Encouraging quality in early childhood education and care (ECEC) [1]

RESEARCH BRIEF: MINIMUM STANDARDS MATTER
Author: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
Format: Article

AVAILABILITY
Access online [PDF] [2]

Excerpts:

Minimum standards are structural inputs that can enable "adequate" or "good enough" quality ECEC provisions. Structural requirements may define the quality of the physical environment for young children (e.g., buildings, space, outdoors, pedagogical materials); the training levels for staff; staff-child ratios; work conditions; etc. (OECD, 2006). A certain minimum level of ECEC provision can be ensured by the clear formulation of standards and enforcement of legislation or regulations (OECD, 2006).

...

What is at stake?
As ECEC expands outside the home, the regulation of services inevitably becomes a public responsibility. All OECD countries impose a preliminary health and safety check on centres or homes licensed to look after young children. However, as the Starting Strong reports point out, the extent and manner of regulation differs widely from country to country and often varies within countries according to region or the type of service concerned. Appropriate regulation not only helps define and enforce health, environmental and programme standards but can also ensure some degree of equity for parents and children in poorer neighbourhoods (OECD, 2001 and 2006).

...

Why do minimum standards matter?
Minimum standards can guarantee the health and safety of children in ECEC environments. They can ensure the conditions of learning and care by defining duration, staff qualification levels and curriculum to shape staff behaviour (Burchinal et al., 2009; OECD, 2001). National regulatory frameworks with appropriate minimum standards can better "level the playing field" by ensuring all children benefit from a minimum quality of education and care (Belsky, 2011; Eurydice, 2009; Vandenbroeck, 2011). Raising standards or setting minimum standards can help reduce knowledge gaps for all, although the effect is greater for low-income, immigrant and minority children (OECD, 2006 and 2011).

...

Creating and consistently enforcing standards at different levels of the ECEC system sets a guarantee that a minimum level of safety, health and quality for children is ensured. For equity reasons, regulations need to apply to all settings, whether they are publicly or privately operated, and should cover infant-toddler, preschool and out-of-school provision. At the same time, regulations should recognise that different settings and age groups may require different standards. In order to meet standards, provision will need to be supported by a strong infrastructure of co-ordinated national-, state- and local-level mechanisms to assure adequate financing at a level that attracts and retains highly-trained early childhood staff (OECD, 2006).

One major difference in policy is the degree to which private (for-profit and non-profit) provision is covered in legislation. This is of particular concern, as, in many countries, the majority of children under age three attend settings in the private sector or are in informal arrangements (OECD, 2001).
Region: International [3]
Tags: quality [4]

Source URL (modified on 19 Oct 2023): https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/12/03/encouraging-quality-early-childhood-education-and-care-ecec
Links
[1] https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/12/03/encouraging-quality-early-childhood-education-and-care-ecec [2] http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/6/60/48483409.pdf [3] https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/international [4] https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/quality