

Public policy context of child care: The issue of auspice^[1]

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Three contextual (structural) variables have a demonstrated impact on the quality of child care programs. These factors are: regulation, funding and auspice. Research confirms that regulated child care is more likely to be high quality than unregulated care; funding has a positive impact on child care through staff and other program variables; child care services operated not-for-profit are more likely to be high quality than those operated to earn profits.

Each of the three contextual factors - regulation, funding, auspice - is important. None of the three determines or guarantees high quality in isolation. Instead, each, through its impact on program-related factors (like wages and working conditions, training, staff turnover, staff morale, staff/child ratios, group size and other factors) makes it more likely that program quality will be higher or lower.

In 1987, when the possibility of a national child care policy was discussed with the Mulroney government, the issue of funding to commercial child care services was pivotal. At that time, many groups with an interest in child care who challenged inclusion of commercial services in new national funding arrangements identified two reasons for their concerns: first quality and second accountability for public resources. The discussion, however, never moved beyond the debate stage to goals and concrete proposals for mechanisms to move towards them.

Region: Canada^[3]

Tags: economics^[4]

quality^[5]

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