

'A New Deal for Children?' – what happened next: a cross-national study of transferring early childhood services into education ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Authors compare the experiences of Scotland, England and Sweden after responsibility for early childhood education and care (ECEC) services were united under their respective ministries of education in the late nineties. The paper examines and compares subsequent developments and consequences of the initial reform, from 2003–2017. Outcomes varied widely in the different contexts; representing a unique learning opportunity for Canada.

Abstract

Between 1996–1998, England, Scotland and Sweden moved responsibility for all early childhood education and care (ECEC) and school-age childcare (SACC) services from welfare into education. Following an earlier study researching these reforms up to 2003, this article examines and compares subsequent developments and consequences of the initial reform, from 2003–2017. These differed widely. Sweden succeeded in achieving further integration and better access to services, while services in England and Scotland remained divided and fragmented. England's attempt at major reform did not survive political change; while Scotland's more ambitious universalist approach was constrained by lack of appropriate devolved powers and a clear vision of how ECEC and SACC might fit into the education agenda. Undue dominance of the school and the teaching profession posed risks in all three countries. The article considers possible reasons for the differing responses to a common policy change, including the different histories of ECEC and SACC prior to transfer, processes of subsequent policy development, and the effects of differing welfare regimes and path dependency.

Related link: Why is early years provision so different in Sweden and the UK? ^[3]

Region: International ^[4]

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