

# Daycare centers are much more than babysitters <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

As the elections in Israel approach, several social issues are being sounded in the public sphere; issues associated with our money and other vulnerabilities: the overburdened and nearly collapsing health system, gender equality, and, lately, also early childhood education.

The politicians who sound these concerns are correct: early childhood education is indeed a pressing subject. It is pertinent to those who are raising children and requires proper attention and policy-making.

Despite the headlines that say that state will build affordable daycare centers, early childhood education is not the personal affair of the parents who seek some kind of arrangement for their children to allow the mothers to have careers.

Daycare centers are not a state-funded babysitting service for parents.

It is a national interest, with broad economic and social implications, to create an optimal and equal education system that responds to the toddlers' developmental needs and allows children to flourish from birth, in the best way possible.

Indeed, we already know everything there is to know: research indicates unequivocally that the years of infancy are the most crucial in children's cerebral and social development. Infants who have a nurturing, educational and supportive system during their early age will realize their abilities optimally in the following years of their development.

Another thing that is clear is that early childhood gaps of care and education correspond with social and economic gaps that evolve later on in the children's life.

Many researchers have shown that the sooner we manage to close the educational gaps and offer the younger generation good supportive and educational systems, the better we can prevent the children from carrying socioeconomic gaps to adulthood. Moreover, research has shown that there is a direct link between the amount of funds that the state invests in early childhood education and the levels of its future economic productivity.

Daycare centers were established in Israel during the 1950s as institutions which provide care for children whose mothers work outside the home. Unlike today, in those years, public opinion focused on allowing the parents to have an efficient household, comprised of two breadwinners.

Today, the public's need is much broader: daycare centers must offer the toddlers nurturing, education, and the potential for progress, which bring about equal opportunities to realize their potential, evolve, and influence their surroundings beneficially.

Today, daycare centers cannot operate as babysitters for working parents: It is time to change our view on the matter and understand that the country has social, economic, educational, and ethical interests to create the best frameworks for young children, allowing the parents to realize their parental and personal potential, while providing the toddlers with the gift of equal opportunity.

Establishing daycare centers is not enough. We must train the teams of educators and caregivers that run the daycare centers; we must make sure they are able to offer the best conditions and accompany the parents on their personal and familial process of rearing the next generation.

The sooner we do so, the stronger economic and social development we create. The cost transform into profit.

**Related link:**

**Region:** Asia <sup>[3]</sup>

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