

Les services de garde subventionnés : l'exception du Québec dans le contexte fédéral ^[1]

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Summary

Compared with other Western countries, Canada has devoted far fewer resources to child daycare services. In contrast, since the late 1990s, Quebec has invested a significant amount in an accessible daycare program, initially limiting the fee paid by parents to \$5 a day for each child. Twenty years later, Quebec is still a leader among the provinces in this field.

Until now, researchers have focused on understanding why the federal government has failed to implement an ambitious daycare program. Very few have looked at why the provinces, aside from Quebec, have not acted in this domain, even though some studies have compared Quebec with Ontario or British Columbia. This study is the first to attempt to explain "Quebec's exceptionalism" in child care services.

Based on an exhaustive and critical survey of the literature, Gabriel Arsenault, Olivier Jacques and Antonia Maioni find that three factors explain Quebec's distinct path: (1) the presence of a centre-left party that could act as the "protagonist" by introducing a major reform in child care; (2) a party system in which no right-wing party was able to form the government and act as the "antagonist" to abolish the progressive program created by a left-wing party; and (3) the fact that child care is considered a provincial responsibility by all political parties and civil society actors.

Quebec is the only province where all three conditions exist. Thus, the Parti Québécois was able to implement an ambitious child care reform, which the Quebec Liberal party has largely maintained. In Quebec, interest groups in the area of early childhood voice their demands to the provincial government. In the rest of Canada, civil society actors tend to turn to the federal government.

This study also advances our knowledge of public policy in a federal context. In this respect, the debate over the mixed results of Quebec's child care policy has hindered the adoption of a similar policy by the other provinces. As well, the fiscal imbalance between the federal government and the provinces and the structure of federal tax credits probably do not encourage the provinces to invest in child care services. Finally, this study evaluates the role of cooperation between the state, unions and employers in the field of child care. Such cooperation does not seem to have played a major part in the implementation of Quebec's child care policy.

Related link: [Subsidized daycare: New study examines factors driving Quebec's exceptionalism](#) ^[3]

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