

Unpacking the childcare and education policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic: Insights from the Canadian province of Quebec ^[1]

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Abstract

Building from Blum and Dobrotić's conceptual framework, this paper shows that the decisions to reopen childcare centres and schools in the Canadian province of Quebec in 2020 were influenced by four goals: (1) protecting public health, (2) promoting academic success / fostering early education, (3) addressing social inequalities, and (4) helping parents to reconcile employment and care activities. Although the first three objectives were considered in the sequence of reopening, the government quickly chose to prioritize work-family reconciliation above other objectives. Quebec's tight sequence of reopening childcare centres and schools is not simply a consequence of evolving research showing lower risks associated with COVID-19 for young children, it also reflects the province's cultural norms toward mothers' employment and the high legitimacy of the state in subsidizing childcare.

Related link: How to support working parents during a pandemic: Lessons from Quebec ^[3]

Region: Quebec ^[4]

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