

Global survey finds individual merit, not solidarity, prioritized by early childhood education policies ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpts

Do we climb the social ladder alone or with help from our communities? Early childhood education (ECE) policies are betting on the former, according to a study published in PLOS One by Katarzyna Bobrowicz from the University of Luxembourg and University of Liège in Belgium, and colleagues.

A 53-country survey of global ECE policies indicates favoritism of competition over cooperation, individualism over solidarity and talent over luck.

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The researchers examined 92 official ECE documents from the European Union (EU) and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and from 53 countries across Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania between 1999–2023.

Using text coding and statistical analysis, they searched for references to four contributors to lifelong success: individual skills, individual agency, uncontrollable factors (e.g., health, childhood, climate) and reliance on others (e.g., teachers, family and community).

Results indicate that overall, the countries surveyed embrace economic meritocracy in their ECE policies, promoting individual skill and agency over solidarity and community reliance.

Further, countries perceived individual agency as integral to success, and only four countries—Ireland, New Zealand, Malaysia and the Philippines—acknowledged that uncontrollable factors may have an impact. The researchers acknowledged that the OECD and the EU reiterated the importance of universal, equitable access to ECE.

Related link: The meritocracy trap: Early childhood education policies promote individual achievement far more than social cohesion ^[3]

Region: International ^[4]

Tags: social policy ^[5]

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