

Early childhood services in the OECD countries: review of the literature and current policy in the early childhood field ^[1]

Innocenti Working Paper

Author: Bennett, John

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NOTE: This Working Paper is a background paper for the upcoming UNICEF Report Card No. 8: "The Transition to Childcare; Early Childhood Education and Care – An OECD League Table"

Abstract:

The aim of this text is to provide a review of the literature and current policies of early childhood education and care in the economically most advanced countries of the world.

The introductory Chapter 1 provides some basic definitions: what is meant by 'early childhood services' both in the narrow sense of care and education services for young children (family day care, childcare centres, pre-primary educational services, integrated services, etc.) and in the wider sense of services supporting the holistic development of young children.

Chapter 2 addresses the question of the rights and well-being of young children. Chapter 3 explores the economic and social context of children's services, and seek to explain the contemporary focus on the upbringing and education of young children. Chapter 4 provides a rationale for substantial state investment in early childhood services. Chapter 5 recalls briefly the promise that participation in high-quality early childhood services holds for the individual child and at a wider level, for society as a whole.

A short conclusion proposes a dynamic social market model that brings together the dynamism and choice that market approaches can present with the strong investment, effective control and equity in access that public systems have traditionally offered in several countries.

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