

Joining up and scaling up: A vision for early childhood education and care ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

- Full article in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts from the article:

Today a three year-old in Marseilles, Stockholm, Barcelona and Reykjavik -- or in a rural village in many countries -- is likely to attend a publicly-funded, publicly-delivered program that incorporates early childhood education and childcare in a more-or-less coherent manner. In most of the developed countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), relatively well-developed universal early childhood education and care (ECEC) systems have become the norm, beginning at two-and-a-half or three years. In some countries -- Denmark, for example -- ECEC is a right, even for toddlers. In comparison, in Canada, kindergarten and childcare are separated philosophically, pedagogically, administratively, and financially, so parents who want both early childhood education and care for their children usually must make several separate arrangements. Early childhood education is not widely available until part-day kindergarten becomes universal at age five (or in Ontario, age four). High quality childcare is the exception, not the rule, for children of any age, and access to most ECEC programs is on a user-pay basis, with fees that are too high for many parents.

As a result, it has become commonplace for Canada to take last place in international comparisons of ECEC arrangements or to be chastised and exhorted to do better. Since the federal Conservatives' 2006 termination of a barely-begun national program, data published by the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) in 2007 and 2009 show that the picture of Canadian ECEC is by-and large a bleak one -- slowed-down childcare expansion, constrained provincial budgets, and an emergent trend toward increased privatization of childcare delivery.

CRRU did note a bright spot, however, when summarizing ECEC developments across Canada in 2009, recognized that some provincial governments took the first steps to close the gap between childcare and early childhood education. Recognition of the merits of blending early childhood education and childcare has unquestionably grown among policymakers, educators, and researchers: three provinces (in addition to the three already offering it) promised full-day kindergarten; another initiated a school-based, blended ECEC program; several provincial education departments began to assume responsibility for childcare, and new ECEC curriculum frameworks were launched. In 2007, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, following on an election commitment to bring in "full-day early learning", appointed a Special Advisor on Early Learning (ELA) to develop an implementation plan. With the publication of ELA Charles Pascal's report to the Premier in June 2009, Ontario moved into the forefront of ECEC developments across Canada.

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: full-day early learning ^[4]

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