Policy Matters: Reevaluating the Meaning of Inclusion and Equity

Moving Beyond Quality

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Moving beyond quality

- Can you move beyond quality when there is little experience of it?
- If quality is defined broadly to include diversity of ideas/values and democratic participation, is it a useful construct?
- Can there be inclusion and equity without quality?
- Can there be quality within a market and privatized system?
- Is “not quality” a useful concept?
Moving beyond quality

- Within the Canadian context of a weak ECEC system, how do we bridge the need for meaningful dialogue on ideas and values for children, and for early childhood provision with the need for a “material framework?”
The Canadian context: rate of access to ECEC programs for 3-6 year olds

AU, CZ, FI, HU, NL, UK – Estimated (averaged across ages 3-6)
DE – Estimated (averaged across ABL and NBL)
CA – Children 0-6 in child care including regulated family day care
Spending on ELCC programs: How does Canada compare?

Among OECD recommendations for Canada...

- Develop a national quality framework for early childhood services across all sectors, and the infrastructure at the provincial level to ensure effective implementation.
- Link accreditation of services to structural requirements and the achievement of quality targets.
- Review ECEC professional profiles, improve recruitment levels and strengthen the initial and inservice training of staff.
Views of the ECEC shaped by...

- Values and history
- Social, economic and political context
- Conception of childhood - “adults-in-training” or “child as citizen”
- Ideas about purpose of ECEC
  - parental employment
  - women’s equality
  - poverty reduction
  - child development
  - school readiness, etc.
The Current Climate: ECEC under siege
Is there a concept of “not quality?”

How to SUCCESSFULLY Potty Train your child in five hours or less - even if your child is resistant

Before the ABCs: Promoting School Readiness in Infants and Toddlers
Moving forward

- A systems approach to provision
- Goals, targets and timetables to increase access
- Support for and value of a well educated workforce
- A universal approach to provision, with additional supports that support equity
- Dependable infrastructure
- Closer links with the education system
- Integrated care, education and parenting supports
Defining Quality is a Process

- Quality is a relative concept, based on values and beliefs;
- Process of defining quality is important in its own right;
- Process should be continuous and democratic
  (Balaguer, 2004)
Quality ECEC…what do we know?

About quality at the system level

- International policy research and analyses
  - EU Childcare Network Quality targets
  - OECD - Thematic Review (*Starting Strong I and II*)
  - Policy researchers – Moss, Penn, Bennett
  - Barcelona targets
  - UNICEF indicators
Ideas About Quality

Ideas about quality in ELCC vary according to:
- Values and beliefs
- Purposes
- Conception of childhood
- Perspectives (from whose point of view?)
- Social, economic and political context
Can there be quality with little access?

Availability

Affordability

Suitability

ACCESS

Inclusion

Equity

Public funding

Public policy

Purpose of programs

Role of “Education”

Labour force
Quality issues

Eight elements support a quality ELCC system
- Ideas
- Governance
- Infrastructure
- Planning and policy development
- Financing
- Human resources
- Physical environment
- Research and data collection

Elements need to be taken into account together

Quality by Design
Moving beyond quality

● Something to aspire to
● Our understandings of quality are shaped by our experience of what we know
● In Canada need to engage in ongoing meaningful dialogue
● We need first to:
  ● raise our expectations of what is possible
  ● move beyond narrow regulatory framework as a proxy for quality
  ● ensure the “material framework” is a foundation upon which to build