ADVANCING EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION POLICY IN THE U.S.

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September 22, 2016
Overview

• Policy history
• Current U.S. policies
• Our policy research
• Advancing ECCE policy
HISTORY OF ECCE

In brief

Industrialization & Progressive Era

- Progressives, such as Jane Addams & Julia Lathrop (later the first head of the U.S. Children’s Bureau, 1912), set up settlement houses that provided child care, and also advocated for mothers’ pensions so mothers could stay home with their children.
World War II

Federal government funded childcare centers for women workers.
Post WW II Era

- U.S. Congress failed to pass the 1946 Maternal and Child Welfare Act, which would have continued federal funding.
- With rising maternal employment:
  - calls for federal support for child care for working mothers, from advocates and government officials - but there was not enough support for a universal child care policy.
  - Instead, Congress passed welfare reform bills in 1960s that linked child care funding to poor and low-income women’s employment.

Head Start

- As part of his “War on Poverty,” President Lyndon Johnson signed the **Economic Opportunity Act of 1964**.

- Created the federal Head Start program, a comprehensive program for children in low-income families.
In 1971, with bipartisan support, Congress passed the Comprehensive Child Development Act,

- which would have created a universal child care system,
- with tuition subsidized for lower-income families.

President Richard Nixon vetoed it, saying the bill,

- “would commit the vast moral authority of the National Government to the side of communal approaches to child rearing over against the family-centered approach.”
Devolving to the States

• In 1990, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) provided federal funding to states to support child care.

• In 1996, welfare reform focused on employment for low-income mothers
  • Congress combined CCDBG, along with several smaller programs, into a single block grant—the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF).
Recap

• Over the past 125 years, the U.S. has been engaged in a debate about whether ECCE should be universal, or focused on low-income children.
  • Advocates have envisioned a universal ECCE program that would meet children’s needs, and support women’s employment.
  • Federal policies have prioritized ECCE for low-income children, and welfare for low-income families.
  • Cities and states have developed more comprehensive programs.

“So much of America’s tragic and costly failure to care for all its children stems from our tendency to distinguish between our own children and other people’s children—as if justice were divisible.”
~Marian Wright Edelman
CURRENT U.S. POLICIES
Types of ECCE for Children Under 6

Where are the children?

- Centers: 35%
- Relatives: 42%
- FCC: 8%
- Neighbors: 5%
- In-home sitters: 5%
- Parents: 5%

Proportion of children with employed mothers, 2011
* 27% of children in multiple types of ECCE

Current U.S. ECCE Supports

**Federal Government:**
- Head Start & Early Head Start*
- CCDF subsidies*
- Child Care Tax Credit
- Family and Medical Leave Act

**State & Local Government:**
- Subsidized ECCE*
- “Universal” pre-kindergarten
- Paid parental leave

**Employers:**
- Paid parental leave
- Subsidized ECCE

* low-income children only
Recap

• Current policies have created growing social class divisions in ECCE:
  • Federal funding continues to focus on child care for low-income families, but is insufficient to meet demand. Only 12% of children in low-income families receive government subsidies.
  • Middle-income families who are not eligible for publicly-funded ECCE often cannot afford higher quality programs.
  • Higher income families can afford to pay for higher quality programs.
Work, Families & Children Research

• Cost, Affordability and Subsidy Studies
  • Massachusetts Affordability Study
    • Low-income families who don’t have a subsidy or Head Start slot, as well as middle-income families, often pay more than they can afford. In 2011, families in poverty paid an average of 30% of their income for ECCE.
  • Massachusetts & Maine Cost & Quality Studies
    • Higher observed quality costs more.
    • Labor makes up 80% to 90% of costs.
  • Massachusetts Child Subsidy Study
    • The MA subsidy system gives lower-income families better access to affordable, quality ECCE, and supports mothers’ employment.
Work, Families & Children Research

• Quality and School Readiness Studies
  • Massachusetts School Readiness Study
    • Children in higher quality infant centers have stronger social-emotional skills in preschool.
    • Children show stronger academic skills if they attended preschool programs with a strong academic curriculum.
  • NICHD Study of Early Child Care & Youth Development
    • Quality of ECCE matters to children’s school readiness & social-emotional development. Too many hours, esp. of poor quality, is harmful to some children.
  • Massachusetts Quality Rating & Improvement System Evaluation
    • Programs at higher QRIS levels provide higher quality ECCE to infants, toddlers and preschoolers, and this is reflected in stronger child cognitive, behavioral and social-emotional development ratings.

Workforce Studies

Characteristics of the ECCE Workforce
- Reported on education, experience and demographic characteristics of Massachusetts workforce in centers, licensed family child care, and school age programs.

Preparation of the ECCE Workforce by Massachusetts Institutes of Higher Education
- Two tiered system:
  - Teachers who graduate from IHE programs with certification are more likely to work in K-12 schools and to earn higher salaries.
  - Teachers who graduate from IHE programs with state ECCE licensing are more likely to work in ECCE programs and to earn less. These teachers are more likely to be people of color.

Ready Educators Quality Improvement Project (REQIP)
- Professional development to improve quality needs to be individualized, and include coaching.

Ready to Learn Providence (R2LP) Evaluation
- Efforts to improve quality require intensive intervention.
ADVANCING ECCE POLICY
The Rationale

- ECCE serves dual purposes:
  - It allows parents to be employed or be in school or training. AND it also helps prepare children for school and academic success- this is especially true for children from families with low incomes.

- 59% of families with children under 6 have their only, or both, parents employed.
  - ECCE costs are high, and families often have to forego or reduce other important expenses (housing, insurance, saving for college or retirement). This is particularly true for infant ECCE, for single parent families, and for low-income families.

- 61% of children under the age of 5 are in some type of regular ECCE arrangement.
  - The majority of ECCE arrangements are rated as mediocre in quality.
The Global Case for ECCE

In 2015, the United Nations adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all as part of a sustainable development agenda.

Goal 4 of this agenda ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Goal 4.2: By 2030, ensure that all boys and girls have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

Our Framework for U.S. Policy

• **Universal ECCE programs** are needed and must meet the needs of children and families, such as taking into account parents’ work schedules.

• “The scientific knowledge is irrefutable. The moral argument is strong. The investment case is persuasive. Now we must act to make a lasting and positive difference for our children’s most important treasure: their brains and their minds. For their sake. For our future.” – Anthony Lake, executive director of UNICEF

“The question is not whether we can afford to invest in every child; it is whether we can afford not to.”

- Marian Wright Edelman
Proposed Elements of National Policy

• Affordability. Goal: reduce parental share of cost
  • Free universal pre-kindergarten for all preschool-age children.
  • Subsidies, on a sliding scale, for infants, toddlers & school-age.
  • Paid parental leave.

• Quality. Goal: ensure equal access to quality ECCE
  • National standards for group size, ratios, health & safety, workforce qualifications.
  • Alignment of higher education with core competencies for ECCE.
  • Ongoing professional development, including coaching.

• Workforce. Goal: raise wages, maintain diversity, reduce turnover
  • “Worthy wages” for workforce.
  • ECCE pay comparable to pay for public school teachers.
  • Career lattice – multiple points of entry into career ladder, multiple advancement paths.
POLICY EXAMPLE #1

ECCE Policies for Infants and Toddlers

Need for ECCE for Infants & Toddlers

- 61% of mothers with a child under the age of 3 are employed
- 57% of mothers with infants are employed
Need for ECCE for Infants & Toddlers

Infants
- Kin: 45%
- Centers: 16%
- FCC: 10%
- Neighb or: 7%
- Sitter: 4%
- Parent: 37%

Toddlers
- Kin: 48%
- Centers: 26%
- FCC: 7%
- Neighb or: 5%
- Sitter: 6%
- Parent: 33%

Proportion of children with employed mothers, 2011
* 27% of children in multiple types of ECCE

Problems with Infant/Toddler ECCE

- Lack of available, affordable ECCE
  - Many parents would prefer non-parental & non-kin ECCE
- Infant & toddler ECCE often of poorer quality than preschool ECCE
  - Provider workload; cognitive stimulation
- Quality infant and toddler ECCE is expensive
  - In many states, child care costs more for an infant or toddler than it does to send a child to a state college or university!

What can we do?

• Paid parental leave, to facilitate parental care.
  • Some states have implemented paid leave (California, New Jersey, Rhode Island, New York)

• National ECCE policy that includes:
  • Age-appropriate national regulations (ratios, health & safety).
  • Multiple types of ECCE: Center-based (Early Head Start, child care centers); licensed or regulated family child care homes; relative care.
  • Training and education specific to care of children under 3, in all types of ECCE.
  • Sliding fee scale subsidies for all types of ECCE, including relative care.
POLICY EXAMPLE #2

Worthy Wages

Need for Worthy Wages

• In 2015, the average compensation for child care workers was $10.44/hour.

• 15% of child care professionals live in poverty.

• High turnover (20%-35% leave their jobs each year).
Why are wages so low?

- Parents currently pay most of the cost of ECCE.
- Programs that receive state or government funding are not receiving the market rate for the care they provide.
What can we do?

• **The Worthy Wage Campaign**
  • The Worthy Wage Campaign was initiated by the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW) at UC Berkeley, in early 1990s.
  • Seeks to educate the community about retaining a skilled child care workforce and providing adequate compensation.

• **State-level Action**
  • In Massachusetts, The Department of Early Education and Care will make compensation a priority in FY 18.

• **Activism**
  • Local campaigns to seek wage parity. E.g., Boston requires wage parity between pre-kindergarten teachers and K-12 teachers.
  • Local, state & national campaigns to raise the minimum wage for all workers.

How Long?

- It took kindergarten teachers almost 100 years to be considered the equal of other teachers in the public school system and be paid the same.

- How long do ECCE teachers need to wait?

- To improve the wages and work of ECCE professionals, a larger movement for public investment in services for young children and designing reforms to improve the compensation and skills of the workforce is needed not tomorrow but today.
The Heart of the Matter

- We see ECCE policies as central to a social justice mission.
- If all families have access to the policies we propose, we will reduce the stress on working families, improve the early childhood experiences and school readiness of all children, and strengthen the ECCE workforce.