

This volume collects chapters on the history of educational and child-care services in various European countries since the period following World War II, with the aim of shedding light on legislative reforms and the change in educational methods that affect children up to three years of age. From a comparative point of view, the different chapters – written by fifteen authors (Catherine Bouve, Janet De Vigne, Diana Franke-Meyer, Noémi Janek, Eleni Kainourgiou, Tora Korsvold, Claudine Marissal, Eleni Mousena, Aggné Veronika Pirka, Tiziana Pironi, David Salomoni, Carmen Sanchidrián Blanco, Simona Salustri, and Johannes Westberg) – describe the history of the day nurseries in France and Belgium, Sweden and Norway, Germany and Scotland, Spain and Portugal, Italy, Greece, Hungary, and the Soviet Union, paying particular attention to the important process of transformation from welfare institutions to educational services for children from birth to three years of age. In the context of the European policy field of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), which deals with children from birth to compulsory school age, such institutions are undergoing a further evolution towards a European model of preschool education. This volume aims to deepen a story that is still little known and investigated. It is aimed at students and educators in educational science courses, because knowledge of the past can be the basis for better analysis and development of the reforms in progress. The recent development of the “integrated 0–6 system” (of nurseries and kindergarten), a well-known and integrated education and training system from birth up to six years underway in Italy, is part of these recent changes.

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€ 27,50

ISBN 978-88-491-5741-3



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History of Early Education Institutions in Europe From WWII until the Recent Reforms Dorena Caroli

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From WWII until the Recent Reforms

edited by **Dorena Caroli**



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This series of volumes aims to publish monographs or collective volumes, both in Italian and other languages, concerning the history of pedagogy as widely understood within the Italian university field M-Ped/02. The studies will address issues that include the history of pedagogical ideas, education and educational institutions in general, and, in particular, preschool institutions and children's literature. Particular attention will be devoted to transnational and comparative dimensions of the educational problems and to pedagogical transfers of the past, which allows us to grasp the circulation of educational models and reciprocal influences at an institutional and cultural level. The multiple approaches of cultural history will also be adopted for the interpretation of the educational reforms and institutions of the different historical periods.

The volumes are subjected to double-blind review.

Responsible for the review process is the publisher's redaction.

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Europe from WWII until the Recent Reforms

edited by
Dorena Caroli



Questo volume è stato finanziato con il contributo del Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Educazione "Giovanni Maria Bertin" dell'Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna / This volume was financed by the contribution of the Department of Education Studies "Giovanni Maria Bertin", Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna.

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ISBN 978-88-491-5741-3

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Immagine di copertina / Cover image: Inaugurazione dell'asilo nido di Viserba, 13 ottobre 1979 (Archivio fotografico D. Minghini, © Biblioteca civica Gambalunga-Rimini). Si ringrazia Nadia Bizzocchi per il permesso di pubblicazione. / Inauguration of the day nursery in Viserba, 13 October 1979 (Photographic Archive D. Minghini, © Biblioteca civica Gambalunga-Rimini, Italy). The Editor and the Publisher thank Nadia Bizzocchi for the authorization to publish.

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Introduction

Dorena Caroli

Over the past thirty years, the history of early childhood educational institutions, now known at the European level as early childhood education and care (ECEC) institutions, has been the subject of numerous studies that have given rise to new historiographical trends. Some are interested in European education policies and social changes that have affected Europe at the beginning of the new millennium, others in the function that these institutions have in the welfare and education systems of different countries or in the role that these institutions have played in family policies.

The birth and development of this historiography seem to have been marked by some important legislative acts, such as the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959). Thanks to the work of Philippe Ariès¹, which reflected on the evolution of the idea of childhood as a cultural construct in relation to the structure of the family and social classes, new studies have investigated unknown aspects and chapters of the history of childhood, its culture and educational institutions. Among the first published studies after the Convention on the Rights on the Child (1989), which was an important impetus for the development of this field of research², are those by Catherine Rollet, Edward C. Melhuish and Peter Moss that highlighted the international perspectives of a research that was taking its first steps in the early nineties³.

At the European level, other important and innovative studies have also followed, such as that by Hugh Cunningham, who offered a very signifi-

¹ P. Ariès, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Anciènne Régime*, Paris, Plon, 1960; Seuil, 1963 [English trans. R. Baldick, *Centuries of childhood. A Social History of Family life*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1962].

² Z. Moody, *Transnational Treaties on Children's Rights: Norm Building and Circulation in the Twentieth Century*, in «Paedagogica Historica», 50/1-2 (2014), pp. 151-164.

³ C. Rollet, *La politique à l'égard de la petite enfance sous la III^e République. Annexes : bibliographie, index*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1990; E.C. Melhuish, P. Moss (eds.), *Day Care for Young Children. International Perspectives*, London and New York, Tavistock/Routledge, 1991.

cant comparative framework for capturing some important aspects of childhood history such as the fight against infant mortality⁴. The history of child abandonment is neglected by the present volume, but is no less important. Among the most interesting studies on the concept of childhood culture is the large collection edited by Egle Becchi and Dominique Julia, which presents new chapters on the history of childhood, educational institutions for early childhood and theories about early childhood⁵.

Step by step, many unpublished aspects of the history of educational institutions aimed at preschool education have been addressed with very different perspectives and methodologies. Among the first to study preschool institutions in depth was Jean-Noël Luc⁶, who studied birth and development in France, a country that has been an important European model in child protection.

The field of research into preschool institutions has since been extended up to more recent times, with considerable insights into the various national contexts since the beginning of the new millennium⁷. These insights were in relation to the development of national school systems on the one hand, and family politics on the other⁸. Some studies, including a recent one edited by Karen Hagemann, Konrad H. Jarausch and Cristina Allemann-Ghionda⁹, compare the history of policies concerning childcare and educational institutions with those on the family, with a wide choice of national cases highlighted. Progressively, the focus has extended to other nations and internationally has included the United States, Africa, Japan and other countries thanks to the monumental work of V. Celia Lascarides and Blythe Farb

⁴ H. Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500*, Harlow, England, London, New York, Pearson Longman, 1995 (2005, 2nd ed.).

⁵ E. Becchi, D. Julia (eds.), *Histoire de l'enfance. Tome I: De l'Antiquité au XVIII^e siècle. Tome II: Du XVIII^e siècle à nos jours*, Paris, Seuil, 1998.

⁶ See for example J.-N. Luc, *L'invention du jeune enfant au XIX^e siècle. De la salle d'asile à l'école maternelle*, Paris, Berlin, 1997, pp. 392-398.

⁷ E. Melhuish, K. Petrogiannis, *Early Childhood Care and Education: International Perspectives*, London, Routledge, 2006; T. Bertram, C. Pascal, *Early Childhood Policies and Systems In Eight Countries*, Cham, Switzerland, Springer International, 2016.

⁸ See K. Scheiwe, H. Willekens (eds.), *Child Care and Preschool Development in Europe. Institutional Perspectives*, Houndsmills, Basingstoke Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; H. Willekens, K. Scheiwe, K. Nawrotzki (eds.), *The Development of Early Childhood Education in Europe and North America. Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

⁹ K. Hagemann, K.H. Jarausch, C. Allemann-Ghionda (eds.), *Children, Families, and States. Time Policies of Childcare, Preschool, and Primary Education in Europe*, New York, Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2011.

Hinitz¹⁰, who focused on the circulation of Froebel's, Montessori's and other educational methods at the international level within these institutions.

The chapters collected in this volume present the reconstruction of the history of services for children, and in particular of infant-toddler centres from the second postwar period to recent decades (in some cases until 2000–2010), with a focus on the transformations mainly in services and educational theories aimed at the 0–3 years age range. In fact, despite the trend at the European level of education systems for 0–6-year-olds converging towards preschool education, in the past, a great variety of institutions for younger children were present in different national contexts. In the past, there was a real division of early childhood services, which were either caring or educational services for preschool-aged children. As Diana Sousa and Peter Moss argue:

From the start, therefore, the early childhood sector was split, between 'child-care' services and school or kindergarten services, usually overseen by different branches of government, and differing in terms of regulation, funding, type of provision, workforce and primary purpose. Today a handful of countries have moved beyond this initial split and created a completely integrated early childhood service¹¹.

Although numerous studies are available on institutions for groups of children aged 3–6 in various countries, intended as preschool institutions (from *salle d'asiles*, *écoles maternelles*, kindergarten, nursery schools, *detskie sady*), these chapters try to deepen the history of the institutions meant for to the 0–3 age group in order to complete the study of cases absent in other published volumes and offer a picture of the complexity of the current situation. The aim is to illustrate the changes that have taken place in various countries in the context of post-World War II welfare reforms, although some have more detail and depth than others.

These institutions for early childhood, which arose in most European countries on the basis of Firmin Marbeau's French model, played a fundamental role in countering the consequences of the war, facilitating the return

¹⁰ V. Celia Lascarides, B.F. Hinitz (eds.), *History of Early Childhood Education*, New York and London, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2000; B. Farb Hinitz (ed.), *The Hidden History of Early Education*, New York and London, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.

¹¹ P. Moss, D. Sousa, *Introducing the special issue on 'Comparative studies in early childhood education: past, present and future'*, in «Comparative education», 58/3 (2022), p. 288.

of women to the workforce, and contributing to a more inclusive policy towards children from more disadvantaged social backgrounds¹².

At different times, a slow transformation of these institutions in an educational sense took place in the postwar period. The desire to elaborate and adopt new educational strategies, thanks to the studies of child developmental psychology that resumed after World War II, has made it possible to significantly renew the educational methods adopted in these institutions, also contributing to an improvement in staff training and a greater engagement of parents in services that have also become increasingly important for the development of the concept of parenthood. The changes that have taken place have contributed to emancipating these institutions from being mere providers of assistance to education, bringing them closer and closer to real preschool institutions. In some cases, it was also possible to observe the international circulation of educational methods, as well as reciprocal pedagogical influences in different European countries¹³.

Unlike the research that has produced some social history and/or sociology studies, the present chapters try to offer some historical-educational insights into the different phases of the reforms and the legislative acts that mark the changes. The different authors describe the characteristics of different national contexts in a macro-historical perspective, with a periodization that sometimes approaches the current reforms, in other cases the reconstruction concerns the characteristics of two decades or the study of a particular case. The attention to the historiographical production that accompanies the studies in this collection also has the purpose of relating the results of the studies collected here with the research done so far in order to offer teaching and research tool for students and doctoral students, in a field that deserves considerable further investigations.

This collection is made up of thirteen chapters (written by 15 authors) divided into six parts. The first part contains chapters on France and Belgium. *Catherine Bouve* reconstructs the history of nurseries in France from 1945 to 1995 with attention to the main reforms, particularly the renewal of educational methods and the protagonists of these concepts. It is a context that is particularly sensitive to the reception and debate of pedagogical concepts that stimulate the growth of the child. In fact, crèches originated in France, becoming an international model. *Claudine Marissal* describes both the development of the nursery network and the role of feminist or-

¹² D. Caroli, *Day nurseries and childcare in Europe, 1800–1939*, London, Palgrave, 2017, pp. 3-59.

¹³ S. Rayna, F. Laevers, *Understanding Children from 0 to 3 Years of Age and Its Implications for Education. What's New on the Babies's Side? Origins and Evolutions*, in «European Early Childhood Education Research Journal», 19/2 (2011), pp. 161-172.

ganizations in the vindication of these institutions in Belgium, with a focus on postwar debates on the effects of childcare, with an important shift in perspective leading to a significant increase from the 1970s onwards¹⁴.

The second part presents chapters on Sweden and Norway. *Johannes Westberg* reconstructs the history of childcare services in Sweden, examining the process that led to the birth of a unitary preschool service, which welcomes children between the ages of 1 and 5 years. *Tora Korsvold* discusses the history of laws relating to early childhood services in Norway from the postwar period to the beginning of 2000, showing how this service, which has become a right since 2006, has developed since the 1960s. Research shows that Norwegian crèches have also become institutions based on educational and playful activities.

The third part concerns Germany and Scotland. *Diana Franke Meyer* recounts the reforms in the two divided Germanies, which were distinguished by tradition, institutional competence and educational methods. While in the Federal Republic there was no developed system to handle children under 3 years of age, in the German Democratic Republic there was a mass expansion, accompanied by the introduction of pedagogical methods of Soviet origin. *Janet de Vigne* discusses the perception of educator work and the changes introduced in Scotland through major reforms based on a rich choice of government reports that, until recently, resolved the dichotomy between education and care on the one hand and low staff wages on the other.

The fifth part contains chapters on Italy and Greece. *Tiziana Pironi* describes experiences in Italy that testify to the change from the management of the National Institution for the Maternity and Childhood (ONMI) to other entities: the Olivetti day nursery in Ivrea, the Montessori centre in Rome founded by Adele Costa Gnocchi, a pupil of Maria Montessori, and the nursery run by Dr Nino (Eustachio) Loperfido in the city of Bologna. As this chapter reveals, the cities of Emilia-Romagna played a pioneering role, anticipating the promulgation of the law N. 1044 (“Piano quinquennale per l’istituzione di asili-nido comunali con il concorso dello Stato”; Five-year plan for the establishment of municipal day nurseries (asili nido) with the support of the State) in 1971, thanks to Adriana Lodi, a city councillor in Bologna and a Member of Parliament. Her work on childhood issues and the reform of educational institutions gave great impetus to the birth of a new culture of the child, a subject of educational rights and not just an object of welfare care.

With respect to these changes, in Italy and particularly the Emilia-Romagna region, which is one of the most studied, the conciliatory func-

¹⁴ This part is in French, while the others are in English.

tion of the day nurseries is particularly evident with regard to agricultural workers, as shown in the chapter by *Simona Salustri*, which also recounts the political debate over the protection of female labour (in particular mondine, seasonal female workers who plant and harvest rice) and the characteristics of childcare in the countryside of Bologna. As for Greece, the chapter by *Eleni Mousena and Eleni Kainourgiou* reconstructs the history of the paradigm shift in childcare services, paying attention to the institutionalization process and the evolution of the educational model that occurred in close collaboration with research conducted in the university environment.

Finally, part six presents chapters on Hungary and the Soviet Union. In both countries, crèches were part of the vast welfare system and experienced similar problems, such as scarcity of services relative to women's needs to work while maintaining a family and the training of personnel which improved over the decades. The stages of renewal and development were different in the two socialist countries, although Soviet influence on the Hungarian early education system had already been visible since the 1950s. The chapter by *Aggné Veronika Pirka and Noémi Janek* presents the development of these institutions in Hungary, in which the paediatrician Emmi Pikler stands out. The chapter also discusses the renewal of educational methods in the more general context of the postwar welfare state reforms and the increasing role of the government in supporting families¹⁵. The chapter also pays particular attention to the crucial problem of staff training.

As for the Soviet Union, *Dorena Caroli's* final chapter studies the postwar recovery and shows a completely different reality from the images of the propaganda with regard to the well-being of women over the following two decades¹⁶. Shortage of crèches and problems related to poor staff training lead to nurseries and kindergartens joining to form preschool education institutions. Although this was a solution that made "a virtue of necessity", in reality, it led to a progressive transformation into educational institutions, characterized by interesting experiments at a pedagogical level, which often drew inspiration from the historical-cultural school.

¹⁵ D. Szikra, *Tradition Matters: Childcare, Preschool, and Primary Education in Modern Hungary*, in S. Hering (ed.), *Social Care Under Socialism (1945–1989). Ambitions, Ambiguities, and Mismanagement*, Opladen & Farmington Hills, MI, Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2009, pp. 364–384.

¹⁶ A. Rakhochkine, *Beyond Ideology: The Time Policy of Russian School Education since 1945*, in Hagemann, Jarausch, Allemann-Ghionda (eds.), *Children, Families, and States. Time Policies of Childcare, Preschool, and Primary Education in Europe*, cit., pp. 323–343.

For this volume authors from various universities and scientific backgrounds have paid greater attention to the historical evolution that occurred immediately following the Second World War. They investigated the pre-school education system, until the most recent developments¹⁷, since day nursery is an important institution that guarantees the passage of the first three years of a child's life into preschool institutions. Recent European politics has shown this trend through the development of ECEC institutions educating "children aged 0–6" or seven in some countries.

The initial idea of studying the transnational circulation and slow transformation of practices in relation to the dissemination of new pedagogical theories and ideas was confronted with the limited accessibility (during the pandemic years) of archives and libraries. In some cases, the pandemic has forced the authors to sacrifice gleaned insights based on primary sources. Several chapters reveal the process of transnational circulation of educational methods in the inter-war period and moments of exchange¹⁸, while in other chapters it has not been possible to demonstrate elements of phenomena of cultural and pedagogical transfer from one country to another European one, although the same work of translation of the pedagogical works has been well documented and offers examples of the borrowing of pedagogical theories about newborn children and children of 3 years and under. This stimulus to circulate and exchange methods is represented by the common tendency in institutional development, still ongoing at the European level in ECEC institutions that handle children aged 0–6.

Before concluding, we should emphasize that the Italian case seems particularly rich in experimentation after the Second World War. The general context was studied by Monica Ferrari, who highlights that the transformation of the day nursery as an educational service takes place in phases that correspond to the emanation of the regional provisions relating to the Italian national law of 1971 (N. 1044, mentioned previously). It should be added that some publications from the 1980s¹⁹, the result of confer-

¹⁷ E. Nottoli (ed.), *Lo 0-6 in Europa, un viaggio nell'infanzia*, Bergamo, Zeroseiup, 2016.

¹⁸ See for example D. Caroli, *Day Nurseries in Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: The Challenge of the Transnational Approach*, in E. Roldán Vera, E. Fuchs (eds.), *The Transnational in the history of Education*, Cham, Palgrave, 2019, pp. 69-100.

¹⁹ P.O. Ghedini (ed.), *Quali prospettive per l'infanzia. Partecipazione e gestione dei servizi della trasformazione dello Stato sociale. Atti del seminario internazionale promosso dalla Regione Emilia-Romagna e dall'OCSE-CERI: Bologna 17-19 ottobre 1984*, Scandicci, La Nuova Italia, 1988.

ences that compared Italian realities with foreign ones, took stock of the transformation of the Italian day nursery from a welfare institution to an educational institution after this 1971 law, already studied with reference to the political and social dimensions²⁰. In fact, some regions intervened in this field only as late as 1973²¹. In general, today in Italy there is still a great disparity between the quantity of ECEC services in some regions of the north and in particular south, where the percentage of accessibility is still very low.

This volume does not include descriptions of other important Italian experiences that, however, are worth noting to demonstrate the fact that childcare services in Italy have been the result of political achievements and the commitment of pedagogists. Among the most important is that of Margherita Zoebeli in Rimini (Emilia Romagna). Coming from Switzerland to Rimini, almost razed to the ground, this courageous woman opened and managed the Italian-Swiss Educational Center (well known as CEIS)²², as well as a nursery school and an institution similar to an orphanage.

The pioneering experience of the 1980s in Bologna, thanks to the introduction of the Lóczy-Pikler method, developed by the paediatrician Emmi Pikler at the Lóczy orphanage in Hungary, is also very interesting. As Susanna Mantonavi states, this method was implemented thanks to the translation from French of her work (already translated into Italian for the first time in 1978) almost 7 years after law N. 1044 of 1971 on day nurseries (*nidi d'infanzia*)²³, and it is defined as «an unusual mothering» for nurseries, based on the autonomy of the child²⁴. It is certainly an example of transnational circulation in which the history of these early childhood institutions is dotted. In general, after World War II, the entire Emilia-Romagna region

²⁰ See the evolution of the institutional childcare before the 1968 reform presented by E.M. Hohnerlein, *The Paradox of Public preschools in a Familist Welfare Regime: the Italian case*, in Scheiwe, Willekens (eds.), *Child Care and Preschool development in Europe. Institutional Perspectives*, cit., pp. 88-104.

²¹ M. Ferrari, *Asilo nido e scuole dell'infanzia nel primo trentennio della Repubblica italiana tra proposte educative e disposizioni normative*, in G. Zago (ed.), *L'educazione extrascolastica nella seconda metà del Novecento. Tra espansione e rinnovamento (1945-1975)*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2017, pp. 63-84.

²² T. Pironi, *Per una pedagogia dell'utopia concreta: la comunità educativa di Margherita Zoebeli*, in C. De Maria (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa. Margherita Zoebeli nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra*. Atti del Convegno tenutosi al Centro educativo italo-svizzero, Rimini, 7 maggio 2011, Bologna, Clueb, 2012, pp. 59-81.

²³ M. David, G. Appell, *Una relazione educativa insolita. Lóczy*. Pres. di S. Mantovani, trad. Giuliana Santambrogio, Parma, Spaggiari, 2012.

²⁴ S. Mantovani, *Presentazione*, *ivi*, pp. 7-9.

was characterized by a political will, mostly communist-oriented, to renew services for children that would better meet local needs. Other experiences have distinguished themselves and testify to great confidence in the educational sciences and in the elaboration of a new pedagogy for educational services, such as the case of the educational services of Pistoia in Tuscany to which Egle Becchi dedicated herself for many years, and which has been also studied in the United States²⁵.

The Reggio Children Approach, founded by pedagogist Loris Malaguzzi, has been described by several scholars²⁶, and is very important, even for the international circulation of the evolution of the Italian nursery in an educational sense, although it is not dealt with in this volume. Malaguzzi's method is the basis of many innovative experiences abroad too, since Reggio Emilia has become a destination for visits by important scholars such as Howard Gardner (1943–)²⁷. The translation of Malaguzzi's writings into English accounts for intense theoretical discussions and activities in Italy, the renewal of day nurseries as services for children aged 0–6, as well as a system dealing with day care and pre-school education until school age²⁸. In 1980, Malaguzzi also initiated the national “nursery and childhood” group (Gruppo nazionale nidi e infanzia), which recently celebrated its 40th anniversary by offering reflections on the future²⁹.

The Italian education system, which is defined as integrated for children up to access to school, was the subject of legislation on 13 April 2017, with decree no. 65 that established an “integrated education and training system from birth up to six years” (Sistema integrato 0-6)³⁰. This follows the

²⁵ E. Becchi, *Incontri e alleanze*, in Ead. (ed.), *Una pedagogia del buon gusto. Esperienze e progetti dei servizi educativi per l'infanzia del Comune di Pistoia*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2010, pp. 215-231 (see pp. 227-228).

²⁶ N. Barbieri, *Historical Features of Early Childhood Education, Maria Montessori and Loris Malaguzzi*, in A.S. Canestrari, B.A. Marlowe (eds.), *The Wiley International Handbook of Educational Foundations*, Hoboken NJ, Wiley Blackwell, 2019, pp. 335-349.

²⁷ A.H. Planillo, *Loris Malaguzzi. Una biografia pedagogica. Seconda edizione*, trad. di Francesca Davoli, Bergamo, Gruppo Spaggiari Parma, 2020.

²⁸ P. Cagliari, M. Castagnetti, C. Giudici, C. Rinaldi, V. Vecchi, P. Moss (eds.), *Loris Malaguzzi and the Schools of Reggio Emilia. A Selection of His Writings and Speeches, 1945–1993*, trans. Jane McCall, London and New York, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2016.

²⁹ L. Campioni, F. Cremaschi, A. Garbarini, S. Mantovani, T. Musatti (eds.), *1980/2020. Per i prossimi 40 anni*, Bergamo, Zeroseiup, 2021.

³⁰ See A. Bobbio, *I servizi educativi per l'infanzia. La scuola materna statale nel secolo del bambino*, in M. Gecchele, S. Polenghi, P. Dal Toso (eds.), *Il Novecento: il*

indications for the curriculum (No. 254) of 2012 for kindergarten (*scuola dell'infanzia*)³¹. This means that the historical split between day nurseries and nurseries will be removed in order to guarantee better development and education of children. Furthermore, in Italy, there is still an important discrepancy in attendance, accessibility and quality between the North and the South. In a comparative work, Enea Nottoli stated that

In the EU 28.93% of children between the ages of four and the starting age for compulsory primary school attend a primary education facility. However, only 30% of children under 3 attend an ECEC facility, confirming that in this respect the gap among the various European countries continues to remain very wide³².

For this reason, the different chapters open new perspectives of research into different national contexts for the study of the process through which national policies and state reforms are intertwined with practices at the local level and theories of childhood that modify the practice of daily education. It is hoped that new research will be able to combine the macro- and micro-historical perspectives on education and that they will shed light on the changes in educational practices, in parents' perceptions of institutions and eventually, in the educational results achieved by children who attended preschool institutions. The aspect of staff training is also of great interest and will merit further investigation.

This work was the result of a continuous exchange among the authors of the chapters, carried out during the pandemic period of January 2020 to 2022, with a hope for future collaborations in the years to come.

We thank the authors for their participation in the seminars and discussions, which have always been stimulating. We are also grateful to Janet de Vigne and Alice Greaves for their support in the editorial work on different parts of this volume.

secolo del bambino?, Bergamo, Edizioni Junior/Gruppo Spaggiari, 2017, pp. 393-410.

³¹ G. Cerini, C. Mion, G. Zunino (eds.), *Scuola dell'infanzia e prospettiva "zerosei"*, Faenza, Edizioni Homeless Book, 2019.

³² E. Nottoli, *Introduzione*, in Id. (ed.), *Lo 0-6 in Europa, un viaggio nell'infanzia*, Bergamo, Zeroseiup, 2016, pp. 5-13 (p. 6).

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De la garde à l'accueil. Les crèches françaises de 1945 à 1995, au carrefour d'une redéfinition de leurs normes politiques, sociales et pédagogiques

Catherine Bouve

Abstract – From Nursery to Education, at the Crossroads of Pedagogy, Politics and Society: Changing Norms in French Daycare Centres from 1945 to 1995:

To write the history of daycare centres is to place oneself at the crossroads of institutions, pedagogies, scientific works (in particular, in the twentieth century, clinical and developmental psychology), actors, practices, representations, and policies of early childhood. This story reveals, since the creation of such institutions in 1845, a fundamental tension between health and educational progress and the normalizing intention at the origin of the project, where the legitimacy of women's work and the definition of parental roles were endlessly being questioned. Prevention is at work, in the name of the good of the child. What about after World War II? The spaces of the nursery mark a closure to families and a form of appropriation of the child, a fragile body to protect against premature death. The popularization of works on hospitalism contributes to renewing the system of opposition to the nurseries: they still contribute to infant mortality – no longer by their hygienic and medical incompetence, but by their emotional insufficiency. However, after the doctors, new professionals will appear in nurseries. From the 1960s, based on the work of researchers, two new professionals appeared: the kindergarten educator and the psychologist. The nurseries left the fold of the public-assistance hospitals of Paris, to be transferred to local authorities. The daycare centres then participated in a renewal of representations of childhood, contributing to the recognition of the child no longer as a simple digestive tract, but as a competent subject whose psychomotor development, and intellectual, social and emotional awakening must be taken into account. The events of May 1968, with the experience of *crèches sauvages*, contributed to this renewal of political norms and to the evolution of the social function of day nurseries. Which will be called “collective crèches” in 1971, to distinguish them from the “family crèches” initiated in 1959. The “wild crèches” will be recognized by the legislator as “parental crèches” in 1981: they contribute to gradually transforming the relationship

with families and children. At the same time, as the sociological profile of the crèche population was changing, their curriculum became oriented towards the expression of children's skills, and later in the 1980s, the cultural awakening of young children. However, the notion of *support for parenthood*, which emerged in political and then professional rhetoric at the end of the twentieth century, seems like a historic return to this social control of families.

Introduction

Les crèches françaises ont été créées en 1844 dans le mouvement du catholicisme social, par Firmin Marbeau (1798-1875), avec pour vocation, notamment, la lutte contre la mortalité infantile et la pauvreté, par l'encouragement du travail des mères et la moralisation des classes *indigentes*¹, mais aussi la pacification de la société, de ses antagonismes de classes, et la contribution au développement du capitalisme industriel. Les crèches sont alors administrées par les œuvres religieuses et charitables, elles-mêmes secondées par la médecine. Ce sont les *berceuses*, sélectionnées parmi les mères de familles indigentes, qui s'occupent des enfants et du fonctionnement de la crèche (cuisine, ménage, linge). L'avènement de la III^e république en 1870, engage la lutte des républicains pour la laïcisation de ces institutions. Par la naissance de la puériculture, le renforcement de l'hygiène sera un argument des républicains pour évincer définitivement les congréganistes des crèches qui passeront sous la tutelle de l'administration publique hospitalière. Celles-ci, dès leur origine, ont longtemps été décriées comme des lieux impropres à l'éducation du jeune enfant, et critiquées pour leur dimension collective. L'« agglomération » d'enfants était dénoncée comme source de mortalité infantile et la place de la femme dans la société a longtemps constituée la toile de fond, implicite ou explicite, de ces controverses et oppositions, aux invectives fréquemment virulentes : « La crèche est un simple encouragement à la paresse et à l'indifférence des mères : c'est une école de mauvais allaitement artificiel. Delenda est : Il faut détruire les crèches »². D'autres, ou parfois les mêmes, y dénonçaient aussi une possible école du socialisme. Plus ou moins appuyée, plus ou moins explicite, la disqualification des pratiques éducatives parentales – maternelles – traverse aussi le temps.

¹ C. Bouve, *L'utopie des crèches françaises au XIX^e siècle : un pari sur l'enfant pauvre. Essai socio-historique*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2010.

² A.-P. Renaud-Badet, *Les crèches à Paris. Ce qu'elles sont. Ce qu'elles doivent être*, Université de Paris, Thèse pour le doctorat en médecine, 1909, p. 73.

En 1945, au sortir de la seconde guerre mondiale, est créée la Protection maternelle et infantile (PMI) qui marque une étape importante dans la construction d'un État-Providence et ce que l'on appellera ensuite les « trente-glorieuses » (1945-1975). La lutte contre la mortalité des enfants y est encore un enjeu essentiel. L'objectif de ce chapitre est de montrer la trajectoire des crèches en France dans la seconde moitié du XX^e siècle à partir de l'histoire des principales références savantes et des idées pédagogiques qui ont marquées l'évolution des pratiques professionnelles. Nous serons aussi attentives aux transformations sociales des publics accueillis en crèche : s'y jouent en effet des définitions sociales de la petite enfance qui s'inscrivent à la fois dans la demande d'accueil et dans les pratiques légitimes à l'égard des jeunes enfants. De préoccupations hygiénistes à celles soutenant une vision éducative de la crèche, les institutions diffusent et contribuent à produire, une définition nouvelle de l'enfance et une culture enfantine qui lui sont propre et qui participent en retour aux transformations des jeunes enfants. Les parents et leurs enfants continuent d'être la cible du renouvellement des normes politiques, sociales et pédagogiques.

1. De l'hospitalisme, à la redéfinition des pratiques et des compétences professionnelles

Les débats sur les effets nocifs des crèches qui émergent dès leur création, se renouvellent au XX^e. Ainsi, diffusés essentiellement à partir des années 1950, des travaux sur le domaine de l'inconscient, et plus particulièrement sur la carence des soins maternels, de René Arpad Spitz³ (1887-1974) et de John Bowlby (1907-1990)⁴ mettent en évidence le rôle essentiel de la qualité des soins maternels aux nourrissons et pendant la première enfance, pour la santé mentale. La définition de l'*hospitalisme* est élaborée par le psychiatre et psychanalyste nord-américain Spitz, en tant que détérioration psychique et physique progressive, pouvant aboutir à la mort, due à une absence de soins maternels et de relations affectives avec la mère ou une figure maternelle stable. Les travaux de Spitz concluent à la nocivité de l'éducation collective, impropre à assurer le bon développement psychomoteur et affectif du jeune enfant. Confortant le discours freudien, Spitz déclare : « La détérioration rapide de la relation mère-enfant [qui] a commencé il y a environ un siècle et [qui] a été provoquée par l'instauration de l'industrialisation de la production. Le changement d'idéologie qui y a correspondu a ouvert la voie à l'embrigadement de la mère dans le travail

³ R.A. Spitz, *De la naissance à la parole*, Paris, PUF, 1968.

⁴ J. Bowlby, *Soins maternels et santé mentale*, Genève, O. M. S, 1951.

d'usine, ce qui l'a éloignée de sa famille et de son foyer [...] »⁵. La « mauvaise » mère ainsi désignée, c'est l'ouvrière qui se rend à l'usine (sous-entendu qui délaisse son enfant).

De son côté, Bowlby, psychiatre et psychanalyste anglais, s'est séparé de la psychanalyse freudienne pour construire une théorie de l'*attachement maternel* et affirmer qu'une mauvaise mère est toujours préférable pour son enfant plutôt qu'une bonne institution. Et les mêmes principes de négation se retrouvent à propos des crèches : « [...] ces établissements [sont] comme un mal nécessaire : le petit enfant est toujours mieux avec sa mère que dans la meilleure crèche »⁶. Pour Bowlby aussi, la qualité des soins maternels pendant la première enfance joue un rôle fondamental dans le développement du psychisme de l'enfant. Ainsi, il définit trois facteurs pouvant porter atteinte à l'équilibre psychique des enfants : l'impossibilité de construire une relation privilégiée avec la mère ou un substitut pendant les trois premières années ; la séparation pendant des temps limités d'avec la mère ou le substitut ; les changements de substitut maternel pendant les trois premières années.

En France, ces travaux sur l'hospitalisme sont notamment relayés par Jenny Aubry (1903-1987), psychiatre et psychanalyste, dont le terrain de travail et de recherche se situe à la Fondation Parent de Rosan, qui accueille des enfants de l'Assistance publique. Dans ses conclusions, Aubry affirme qu'il « est maintenant prouvé qu'un séjour en collectivité quel que soit sa durée est extrêmement nuisible pour l'enfant de moins de 5 ans »⁷. Alors même que l'ensemble de ces travaux porte sur des enfants privés de milieu familial et de soins affectifs, orphelins, pour la plupart issus de milieux familiaux en difficultés psycho-sociales, leurs conclusions seront vulgarisées et généralisées à l'ensemble des institutions de la petite enfance, en dépit de leurs spécificités, et notamment aux crèches.

Cette dénonciation a permis au modèle idéologique de la femme au foyer qui élève ses enfants, défendu par le courant familialiste ou « néo-spitzien », de s'affirmer de nouveau tout en renouvelant le système d'opposition aux crèches. La crèche contribuerait ainsi toujours à la mortalité infantile : non plus par son incompetence hygiénique et médicale, comme au XIX^e siècle, mais par son insuffisance affective, sa pauvreté psychique, les actes mécanisés et dépersonnalisant du personnel. La culpabilisation maternelle se poursuit de ne pas assurer l'idéal du rôle maternel – élever son enfant – et de

⁵ Spitz, *De la naissance à la parole*, cit., pp. 230-231.

⁶ Cycle d'études européen sur les crèches, garderies et jardins d'enfants, Sèvres, 24 avril/3 mai 1956, Rapport des Nations Unies, Genève, décembre 1956.

⁷ J. Aubry, *La carence de soins maternels, les effets de la séparation et la privation de soins maternels sur le développement des jeunes enfants*, Paris, PUF, 1955, p. 183.

le confier à de telles institutions pour aller travailler. Le contrôle du corps de la femme, de son statut et de son rôle social, reste bien un enjeu sous-jacent du débat. Ainsi, « déjà placée au début du XX^e siècle sous le contrôle du médecin, la mère va glisser, après le milieu du siècle, sous le contrôle des spécialistes de l'inconscient »⁸. La crèche suivra en conséquence la même destinée. Et en lien, les personnels qui y travaillent se retrouvent marqués du sceau de la suspicion et de l'incompétence.

2. *Émergence progressive d'un autre paradigme, l'enfant acteur et compétent*

D'autres chercheurs vont faire contrepoids à l'influence de la théorie psychanalytique et de la théorie de l'attachement en posant le postulat de l'influence déterminante du groupe de pairs dans le développement psycho-social de l'enfant. L'expérience d'éducation communautaire dans les kibboutz d'Israël⁹ relativise en effet ces conclusions, en affirmant que la sécurité fondamentale nécessaire au jeune enfant peut être apportée par le groupe de pairs. En France, des chercheurs vont contribuer à faire émerger une nouvelle représentation des capacités du jeune enfant et de nouvelles professionnalités.

Des psychologues dans les crèches

En France, les recherches sur le développement psychomoteur et affectif des jeunes enfants se portent alors sur l'éducation des enfants en crèche. Irène Lézine (1909-1985)¹⁰, psychologue, intervient dès 1953 dans les crèches de Paris avec Odette Brunet, psychologue clinicienne, pour étudier le comportement des bébés et contribuer à améliorer l'organisation de ces lieux de garde. Trois ans après cette première expérience bénévole, un service de psychologie dans les crèches et les consultations de nourrissons est créé. Les observations issues de ce premier travail de terrain montrent très peu de cas de retards importants ou de troubles graves dépistés et un niveau de développement psychomoteur des enfants fréquentant les crèches – à niveau socioculturel égal – identique à celui des enfants élevés dans leur famille. Lézine part d'une hypothèse qui prend le contrepied des représentations en vigueur : la crèche peut être un lieu de socialisation collectif

⁸ Y. Knibielher, C. Fouquet, *Histoire des mères du Moyen-âge à nos jours*, Paris, Montalba, 1977, p. 317.

⁹ B. Bettelheim, *Les enfants du rêve*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1971.

¹⁰ I. Lézine, *Psychopédagogie du premier âge*, Paris, PUF, 1964.

positif pour l'enfant. Lieu qui n'a pas à se substituer à la famille, qui ne se confond pas avec la famille, lieu éducatif et de vie à part entière, porteur d'une dynamique qui lui est propre. En même temps, ses analyses remettent en cause des principes organisationnels mêmes des crèches et des pratiques professionnelles. Elle met en évidence le fait que les règles de l'hygiène physique se révèlent être en contradiction avec celles de l'hygiène mentale. Le personnel est décrit comme peu attentif au développement psychomoteur, affectif et cognitif des enfants, et davantage préoccupé par la gestion des tâches matérielles. Ce sont le manque de stimulations, de contacts individuels, l'absence de liens avec le milieu environnant des crèches qui sont mis en cause, et non simplement l'absence de la mère. Lézine et Spionek dénonceront ainsi « la simplification dangereuse d'attribuer à la seule carence maternelle l'origine du médiocre développement psychosomatique des enfants élevés en institution »¹¹. Sont alors perçues les multiples réactions des mères et des familles par rapport à la crèche : agressivité, frustration, anxiété, culpabilité, confiance extrême, démission. La généralisation de l'expérience de réunions de parents est appréhendée comme favorisant la compréhension réciproque des deux parties.

La création de postes de psychologues dans les crèches se développe progressivement et permet la diffusion des travaux de recherche. Leur intervention trouve sa justification dans une forme de supervision des situations pédagogiques, notamment pour attirer l'attention sur « les enfants aux quotients de développement les plus bas »¹². L'ouvrage de Lézine (1964) définit le but et les principes de l'éducation des jeunes enfants dont la directrice de crèche, le médecin et la psychologue sont les piliers. La crèche est présentée comme un milieu rassurant, permettant la prévention des troubles dont peut être atteint l'enfant, à travers l'éducation du personnel et des mères. Il s'agit d'« atteindre à travers les conduites de ces enfants les principes éducatifs des familles, redressant et modifiant ainsi, s'il y a lieu, certaines des conceptions éducatives répandues dans les milieux environnant la crèche »¹³. Malgré cela, la crèche reste perçue comme un pis-aller, nécessité par le travail des mères, qui pose problème pour la santé mentale

¹¹ I. Lézine, H. Spionek, *Quelques problèmes du développement psychomoteur et d'éducation des enfants dans les crèches*, in « Enfance », 3 (1958), p. 245.

¹² O. Brunet, *Quelques aspects du développement psychologique des enfants dans les crèches*, in « Enfance », 20 (1967), p. 413.

¹³ Lézine, *Psychopédagogie du premier âge*, cit., p. 9.

de l'enfant¹⁴. Ces débats autour des effets nocifs ou bénéfiques des institutions collectives reflètent alors ceux qui se jouent au niveau international¹⁵.

L'influence du mouvement Pikler-Lockzy

À la faveur du redécoupage administratif de la région parisienne et de la création des départements de la petite couronne en 1964, les crèches passent de la tutelle de l'Assistance publique et des hôpitaux à celle des municipalités. La réorganisation de la PMI qui s'ensuit, ouvre la possibilité d'une autre expérimentation d'importance, avec le travail de Geneviève Appell (1924-) à la pouponnière de Sucy-en-Brie, dans le Val-de-Marne. Psychologue clinicienne, elle vient d'écrire avec le Docteur Myriam David¹⁶ (1917-2004) *Lóczy ou le maternage insolite* (1973). Après sa visite à « Lóczy », pouponnière d'enfants à Budapest, impulsée par la pédiatre austro-hongroise Emmi Pickler (1902-1984), elle souligne

[...] la beauté et l'harmonie corporelles des enfants, la qualité de leur activité ; l'équilibre tranquille de la plupart d'entre eux et le calme de leur vie de groupe nous ont émues. [...]. L'attitude [...] de tous les adultes, à l'égard des enfants, empreinte de chaleur, de connaissance fine de chacun, souvent accompagnée de gaieté et toujours pleine de patience était frappante¹⁷.

Pickler part du postulat que la relation maternelle à l'enfant ne peut être reproduite dans le cadre d'une pouponnière, mais que bien pensée et bien organisée elle peut être à même de permettre à l'enfant de se développer de façon optimale. En ce sens les facteurs de carence liés à la collectivité ne sont pas niés, mais analysés de façon à être supprimés. Un maternage réfléchi est instauré où la qualité de la relation enfant-adulte est au centre

¹⁴ F. Davidson, *Les crèches de Paris et de sa banlieue*, in « L'Hôpital et l'aide sociale à Paris », 28 (1964), pp. 499-510.

¹⁵ M. Rutter, *Parent-child separation : psychological effects on the childrens*, in « Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry », 12 (1971), pp. 233-260 ; J. Belsky, *The "effects" of infant day care reconsidered*, in « Early Childhood Research Quarterly », 3 (1988), pp. 235-257 ; A. Florin (ed.), *Modes d'accueil et développement du jeune enfant, Rapport terminal à la CNAF*, Labécd, Université de Nantes, 1999.

¹⁶ Psychiatre et psychanalyste, M. David et G. Appell ont œuvré à la Fondation Parent de Rosan à améliorer la situation de détresse des enfants placés. Elles ont contribué à l'ouvrage de J. Aubry (1955).

¹⁷ Propos de G. Appell, dans A. Charles Nicolas et P. Mazet, *Geneviève Appell. Entretien*, in « Synapse », 55 (juin 1989), pp. 18-30.

des préoccupations, assurant la fonction de « holding »¹⁸ décrite par le pédiatre et psychanalyste anglais Donald W. Winnicott¹⁹ (1896-1971). L'enfant est considéré comme un partenaire actif et non comme objet passif de soins. L'autonomie librement acquise – « motricité libre » et « activité autonome » de l'enfant – et non suscitée par les adultes, est une valeur privilégiée. Le postulat de la valeur des activités libres, motrices et manuelles, un des fondements de la pédagogie de l'Institut Pickler, remet en cause les pratiques de contention sur les jeunes enfants dans les institutions – hôpitaux et crèches notamment – encore courantes à l'époque²⁰. Par ailleurs, l'enfant a des rapports avec d'autres adultes à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur de l'institution, ce qui permet de lutter contre la pauvreté des relations sociales et le repli dans l'institution.

Cette expérience est déterminante pour l'évolution du travail des psychologues de PMI. De l'expérience originale de Lóczy, différents points vont être repris au sein des crèches : la stabilité des groupes et l'introduction des « référentes », la constitution de petits groupes d'enfants plutôt que des grands, l'observation et les échanges avec et entre les auxiliaires, indispensables pour les soutenir dans leur travail quotidien. L'arrivée de la pensée de « Lóczy » s'accompagne d'un dynamisme et d'une réflexion interprofessionnelle ; des réflexions communes entre psychologues, médecins, puéricultrices s'engagent, ainsi que des formations des personnels qui travaillent auprès des enfants. Cette approche essaime et, devant la demande croissante de formation, l'association Pikler-Lóczy est créée en 1984 et présidée par Appell. Elle permet de développer la réflexion et la formation sur les retombées de cette expérience, mais aussi les recherches et les rencontres entre scientifiques. L'importance de se mouvoir en liberté, dès la naissance, va être reconnue à l'enfant. Les séjours prolongés, voire attachés dans les berceaux vont progressivement faire partie du passé.

¹⁸ Le *holding* renvoie au portage, à la capacité de contenance, physique et psychique de la mère, ou de l'adulte suppléant, vis-à-vis de l'enfant.

¹⁹ Winnicott a notamment étudié les processus de maturation de l'enfant sous un angle dynamique, dépendant des interactions avec son entourage affectif et le milieu ambiant (1969).

²⁰ La circulaire n° 117 du 15/2/1966 relative aux mesures à prendre en vue d'assurer la sécurité des enfants placés dans les services hospitaliers et les établissements de PMI, rappelle que des accidents graves se sont produits, dus à l'utilisation de moyens de contention, et recommande l'abandon de telles pratiques conjointement à l'utilisation de lits à barreaux adaptés.

Naissance d'une pédagogie interactive

De façon quasi concomitante, à Paris, Mira Stambak (et son équipe du CRESAS²¹) développent progressivement leurs travaux et les bases d'une pédagogie interactive, au travers de recherches-actions-formations au sein des écoles maternelle et des crèches, qui va essayer également bien au-delà de la capitale²². L'angle d'approche est d'abord la compréhension et la lutte contre l'échec scolaire. Les travaux se fondent sur une psychologie constructiviste et interactionniste. Ils croisent aussi les expériences des pédagogies nouvelles et mettent en avant les modalités d'apprentissage des enfants : ceux-ci apprennent à condition d'une dynamique interactive, au travers d'échanges entre pairs et avec les adultes, et de l'action consciente et volontaire, afin de résoudre les problèmes qu'ils se posent. Le contexte d'apprentissage, le jeu et matériel mis à disposition, la place et la co-construction de la culture, sont au centre de la réflexion. Ces résultats questionnent fondamentalement le rôle de l'adulte et le sens de son intervention auprès de l'enfant. Il ne s'agit plus de socialisation descendante, mais de créer les conditions où l'enfant est acteur de ses apprentissages, eux-mêmes co-construits, ce dès la crèche. Dans cette approche, le professionnel est lui aussi actif, impliqué, embarqué dans des processus de recherche et de réflexion, les plus à même de faire évoluer ses pratiques.

L'ensemble de ces chercheurs et leurs équipes, marquent bien une rupture essentielle avec les recherches antérieures basées sur les troubles consécutifs aux carences maternelles. Proches des travaux de Wallon, Ajuariaguerra, et s'appuyant aussi sur les théories de Freud, Piaget, Vigotsky et Bruner, ils démontrent l'importance du milieu dans le développement de l'intelligence du jeune enfant, mais aussi dans son développement affectif et dans le processus de socialisation. Ainsi, les relations entre pairs sont mises en valeur et permettent de décentrer l'attention de la seule relation adulte-enfant (reproduction de celle mère-enfant). Ces travaux permettront de considérer les capacités de l'enfant à entrer dans la culture²³.

²¹ Le Centre de recherche de l'éducation spécialisée et de l'adaptation scolaire est constitué en 1969 et fonctionne jusqu'en 1981.

²² CRESAS, *Naissance d'une pédagogie interactive*, Paris, ESF / INRP, 1991 ; M. Stambak, *Tonus et psychomotricité dans la première enfance*, Neuchâtel, Delachaux et Niestlé, 1963, 1983 ; M. Bréauté, S. Rayna, *Jouer et connaître chez les tout-petits*, Paris, CRESAS/INRP, 1995 ; O. Baudelot, S. Rayna, *Les bébés et la culture*, Paris, INRP/L'Harmattan, 1999.

²³ Baudelot, Rayna, *Les bébés et la culture*, cit.

3. *L'évolution des professions et du curriculum des crèches*

C'est dans le contexte de ce qui précède que commencent des sessions de formation psychopédagogique du personnel des crèches suivies de sessions de perfectionnement. Depuis le XIX^e siècle, la maternité sert de qualification aux berceuses et aux gardiennes, puis à leurs descendantes professionnelles, les auxiliaires de puériculture, aides-soignantes... Depuis les années 1945, un personnel paramédical a fait son apparition : auxiliaire de puériculture et infirmière-puériculture, les directions étant fréquemment confiées à des médecins. Mais globalement, avant les années 1975, le personnel en poste dans les crèches n'a pratiquement aucune formation initiale, et ses compétences « naturelles » peuvent être mises en question :

c'était un personnel qui n'était pas éduqué, qui n'avait aucune formation et qui pensait qu'éduquer les enfants c'était les torcher [...] une femme qui était là m'avait raconté qu'elle travaillait là parce qu'elle avait bien mérité de se reposer après vingt ans de pluches à l'AP²⁴.

La crèche apparaît ici comme le lieu de préretraite des agents hospitaliers. Un des objectifs de l'équipe des psychologues est d'amener ces femmes qui travaillent auprès des enfants à prendre en considération les différents aspects du développement des enfants et de l'organisation du travail qui en découle (aménagement des salles, choix des jouets, relation à l'enfant, etc.). Il est demandé de ne plus appeler les enfants par leur nom de famille ou leur numéro de lit, d'éviter les séances de pot collectives [...] Le décret du 15/1/1974 laisse prudemment ouverte la définition des « soins nécessaires » à l'enfant et à son développement physique et mental. Le savoir spécialisé analyse et détermine les besoins de l'enfant et fonde les pratiques éducatives adéquates à partir de deux types de besoins : ceux d'ordre physiologique (sommeil, rythme, alimentation...) et ceux d'ordre psychologique (affectivité, cognitivité, sensorialité...). Ce sont les compétences des médecins et des psychologues qui fondent les pratiques.

À la faible qualité et qualification du personnel des crèches s'oppose la légitimité éducative des jardinières d'enfants qui œuvrent dans les jardins d'enfants, mais aussi dans les écoles maternelles aux côtés des institutrices. Elles sont appelées dans les crèches à partir des années 1960 et leur formation est revue et adaptée aux plus jeunes enfants. C'est aussi que

²⁴ Assistance Publique Hôpitaux de Paris. Entretien psychologue de P.M.I. Cf. C. Bouve, *Les crèches collectives du Val-de-Marne de 1950 à 1996 : politiques, usagers et représentations. Contribution à une sociologie de la petite enfance*, thèse de doctorat s/d d'Éric Plaisance, février 1999, Université Sorbonne Paris V.

la loi Debré ferme les postes de jardinières d'enfants au sein des écoles maternelles²⁵. En 1973 le diplôme d'État d'éducateurs de jeunes enfants est institué. Il remplace l'ancienne jardinière d'enfants²⁶ et ouvre la profession aux hommes. En quelque sorte, l'éducation fait son entrée dans les crèches.

Critiques radicales des crèches traditionnelles : apports de la psychanalyse...

Avec les évènements de Mai 1968, la vulgarisation des théories psychanalytiques renouvelle encore la pensée et la prise en charge des jeunes enfants au sein des crèches. « Lieu de séparation, la crèche est l'espace où s'illustre le scandale d'une liberté (celle de la femme) qui passe par le salariat, le scandale d'une institution séparée de son entourage urbain dont elle aurait dû être l'émanation, le scandale d'une institution qui de son propre aveu est régie par la loi de la nécessité »²⁷. La crèche est décrite comme un « milieu d'essence répressive que nous persistons pourtant à penser comme lieu privilégié et à privilégier pour y élever des enfants » (idem). Il faut entendre ces propos du psychiatre Jacques Hassoun (1936-) comme une critique de la tentation normalisatrice qu'exerce le travail des psychologues et des psychanalystes, quelle que soit leur école de pensée : « Quant au désir, on n'en voulait rien savoir, la science psychologique ne l'ayant jamais codifié dans les multiples grilles qu'elle met à la disposition de ses prêtres, de ses fidèles et de ses victimes »²⁸. Aux côtés de la psychologie expérimentale, la psychanalyse se trouve à son tour prise entre subversion et conformisme, à son tour récupérée et réduite en catégories conceptuelles et le paradoxe demeure flagrant de faire appel à la psychanalyse pour permettre l'émergence d'une parole. Car ce sont ces professionnels, les psychologues, qui – mandatés par le pouvoir administratif et politique – font la demande

²⁵ Loi n. 59-1557 du 31 décembre 1959 sur les rapports entre l'État et les établissements d'enseignement privés.

²⁶ Pour une histoire de cette profession, cf. : A. Gervais-Karpowicz, *Histoire et mémoire des jardinières d'enfants aux éducateurs de jeunes enfants : contribution à l'analyse du processus de professionnalisation des éducateurs de jeunes enfants*. Mémoire de DSTS non publié, Institut du Travail Social, Tours, 1991 ; et F. Serina-Karsky, *La formation des jardinières d'enfants, une institutionnalisation conflictuelle (1910-1931)*, in B. Garnier, P. Kahn (eds.), *Éduquer dans et hors l'école. Lieux et milieux de formation. XVII^e-XX^e siècle*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016.

²⁷ J. Hassoun, *Entre la mort et la famille : l'espace-crèche*, Paris, Maspero, 1973, p. 13. Ce livre est le témoignage et la dénonciation d'un système, d'un psychanalyste sur sa pratique au sein des crèches départementales de la Seine-Saint-Denis dans les années 1970.

²⁸ *Ivi*, p. 18.

auprès des crèches d'intervenir dans ces lieux. Dès lors il ne s'agit plus d'écoute du désir de l'enfant mais d'intervention en fonction de la demande des structures sociales existantes (famille, gestionnaire, personnel). Et Hassoun de dénoncer également l'enfermement et les multiples cloisonnements que produit la crèche. D'où aussi, selon lui, un « super-activisme » où ce qui remplace la nature de la vie familiale est l'apprentissage scolaire précoce, une façon de répondre aux critiques des crèches comme de médiocres garderies.

Si le savoir psychologique ou psychanalytique peut facilement se transformer en construction normative à caractère moral ou idéologique, parallèlement il a aussi permis de modifier la prégnance du pouvoir médical, centré sur le corps, pour laisser une part de plus en plus grande au psychisme de l'enfant. Les travaux d'Anna Freud (1895-1982), de Françoise Dolto (1908-1988), entre autres, laissent voir que le comportement des enfants, à travers leurs activités de jeu notamment, mais aussi à travers les symptômes dont ils peuvent être porteurs dans leur vie quotidienne, est la manifestation de leur vie psychique et que celle-ci existe bien et avant même la parole. L'enfant n'est plus considéré comme un tube digestif mais comme un sujet, une personne²⁹. Ces découvertes ouvrent la voie à des recherches qui prendront en compte les besoins de l'enfant, pour déboucher sur de nouvelles pratiques pédagogiques et éducatives.

De la psychanalyse au freudo-marxisme

Dans les années 1970, un groupe institutionnel émerge, le Centre d'études et de recherches sur le fonctionnement des institutions (CERFI). Dans la mouvance gauchiste de Mai 1968³⁰, ses recherches s'orientent vers une critique radicale de la gestion et des pratiques d'accueil des jeunes enfants. Les établissements sont dénoncés en tant qu'instances de normalisation, insensibles à la dimension désirante du sujet, personnel ou enfant. Les différents travaux des chercheurs appartenant au CERFI dénoncent le découpage institutionnel de la petite enfance : « Pouvant 'passer' d'un lieu ou d'un équipement à un autre, un même enfant n'en sera pas moins catégorisé, 'encodé' dans des systèmes qui, pour être souvent proches dans leurs

²⁹ F. Dolto, *La cause des enfants*, Paris, R. Laffont, 1985.

³⁰ Pour saisir ce qui a présidé à la constitution de ce groupe voir notamment CERFI, *Les gardes d'enfants de 0 à 3 ans comme surface d'inscription des relations entre la famille et le champ social*, Paris, Fontenay-sous-Bois, janv. 1975 et L. Mozère, *Le printemps des crèches*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1992, pp. 119-148.

interventions et leurs implantations, ne s'en ignorent pas moins »³¹. Cet état de fait aboutit, selon l'auteur, à confondre l'histoire individuelle de l'enfant avec son adaptation à la structure et, de là, à la négation de ses propres expériences en tant que Sujet. Les théories psychologiques renforcent ce système de codage, d'enfermement dans des catégories dès la naissance, de par la définition des stades qui définissent les besoins des enfants, à tel ou tel moment de leur développement. Comme le cloisonnement des équipements ne permet pas d'embrasser l'ensemble de ces stades et d'y répondre, les structures se trouvent marquées par le manque, manque de relations affectives pour la crèche, manque de socialisation pour la nourrice... Dans cette analyse en chaîne, ce manque produit une « forme d'incompétence des équipes dans leur pratique » (idem).

Cette critique des crèches existantes s'inspire aussi des travaux de Marcuse et de Foucault pour dénoncer la mutilation des capacités d'expression créatrices et libidinales de l'enfant, de manière à « l'adapter le plus tôt possible, aux valeurs et aux significations dominantes, aux types de comportements dominants »³². La liberté du sujet, associée à un renouveau politique, est ainsi au centre des préoccupations de ce mouvement de critique envers les équipements classiques d'accueil de jeunes enfants. Et la place des parents au sein des lieux d'accueil est très présente au sein de cette réflexion.

Au fur et à mesure que la crèche s'est ouverte, sous l'impulsion du courant psychanalytique, à des pratiques éducatives visant l'épanouissement de l'enfant – abandonnant ainsi des visées d'aide sociale – les couches moyennes ont plus largement investi les crèches et les couches aisées ont progressivement fait leur entrée dans ces structures, influant à leur tour sur ces pratiques. La définition progressive d'une nouvelle fonction de socialisation et d'épanouissement individuel des enfants au sein des crèches s'est accompagnée de l'arrivée de nouvelles classes sociales dans ces établissements, comme nous allons le montrer maintenant. Ceci n'est pas sans lien avec l'expérience des *crèches sauvages*, puis du mouvement des crèches parentales à partir des années 1981³³.

³¹ L. Mozère, *Quelques réflexions sur le thème des modèles de gestion sociale des services de l'enfance*, in « CERI, Enfants et société, vers une réforme de l'éducation préscolaire », Paris, OCDE, 1981, p. 135.

³² F. Guattari, *Les crèches et l'initiation*, in CERFI, *Les gardes d'enfants de 0 à 3 ans comme surface d'inscription des relations entre la famille et le champ social*, Paris, Cordes, 1975, pp. VI-111.

³³ Cf. M.-L. Cadart, *Des parents dans les crèches, utopie ou réalité ?*, Toulouse, Érès, 2006. Notons ici que l'évolution des crèches s'inscrit aussi dans un mouvement de diversification de l'offre d'accueil : expérience des *crèches familiales* en 1959 reconnues par l'arrêté ministériel du 22 octobre 1971 qui instaure l'existence de deux catégories de

4. *Évolution de la population des crèches et du rapport aux parents*

Entre les années 1960-80, la crèche est encore décrite comme un univers aseptisé et impersonnel. Le décret de 1974 stipule que les enfants doivent être bien portants³⁴, mais paradoxalement le personnel y est essentiellement médical et paramédical. Le contrôle de l'institution sur les mères perdure : la « circulaire Veil » du 16 décembre 1975 précise la surveillance que doit exercer la directrice d'établissement sur la propreté du linge porté par les enfants et la nécessité, le cas échéant, de s'en entretenir avec la mère, pour contribuer à son « éducation sanitaire ».

À la fin des années 1970, l'ouvrage d'Hélène Larrive³⁵, sociologue et usagère d'une crèche, témoigne de cet état de fait. Comparant la crèche à un « microcosme féodal », il dénonce le pouvoir médical abusif : interdiction aux parents d'entrer dans les locaux, enfants déshabillés et revêtus des habits de la crèche, vaccination intempestive sans consultation des parents, incursion de la crèche dans l'hygiène familiale, sentiment d'infantilisation par le savoir spécialiste, etc. À travers les récits des mères recueillis, apparaissent les thèmes de la culpabilité féminine face à l'idéologie maternaliste, la rigidité du fonctionnement (horaires stricts, contrôle régulier du travail de la mère à l'extérieur), ainsi que le sentiment de dépossession de son enfant et même de son enfermement (contre la liberté maternelle). Ces critiques sont d'autant plus vives qu'un profond bouleversement social marque les familles accueillies en crèche.

La transformation du public des crèches

Qui sont les parents qui fréquentent les crèches ? En 1948, une enquête d'André Girard³⁶ auprès de mères dont l'enfant est en crèche montre que les milieux sociaux enquêtés sont des ouvriers, employés et fonctionnaires, alors que les professions « supérieures » n'y apparaissent pas. En 1964, Françoise Davidson (1925-2018) médecin, inspectrice de santé, déclare que les crèches sont à disposition de tous les milieux sociaux et elle ajoute : « Elles ne sont pas des établissements charitables pour cas sociaux. En ef-

crèches : familiale et collective ; création des *halte-garderies* en 1962 ; des *centres de la petite enfance* en 1968 ; des *mini-crèches* en 1976.

³⁴ Ce décret reprend les termes de celui de 1945, mais substitue à la phrase « les enfants y reçoivent les soins hygiéniques qu'exige leur âge » celle de « les enfants y reçoivent les soins nécessaires à leur développement physique et mental ».

³⁵ H. Larrive, *Les crèches. Des enfants à la consigne ?*, Paris, Seuil, 1978.

³⁶ A. Girard, *Une enquête sur l'aide aux mères de famille. Extension des crèches. Travail à temps partiel*, in « Population », 3 (1948), pp. 539-543.

fet, plus de 85% des enfants appartiennent à des familles *normalement*³⁷ constituées »³⁸. Toutefois son enquête effectuée sur 173 crèches montre une représentation importante des professions modestes : 25,7% des mères dont les enfants fréquentent la crèche sont employées de bureau, 22,8% sont ouvrières, seules 0,2% exercent en profession libérale.

Deux enquêtes, effectuées dans le cadre de la P.M.I. de la Seine, datées de 1961 et de 1967³⁹, portant respectivement sur 7 500 et 800 enfants fréquentant des crèches collectives de la région parisienne, examinent la « répartition des professions maternelles ». Même s'il convient de considérer leurs résultats avec des précautions méthodologiques, ces enquêtes montrent que les CSP les moins élevées dans la hiérarchie sociale des professions sont en diminution contrairement aux professions intermédiaires. Les professions libérales connaissent aussi une forte augmentation même si leur représentation absolue reste modeste. Parallèlement, les enfants dits « cas sociaux » sont encore fréquemment admis⁴⁰.

Dans une enquête de la CNAF⁴¹ réalisée en 1980, les employés sont en tête des catégories surreprésentées, suivis des cadres moyens puis des cadres supérieurs, aux dépens des ouvriers et personnels de service. Mais un travail de M. Pinçon (1979) nuance ces résultats en prenant en compte le niveau d'équipement public qui serait en revanche favorable à une surreprésentation des ouvrières. Néanmoins, tous gestionnaires confondus, l'auteur confirme bien que les femmes cadres supérieures accèdent plus facilement aux crèches que les ouvrières : « cette discrimination s'explique pour l'essentiel par l'inégale répartition des crèches d'une part, des catégories sociales d'autre part entre les différentes couronnes »⁴². Aux inégalités d'accès, qui dépendent du lieu de résidence et des disparités de l'offre de crèches, s'ajoutent des différences sociales et culturelles de représentation du jeune enfant qui participent d'un inégal recours à la crèche collective.

³⁷ Souligné par nous, ce rapport moral et normatif à la famille.

³⁸ F. Davidson, *Les crèches de Paris et de sa banlieue*, in « L'Hôpital et l'aide sociale à Paris », 28 (1964), p. 500.

³⁹ Voir « Enfance », n. 5, vol. XX (1967).

⁴⁰ O. Baudelot, *La crèche et les parents : histoire d'une ouverture*, in « CRESAS, Ouvertures : l'école, la crèche, les familles », 3 (1984), p. 79, cite deux témoignages allant dans ce sens.

⁴¹ Les modes d'accueil des jeunes enfants en 1981, CNAF, Paris, 1982. C'est la première enquête nationale portant sur les CSP des parents usagers, réalisée dans toutes les crèches collectives de France recevant une prestation de service.

⁴² M. Pinçon, *Espace social et espace culturel. Analyse de la distribution socio-spatiale des équipements culturels et éducatifs en région parisienne*, Paris, CSU, rapport ronéoté, 2 volumes, 1979, vol. 1, chap. 1, *Les crèches*, pp. 83-145, vol. 2, pp. 65-91, p. 128.

En 1985, une nouvelle étude confirme que cette tendance s'accroît⁴³ ; c'est à son tour le cas d'une enquête INSEE en 1990⁴⁴. En 1993, les femmes cadres mettent encore plus souvent que les autres leurs enfants en crèche. Hatchuel y voit des attitudes socialement différenciées et relativement indépendantes des raisons financières. Les parents de niveau culturel élevé expriment, en choisissant la crèche, une préférence pour la socialisation précoce de leur enfant alors que les milieux populaires expriment une préférence pour une éducation familiale et traditionnelle.

Le retrait progressif des classes populaires

Mais comment comprendre cette fréquentation socialement différenciée des crèches ? Plus précisément comment comprendre ce retrait progressif des classes populaires des crèches ? Plusieurs facteurs se recoupent alors et peuvent éclairer cette attitude devant les modes d'accueil.

D'une part, il faut souligner l'importante augmentation des tarifs dans les années 1970 : même si ceux-ci restent fonction des ressources, elle a sans doute eu un effet sur la fréquentation socio-professionnelle, rendant les crèches inaccessibles tant sur le plan symbolique que financier, pour certaines catégories de parents. À la fin du XX^e, une rééquilibrage entre les différents milieux sociaux fréquentant les crèches collectives est en cours. Ainsi l'étude de la CNAF portant sur les crèches de l'année 1993⁴⁵, donne le contrepoint à l'article de Desplanques⁴⁶ : 60% des familles ont des revenus mensuels inférieurs à 15 000 F. dont 20% inférieurs à 9 000 F. Ces résultats sur les revenus des familles, pourraient signifier une diminution des cadres moyens et supérieurs au profit des professions intermédiaires et des

⁴³ Ainsi 16,2% des enfants accueillis en crèche ont une mère qui est cadre, 14,7% ont une mère qui exerce une profession intermédiaire, 13,5% ont une mère employée, 10,1% ont une mère artisan, commerçant ou chef d'entreprise, 5,5% ont une mère ouvrière (Desplanques, *Modes de garde et scolarisation des jeunes enfants*, in « Économie et Statistique », n. 176 (1985), p. 36). Les cadres moyens ne sont pas différenciés des cadres supérieurs.

⁴⁴ Cette étude montre que 19,5% des enfants des crèches ont une mère « cadre », 15,1% ont une mère « profession intermédiaire », 11,4% ont une mère « employée », 5,2% ont une mère « ouvrière ». *Les femmes. Contours et caractères*, Paris, INSEE, 1995.

⁴⁵ CNAF, Action Sociale, *Les crèches en 1993*, mai 1996.

⁴⁶ G. Desplanques, *Garder les petits : organisation collective ou solidarité familiale*, in « Données Sociales », INSEE (1993). Le développement de cet article confirme la division sociale dans l'utilisation des modes de garde, et s'appuie sur l'enquête famille de l'INSEE, qui date de 1990.

employés. C'est aussi les politiques familiales qui incitent les familles les plus aisées à recourir à la garde individuelle (garde à domicile ou assistante maternelle agréées). Ces résultats ne signifient pas pour autant le retour des classes ouvrières dans les crèches collectives mais indiquent néanmoins un infléchissement dans l'évolution de cette fréquentation.

D'autre part, l'évolution des structures d'accueil vers une définition psycho-pédagogique a produit en retour des effets et des influences sur l'éducation et la socialisation opérée par les familles. C'est ainsi qu'une partie des familles partage des références et des attentes proches de celles portées par l'institution concernant le développement global de leur enfant. Pour les milieux populaires, la distance entre ce qui est véhiculé par l'institution et ce qui est transmis par la famille est difficile à franchir. L'absence de connivence sociale et culturelle entre les familles populaires et les structures d'accueil peut ainsi être mise en avant⁴⁷. La spécificité des savoirs, qu'ils soient éducatifs, psychologiques, ou médicaux, dresse une barrière symbolique entre la crèche et les familles populaires qui ne se sentent pas « à la hauteur », ou ont peur d'être jugées.

Mais ce postulat d'une connivence culturelle entre familles aisées et institutions comme celui de la distance socioculturelle des familles populaires à la crèche peut se discuter. Cette opposition peut être induite par la position du chercheur lorsqu'il s'appuie sur la seule définition « dominante » de l'éducation du jeune enfant pour analyser les rapports sociaux au sein des institutions éducatives. Or, les discours parentaux révèlent bien une diversité de représentations et de pratiques éducatives tant au niveau familial qu'au sein même des crèches collectives⁴⁸. Les conflits, les affinités, les postures de connivence comme celles de distance concernent globalement l'ensemble des PCS et se produisent à partir des pratiques et des échanges sur des thèmes très divers : santé, alimentation, sommeil, propreté, respect du rythme de l'enfant, éveil, sanction, etc.

⁴⁷ Sur les différences culturelles concernant l'accès au et le choix du mode d'accueil, cf. A. Pitrou, *Les solidarités familiales dans le monde d'aujourd'hui*, Toulouse, Privat, 1978 ; O. Schwartz, *Le monde privé des ouvriers*, Paris, PUF, 1990 ; C. Bouve, *Choisir un mode d'accueil pour son enfant, des politiques et des acteurs*, in D. Fablet (ed.), *L'éducation des jeunes enfants. Pour de nouvelles modalités d'accueil éducatif*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2007, pp. 31-59 ; M. Cartier, A. Collet, E. Czerny, P. Gilbert, M.H. Lechien, S. Monchatre, *Pourquoi les parents préfèrent-ils la crèche ? Représentations hiérarchisées des modes de garde*, in « Revue française des affaires sociales », 2 (2017), pp. 247-264.

⁴⁸ C. Bouve, *Les crèches collectives : usagers et représentations sociales. Contribution à une sociologie de la petite enfance*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2001.

L'homogénéité des professionnelles de la petite enfance, de leur formation initiale, de leur parcours, est une construction qui demande à être interrogée et qui laisse apparaître une réelle hétérogénéité⁴⁹. Derrière les discours parentaux, se situe une question fondamentale, celle de la place des parents, des usagers, dans la définition et le fonctionnement des crèches. Les valeurs et les normes éducatives sont peu discutées, que ce soient au niveau des orientations pédagogiques ou encore des modalités éducatives de la prise en charge des enfants. La prise en compte du discours parental sur l'institution, la recherche de son expression, par les responsables et les professionnels, est peu présente du point de vue des parents. Elle montre la difficulté que ces partenaires obligés ont à dialoguer et à s'entendre sur les valeurs et les principes qui fondent l'acte éducatif⁵⁰.

De l'enfant au soutien à la parentalité

Pour les questionnaires et les professionnels d'institutions contribuant à l'accueil de jeunes enfants, la *Conférence de la famille*, en juin 1998, amène le développement d'une nouvelle mission au sein des crèches collectives : l'accompagnement parental, le soutien à la parentalité en dehors même de toute suspicion de défaillance ou d'incompétence. Dans le même temps, la création et la gestion de crèche sont ouvertes aux entreprises privées à but lucratif.

Mais comment la notion de soutien à la parentalité conforte-t-elle ou s'oppose-t-elle à cette autre rhétorique du discours professionnel et politique à savoir la responsabilité parentale et la participation parentale ? Celles-ci seront mises en avant par le décret d'août 2000 qui inscrit « la définition de la place des familles et de leur participation à la vie de l'établissement ou du service » au sein du dispositif d'accueil des jeunes enfants⁵¹.

Car le soutien à la parentalité n'engage pas nécessairement la notion de réciprocité dans la relation parents-professionnels et n'apparaît pas, a priori, conforter les textes ou circulaires allant dans le sens d'une participation des parents au fonctionnement des institutions. En d'autres termes, la notion de

⁴⁹ M. Vandebroek, *Du mythe de l'homogénéité à la super-diversité : un défi pour les professionnelles*, in A.-L. Ulmann, P. Garnier (eds.), *Travailler avec les jeunes enfants. Enquêtes sur les pratiques professionnelles d'accueil et d'éducation*, Bruxelles, Peter Lang, 2020, pp. 183-206.

⁵⁰ Bouve, *Les crèches collectives*, cit.

⁵¹ Décret n. 2000-762 du 1^{er} août 2000, réactualisé par le décret n. 2007-230 du 20 février 2007. C'est seulement à partir de ce décret que la circulaire de juin 1983 sur l'obligation faite au gestionnaire d'instaurer des Conseils de crèche avec la participation des parents commencera à être mise en application.

soutien à la parentalité porte le risque d'une subordination des parents aux professionnels. C'est la question du pouvoir qui est ici posée. Et celle-ci passe à travers les savoirs – la définition des « bons » savoirs sur le jeune enfant, qu'ils soient d'ordre psychopédagogiques ou médicaux, la définition de la « bonne » parentalité. À qui appartient la légitimité de produire ces définitions ?

La notion de soutien à la parentalité qui s'est imposée dans le champ professionnel de la petite enfance depuis la conférence de la famille du 12 juin 1998, en est aussi un indice. Elle porte les anciennes visées de normalisation des familles. À l'issue de cette conférence, les réseaux d'écoute, d'appui et d'accompagnement des parents (REAAP) sont mis en place dès 1999. La circulaire du 9 mars 1999 relative aux REAAP est ambiguë : elle fait explicitement référence à la circulaire interministérielle du 6 novembre 1998 qui met en œuvre des décisions adoptées par le Conseil de sécurité intérieur du 8 juin 1998 « relative à la délinquance des mineurs ». Les pouvoirs publics, en adressant les REAAP à tous les parents, ont contribué à construire une représentation de la parentalité comme risque social. Même si, bien évidemment, le postulat de base contenu dans la circulaire du 9 mars est juste : « tous les parents sont susceptibles de rencontrer des difficultés ». Le parent, indispensable protecteur de l'enfant est devenu un facteur de risque supposé. A travers ces orientations politiques ressurgissent, autrement formulées, ces velléités de prévention et de dépistage de la délinquance dès la petite enfance contre lesquelles s'est constitué le *Collectif Pas de 0 de conduite* (2006). Ces orientations ouvriront la voie aux projets libéraux d'« investissement social dans la petite enfance » du XXI^e, inspirés des programmes d'éducation compensatoire menés aux USA dans les années 1960.

5. *Le renouveau du curriculum des crèches*

Progressivement, la lutte contre la mortalité infantile d'après-guerre est gagnée et la légitimité exclusive de la relation mère-enfant s'estompe : les travaux montrant la capacité d'attachement multiple et la capacité d'interaction précoce du jeune enfant se vulgarisent. Avec la critique radicale des crèches amenée par les événements de Mai 1968, le curriculum des crèches s'oriente alors vers l'expression des compétences enfantines s'appuyant, entre autres, sur la pédagogie interactive (CRESAS, 1991) et la psychopédagogie, même si, en fonction des lieux, les préoccupations hygiéniques et les activités occupationnelles perdurent. La convergence de la Déclaration des Droits de l'enfant par l'Organisation des nations unies (ONU, 1959), puis de la Convention internationale des droits de l'enfant (1989), des tra-

vaux émanant de différentes disciplines des sciences sociales et humaines, de la vulgarisation médiatique de ces savoirs, marque l'avènement de l'enfant sujet où l'apport de Dolto et de la psychanalyse sont significatifs de cette nouvelle place donnée à l'enfant : sa parole peut être entendue et prise en compte. C'est aussi, progressivement, la représentation d'un enfant compétent qui émerge de cet ensemble.

En 1982, le rapport à la secrétaire d'État à la Famille fait une proposition qui fera son chemin et remodelera les représentations : l'emploi du terme « accueil »⁵² au lieu de celui de « garde ». « Garder les oies », « élever les cochons » : la « garde » sous-tend une absence de qualité, le terme faisant implicitement référence au « gardiennage », alors que l'« accueil » sous-tend une éducation de qualité, une action réflexive envers l'enfant. L'accueil s'imposera dans la rhétorique tant administrative, professionnelle que scientifique. Ce rapport propose aussi de favoriser le développement culturel dès le plus jeune âge en développant cette dimension dans la formation des professionnels et au sein des projets éducatifs des institutions. Le sens de ce développement est précisé : il s'agit bien de sensibilisation et non d'apprentissage. Un protocole est signé en ce sens en 1989⁵³. Les expériences d'ouverture à la culture se multiplient et se montrent en exemple d'expériences novatrices et de lieux pédagogiquement performants. C'est ainsi que les enfants accèdent aux bibliothèques, mais aussi à des activités de marionnettes, de musique, de fréquentation des musées, de créations artistiques les plus diverses⁵⁴.

Ces pratiques s'appuient sur les recherches concernant les compétences reconnues des jeunes enfants, mais aussi des nourrissons, tant sur le plan de la communication, que sur celui du développement de l'intelligence comme « mode de relation à l'environnement »⁵⁵, ou encore du développement psychomoteur. De même que les connaissances nouvelles sur les compétences précoces du jeune enfant ont conduit à développer les apprentissages pré-

⁵² N. Bouyala, B. Roussille, *L'enfant dans la vie. Une politique pour la petite enfance, Rapport au Secrétaire d'État à la Famille*, Paris, La Documentation Française, 1982, p. 23.

⁵³ Ce protocole d'accord « Pour l'éveil artistique et culturel des jeunes enfants » est renouvelé le 20 mars 2017, entre le ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, et le ministère des Familles, de l'Enfance et des Droits des femmes. Il vise à promouvoir l'accès à la littérature, aux arts, à la culture, dès la naissance et tout au long de la vie.

⁵⁴ C. El Hayek (ed.), *Petite enfance, éveil aux savoirs*. Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Formation Professionnelle, Paris, La Documentation Française, 1997; Bréauté, Rayna, *Jouer et connaître chez les tout-petits*, cit.

⁵⁵ R. Lécuyer, *Bébés astronomes, bébés psychologues*, Liège, Mardaga, 1990.

coces, elles conduisent à développer des pratiques culturelles précoces⁵⁶. Les enjeux autour de l'éveil culturel, permis par la massification et la banalisation de la culture psychologique au sein de la société, ont créé un marché de la culture pour tout-petits. Une pression inspirée par les spécialistes et relayée par les médias invite à mettre toutes les chances du côté de l'enfant dès les premiers mois, en développant l'expression de soi, la créativité, l'autonomie, même si la précocité n'est pas nécessairement un facteur de réussite.

La définition sociale de la prime enfance analysée au début des années 1970 par les sociologues Chamboredon et Prévôt⁵⁷ pour l'école maternelle, peut être transposée à la crèche quelques 50 ans plus tard, à mesure que l'école maternelle a été investie par des apprentissages scolaires⁵⁸. La limite, que ces auteurs fixaient à l'entrée à l'école maternelle, entre l'âge propre aux soins physiologiques et affectifs, et celui propre aux « soins » culturels, recule pour ainsi dire à l'âge de l'entrée en crèche, voire à la naissance. La définition dominante de l'enfance sur laquelle se base l'école maternelle, influence indirectement la crèche, de façon plus implicite puisqu'il n'y existe pas de programme officiel. Tout comme l'école maternelle, la crèche véhicule des modes de pensée, d'agir, de faire qui se retrouvent dans le quotidien, dans le fonctionnement même de l'institution quand il s'y agit

moins d'apprendre à lire ou de s'y préparer, que d'acquérir certaines opérations logiques ou de former la sensibilité, de 'gagner quelques points de Q. I.', et cet apprentissage s'exerce à travers les activités les plus diverses et les plus éloignées en apparence de la fonction d'apprentissage⁵⁹.

On peut s'interroger cependant sur la permanence de la pertinence sociologique de la classification entre instrumentalité et expressivité, développée dans les années 1970, à partir des travaux de Basil Bernstein⁶⁰. Le contexte social, davantage marqué par la montée du chômage, la mondialisation des échanges économiques, bref par la notion d'incertitude, fait que le comportement des familles culturellement privilégiées est aussi marqué par l'instrumentalité des pratiques éducatives basées sur l'expressivité. L'ex-

⁵⁶ P. Garnier, *Ce dont les enfants sont capables*, Paris, Métailié, 1995.

⁵⁷ J.C. Chamboredon, J. Prévôt, *Définition sociale de la prime enfance et fonction différentielle de l'école maternelle*, in « Revue française de sociologie », juill.-sept. (1973), pp. 295-335.

⁵⁸ P. Garnier, *Sociologie de l'école maternelle*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2016.

⁵⁹ Chamboredon, Prévôt, *Définition sociale de la prime enfance*, cit., p. 334.

⁶⁰ B. Bernstein, *Langage et classes sociale*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1975.

pression de soi, la créativité, l'autonomie peuvent ainsi être des valeurs instrumentalisées dans l'objectif d'une meilleure insertion et d'une meilleure réussite scolaire. En ce sens, et dès lors que l'instruction est maintenant devenue obligatoire dès l'âge de 3 ans⁶¹, les analyses autour de la performance enfantine au sein de l'école maternelle⁶² peuvent être mises au regard de l'analyse de l'évolution du curriculum des crèches et des pratiques pédagogiques au sein des crèches collectives. De nombreuses crèches et institutions d'accueil de la petite enfance affiche en effet la « préparation à l'école maternelle » dans leur projet pédagogique.

Conclusion

À partir des années 1950, à la suite des travaux sur l'hospitalisme, les crèches sont à nouveau décriées, et suspectées de produire des conséquences irrémédiables sur le développement psychique des enfants. Les vingt années qui vont suivre sont une période riche en recherches sur les effets des modes de garde. Le statut de la femme et de sa place au sein de la société est à mettre en relation avec ces controverses. En effet le courant spitzien promeut le modèle de la relation mère-enfant comme le seul recevable tant aux yeux de la société que pour l'éducation harmonieuse de l'enfant. Cela en même temps et parce qu'il enferme les mères dans la culpabilité de ne pas élever leur enfant. Néanmoins la pénétration de la psychologie et de la psychanalyse au sein des crèches à partir des années 1950 permet progressivement la décentration des pratiques ayant rapport au corps de l'enfant, pour considérer l'enfant dans sa globalité. Le courant psychopédagogique remet en cause le postulat psychanalytique central de la primauté de la re-

⁶¹ La loi du 28 juillet 2019, a rendu l'instruction obligatoire dès l'âge de 3 ans ; cf. P. Garnier, *L'obligation d'instruction dès l'âge de trois ans : un tournant dans l'histoire de l'école maternelle en France*, in « Revue Internationale de Communication et de Socialisation », 7/1-2 (2020), pp. 1-16. À terme, les jardins d'enfants sont voués à disparaître, soit, ironie de l'histoire, en étant absorbés par l'éducation nationale en se transformant en école maternelle, soit en refusant cette absorption et en se transformant en crèche, cf. C. Puydebois *et al.*, *Mission d'expertise sur l'avenir des jardins d'enfants*, Rapport au ministre de l'éducation nationale, de la jeunesse et des sports e au ministre des solidarités et de la santé, juillet 2020.

⁶² P. Garnier, *Sociologie de l'école maternelle*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2016 ; P. Garnier, G. Brougère, *Des tout-petits « peu performants » en maternelle. Ambition et misère d'une scolarisation précoce*, in « Revue française des affaires sociales », 2 (2017), pp. 83-102 ; G. Leroy, *L'école maternelle de la performance enfantine*, Bruxelles, Peter Lang, 2020.

lation mère-enfant pour lui opposer le rôle fondamental du groupe de pairs dans la constitution de la personnalité de l'enfant. Ces renouvellements conceptuels amèneront une nouvelle fonction sociale des crèches, celle de socialisation et d'épanouissement individuel de l'enfant. Malgré l'introduction de la psychologie et l'expérience psychanalytique au sein des crèches, le rôle de celles-ci ne paraît pas dans un premier temps et dans leur finalité, évoluer. Il reste au croisement du social et du sanitaire – mais il faut garder à l'esprit que la psychologie participe de la santé mentale – alors que son rôle éducatif aurait pu davantage émerger à travers les réflexions et les remaniements que le travail des spécialistes de l'inconscient engageait.

Cette dimension éducative ne va transparaître que progressivement, et modestement, à partir des années 1970-75. La crèche engage alors une réflexion sur ses pratiques, se professionnalise, et évolue vers plus de souplesse en même temps que de nouvelles classes sociales pénètrent dans cette institution. Cette professionnalisation et cette redéfinition de la crèche entraînera une éviction, sur un mode diffus car il ne s'agit pas d'exclusion explicite – un retrait pourrait-on dire – des classes défavorisées et ouvrières. L'épanouissement individuel de l'enfant devient le centre de préoccupation des crèches : face à cette représentation « officielle », les pratiques effectives des crèches peuvent être moins uniformes, et certaines restent ancrées sur une fonction sanitaire. Nous pouvons nous poser alors la question d'une nouvelle fonction des crèches, qui oscille entre fonction d'éveil culturel (consommation et/ou pratique culturelles), et fonction de lien social (quand elle prend en compte l'identité culturelle de l'enfant). Le projet d'éveil culturel se veut alors vecteur de lien entre la famille et l'établissement d'accueil. Cette fonction qui se dessine pose d'autres défis aux crèches collectives : concevoir l'altérité liée à toute pratique culturelle et artistique, éviter l'écueil des apprentissages précoces, interroger le rôle des professionnels de la petite enfance et ne pas accentuer le morcellement de l'enfant entre divers corps de spécialistes. Ajoutons que le XXI^e augure d'une dynamique résolument éducative en instaurant un *Cadre national pour l'accueil du jeune enfant*⁶³ tant en direction de l'accueil collectif qu'individuel. Le décret de juin 2010, maintient la définition des modes d'accueil donnée par le décret d'août 2000, même s'il en assouplit les normes d'encadrement :

Les établissements et les services d'accueil non permanent d'enfants veillent à la santé, à la sécurité, au bien-être et au développement des enfants qui leur sont confiés. Dans le respect de l'autorité parentale, ils contribuent à leur édu-

⁶³ Ministère des Familles, de l'Enfance et du droit des femmes, 2016. Ce référentiel n'a pour le moment aucun caractère coercitif : «https://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/accueil_jeune_enfant_cadre_national.pdf» (consultation 05/03/2021).

cation. Ils concourent à l'intégration des enfants présentant un handicap ou atteints d'une maladie chronique qu'ils accueillent. Ils apportent leur aide aux parents pour favoriser la conciliation de leur vie professionnelle et de leur vie familiale⁶⁴.

Ce décret permettait la création de nouvelles institutions d'accueil, notamment jardins d'éveil et maisons d'assistantes maternelles, poursuivant la diversification des modes d'accueil, avec des personnels moins qualifiés que dans les crèches. Une réforme est amenée par l'Ordonnance de 2021⁶⁵ et un ensemble de décrets. Des acteurs de l'accueil du jeune enfant se sont montrés inquiets quant à l'assouplissement des normes d'encadrement, en lien avec le Plan d'action pour la petite enfance de 2016, qui a entrepris, entre autres, la rénovation des diplômes et carrières des professionnels de la petite enfance (Collectif CEP-Enfance, 2021). L'enjeu étant que les professionnels les plus qualifiés soient davantage sur des postes de coordination et de direction qu'auprès des jeunes enfants. Il serait incompréhensible que ces réformes entraînent une déqualification de l'accueil des jeunes enfants dans ces institutions.

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⁶⁴ Décret n. 2010-613 du 7 juin 2010 relatif aux établissements et services d'accueil des enfants de moins de six ans.

⁶⁵ Ordonnance n. 2021-611 du 19 mai 2021 relative aux services aux familles.

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Les crèches en Belgique, un service collectif dans la tourmente du genre (19^e-début 21^e siècle)

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Abstract – Day Nurseries in Belgium: a Collective Service in the Storm of Gender (19th- Early 21st Century): For a long time, child experts considered that the place of small children was in the family and that day nurseries could never constitute an alternative to maternal education. Founded in the nineteenth century to assist and supervise working mothers, they were meant to “care” for children whose mothers were “forced” to work. After the increase in women’s employment rates during the “Trente Glorieuses”, in the 1970s, day nurseries became “childcare services” to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life. It was only at the end of the twentieth century, in a period of profound renegotiation of maternal roles, supported by several international treaties, that day nurseries became services shaped to contribute to the wellbeing of the child, thanks to a quality environment and appropriate pedagogical methods. Gender is therefore at the heart of this contribution, which shows how conceptions of maternal roles, closely intertwined with conceptions of child welfare, were for more than a century an obstacle to the development of innovative pedagogical methods, before becoming, in the second half of the twentieth century, an argument widely used to obtain the quantitative development and improvement of the quality of childcare services.

Introduction

En ce début de 21^e siècle, le développement des structures d’accueil pour les enfants âgés de moins de 3 ans reste problématique en Belgique. Alors que les enfants plus âgés bénéficient d’un réseau étendu d’écoles maternelles gratuites, d’enseignant·e·s formé·e·s à la pédagogie et de méthodes innovantes et renouvelées, les structures destinées aux plus petits se caractérisent toujours par un sous-financement, un grave manque de places, la non-gratuité, l’hétérogénéité des services et des priorités pédagogiques

moins affirmées, une situation qui semble pourtant meilleure que dans d'autres pays européens¹.

Cette césure trouve ses racines au 19^e siècle, quand les premières crèches sont créées dans une perspective essentiellement philanthropique pour assurer la garde des enfants des ouvrières². Alors que les services de garde pour les enfants plus grands finissent par s'intégrer dans le cursus scolaire, le développement des crèches est freiné dès la fin du 19^e siècle par l'anxiété sanitaire de la mortalité infantile, mais aussi par la certitude de plus en plus ancrée que le petit enfant a besoin d'être exclusivement élevé par sa mère. Dans ce contexte, les crèches deviennent un « mal nécessaire » à ne réserver qu'aux enfants « en danger », ceux dont les mères précarisées ou vulnérables ne peuvent s'occuper. Ces conceptions se maintiennent durant plusieurs décennies. Mais à partir des années 1960, les revendications se multiplient pour réclamer des réformes. Les crèches connaissent alors un développement sans précédent et s'ouvrent très lentement aux nouvelles théories de la pédagogie infantile, sans pour autant jamais atteindre la couverture, l'accessibilité ni la qualité pédagogique des structures destinées aux enfants plus grands.

Même si de larges pans de l'histoire des crèches en Belgique restent encore à découvrir, leur évolution a fait l'objet de différentes recherches. Outre quelques mémoires de maîtrise, les thèses de doctorat des sociologues Perrine Humblet³ et Michel Vandebroeck⁴ ont fait une belle place à l'histoire. Elles ont notamment mis en exergue l'évolution des acteurs institutionnels, des théories scientifiques, des impératifs sanitaires et des valeurs

¹ OCDE, *Note par pays de l'OCDE. La politique d'éducation et de garde des jeunes enfants en Communauté française de Belgique*, 2020 : « <https://www.oecd.org/fr/belgique/2479382.pdf> » ; OECD, *Country Note. Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in the Flemish Community of Belgium*, 2020 : « <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/1915151.pdf> » (consultation 24/03/2022).

² P.C. Humblet, *La crèche : naissance d'une institution (1845)*, in G. Masuy-Stroobant, P.C. Humblet (eds.), *Mères et nourrissons : de la bienfaisance à la protection médico-sociale (1830-1945)*, Bruxelles, Labor, 2004, pp. 67-88 ; M. Vandebroeck, *In verzekerde bewaring: honderd vijftig jaar kinderen, ouders en kinderopvang*, Amsterdam, SWP, 2004 ; M. Vandebroeck, *From crèches to childcare: constructions of motherhood and inclusion/exclusion in the history of Belgian infant care*, in « Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood », 4/2 (2003), pp. 137-148.

³ P. Humblet, *Analyse et évaluation de la mise en œuvre du programme de l'Œuvre Nationale de l'Enfance pour les milieux d'accueil de jeunes enfants. Une contribution à l'évaluation de programmes socio-sanitaires permanents*, Thèse de doctorat inédite, Université Libre de Bruxelles, École de Santé publique, 1998.

⁴ Vandebroeck, *In verzekerde bewaring*, cit.

familiales qui ont façonné depuis le 19^e siècle leurs priorités, leur organisation et leurs publics cibles. Perrine Humblet, qui participera activement dans les années 1990 au Réseau d'experts des modes de garde d'enfants de la Commission européenne, a approfondi l'influence des représentations sociales du travail rémunéré des mères sur la configuration et le taux de couverture des milieux d'accueil. De son côté, Michel Vandebroek a analysé les relations complexes et la méfiance mutuelle qui se sont tissées pendant plus d'un siècle entre les crèches et les parents et la lente intégration, dans la deuxième moitié du 20^e siècle, de nouvelles méthodes pédagogiques, de politiques plus inclusives à l'égard des parents, et de nouveaux critères de qualité, des recherches qu'il poursuit toujours activement au sein du Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy de l'Universiteit Gent⁵.

Cette présente contribution revient sur la forte incidence des conceptions des rôles parentaux sur l'organisation des crèches en Belgique et sur la très tardive prise en compte d'impératifs pédagogiques qui en a résulté. Car pendant longtemps, les experts de l'enfance ont considéré que la place des petits enfants était dans la famille et que les crèches ne pouvaient en aucun cas constituer une alternative à la pédagogie maternelle. Conçues à l'origine pour accompagner et superviser les mères ouvrières, elles devaient « garder » les enfants dont les mères étaient « obligées » de travailler, avant de devenir à partir des années 1970 des « modes de garde » destinés à faciliter la conciliation du travail et de la vie familiale. Et beaucoup ont continué – et continuent encore aujourd'hui – à leur préférer les gardiennes à domicile censées garantir au jeune enfant un cadre familial jugé plus adapté à ses besoins psycho-affectifs⁶.

Ce n'est finalement qu'à la fin du 20^e siècle, dans une période de profonde renégociation des rôles maternels⁷, confortée d'ailleurs par plusieurs traités internationaux, que les crèches finissent par apparaître comme des services capables de contribuer eux aussi, grâce à un environnement de qualité et une pédagogie adaptée, au bien-être de l'enfant.

⁵ La liste des nombreuses publications de Michel Vandebroek figure sur le site web de l'Universiteit Gent : « <https://www.ugent.be/cessmir/en/about-cessmir/promoters/michel-vandebroek> » (consultation 24/3/2022).

⁶ M. Kremer, *The politics of ideals of care: Danish and Flemish Child Care Policy Compared*, in « Social Politics. International Studies in Gender, State and Society », June 2006, pp. 261-285; V. Bauters, M. Vandebroek, *The professionalisation of family day care in Flanders, France and Germany*, in « European Early Childhood Education Research Journal », 25/3 (2017), pp. 386-397.

⁷ C. Marissal, *Mères et pères, le défi de l'égalité (Belgique, 19^e-21^e siècle)*, Bruxelles, IEFH, 2018.

Le genre sera donc au cœur de cette contribution qui montrera comment les conceptions des rôles maternels, étroitement imbriquées aux conceptions du bien-être de l'enfant, ont représenté pendant plus d'un siècle un frein au développement des crèches et de méthodes pédagogiques innovantes, avant de devenir, au cours de la deuxième moitié du 20^e siècle, un argument largement mobilisé pour obtenir le développement quantitatif et l'amélioration de la qualité des services d'accueil de la petite enfance.

1. *Des débuts prometteurs mais vite contestés*

Dès le 19^e siècle en Belgique, la nécessaire conciliation de la vie professionnelle et familiale se pose déjà avec acuité. Alors que les familles aisées ont les moyens de recourir à un personnel domestique, les familles ouvrières confient leurs jeunes enfants à leur entourage familial (enfants plus âgés ou parents), à des voisins, voire à des gardiennes rémunérées de médiocre réputation qui agissent en dehors de tout contrôle⁸. C'est dans ce contexte que dès le début du 19^e siècle, des philanthropes et des patrons fondent de premiers organismes (crèches, salles d'asile, garderies) qui organisent, contre une faible rétribution, l'accueil des jeunes enfants dans les localités industrielles qui emploient une abondante main d'œuvre féminine. Dès le milieu du siècle, ces initiatives commencent à codifier leurs pratiques en s'inspirant du modèle de la crèche de Firmin Marbeau fondée à Paris en 1844. Supervisées par des médecins et des dames patronnesses, elles fonctionnent avec un personnel rémunéré (souvent des servantes) qui prennent soin des enfants. Comme toute initiative philanthropique, elles combinent des objectifs caritatifs, économiques et éducatifs : protéger l'enfant pauvre, faciliter l'accès des femmes à l'emploi rémunéré et surveiller les comportements et la moralité des mères de la classe ouvrière.

Au-delà de leur dimension philanthropique, les crèches apparaissent aussi, dans les milieux libéraux qui promeuvent l'instruction des enfants du peuple, comme le premier maillon d'un parcours éducatif qui se poursuivra à l'école gardienne, puis à l'école primaire. Cette conception originale mène à la création de crèches-écoles gardiennes dans quelques localités urbaines dirigées par des libéraux, un courant qui se confirme en 1879, quand un gouvernement libéral adopte une loi sur l'enseignement qui recommande explicitement la création de crèches et d'écoles gardiennes, surtout dans les localités industrielles, et leur financement à charge du budget de l'Instruc-

⁸ É. Gubin, V. Piette, *Femmes et mères au travail, 1830-1914* et Humblet, *La crèche : naissance d'une institution (1845)*, in *Mères et nourrissons*, cit., p. 56 sv., pp. 67-89.

tion publique⁹. Mais cette conception est très éphémère car la loi qui entend aussi encourager le développement d'écoles primaires officielles, provoque la colère des catholiques et la chute du gouvernement qui avait osé la laïcisation de l'enseignement. Quand les catholiques reviennent au pouvoir en 1884, ils remplacent la loi libérale par des dispositions favorables aux écoles catholiques. Quant aux crèches, elles apparaissent désormais comme des organismes de bienfaisance sans connexion avec la scolarité.

Ce revirement n'est pas étonnant car à la fin du 19^e siècle, les crèches subissent les effets des réponses qui sont données aux questions sociales et sanitaires. Alors que de graves révoltes sociales secouent la Belgique, plusieurs remèdes sont proposés pour pacifier les relations sociales et améliorer les conditions de vie de la classe ouvrière, comme la régulation des relations de travail et l'adoption de premières législations sociales. Mais le modèle familial idéalisé de l'homme « gagne-pain » et de la mère ménagère au foyer, qui séduit toutes les formations politiques, s'impose aussi comme une condition essentielle au bien-être ouvrier¹⁰. Les solutions proposées aux urgences sanitaires s'inscrivent dans la même logique, certainement pour ce qui concerne la lutte contre la mortalité infantile. À la fin du 19^e siècle, des médecins, des hygiénistes et des philanthropes s'engagent dans un long combat pour lutter contre les taux effroyables de mortalité infantile. Et comme ils sont convaincus que les décès infantiles incombent à l'ignorance maternelle, à l'alimentation défectueuse des bébés et au travail rémunéré des mères dans les établissements industriels, ils préconisent des campagnes massives d'éducation des femmes à leurs rôles maternels, la généralisation de l'allaitement au sein et des mesures pour stimuler les mères ouvrières à rester au foyer¹¹.

2. *Priorité à l'hygiène*

Ces évolutions rejaillissent sur la réputation, le développement et l'organisation des crèches qui visaient jusqu'alors à favoriser le travail rémunéré des mères frappées de précarité. À la fin du 19^e siècle, les modes de garde extra-familiaux (crèches et gardiennes à domicile) apparaissent de

⁹ Humblet, *La crèche : naissance d'une institution (1845)*, cit., pp. 80-81.

¹⁰ É. Gubin, 'Home, sweet home'. *Le modèle de la femme au foyer en Belgique et au Canada*, in « Revue belge d'Histoire contemporaine », 22/3-4 (1991), pp. 521-568.

¹¹ C. Marissal, *Protéger le jeune enfant : enjeux sociaux, politiques et sexuels (Belgique, 1890-1940)*, Bruxelles, Université de Bruxelles, 2014 ; G. Masuy-Stroobant, *Les déterminants de la mortalité infantile : la Belgique d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, Louvain-la-Neuve, CIACO, 1983.

plus en plus souvent comme un danger pour l'enfant. Le seul mérite que les hygiénistes et les protecteurs de l'enfance leur reconnaissent encore, c'est de faire barrage à la mise en nourrice et aux placements incontrôlés dont font encore largement usage les parents. C'est pourquoi au début du 20^e siècle, le Conseil supérieur d'hygiène publique, qui conseille le gouvernement en matière de santé publique, recommande la multiplication de « crèches, bien aérées et bien surveillées, où la mère conduira son enfant au lieu de l'abandonner à une garde mercenaire »¹², une recommandation qui sera reprise dans un projet de loi sanitaire déposé en 1911, mais qui ne sera jamais voté¹³.

Toutefois, les acteurs qui en vantent encore les mérites mettent un bémol à leurs propos : ils conçoivent seulement les crèches comme un « mal nécessaire » pour les mères « obligées » de travailler, en attendant les jours meilleurs où elles pourront rester au foyer pour s'occuper elles-mêmes de leurs bébés. Alors que les écoles gardiennes se multiplient, expérimentent des pédagogies nouvelles (Frœbel) et rencontrent un beau succès auprès des parents¹⁴, les crèches entrent dans une longue période de stagnation. Stagnation numérique tout d'abord : à la veille de la Première Guerre mondiale, une cinquantaine d'institutions réunissent environ 3.500 enfants, des chiffres qui n'évolueront plus jusqu'aux années 1960. Stagnation pédagogique ensuite, car les crèches se réorientent au début du 20^e siècle autour de priorités sanitaires qui visent à endiguer la propagation des maladies. La conciliation du travail et de la vie familiale des mères ouvrières passe désormais au second plan. Quant à l'objectif éducatif, il n'est quasi plus énoncé.

Cette situation perdure durant l'entre-deux-guerres, une période qui se caractérise par des politiques natalistes et familialistes qui s'avèrent particulièrement hostiles au travail rémunéré des mères à l'extérieur du foyer¹⁵. Au nom de la lutte contre la mortalité infantile, les spécialistes de l'enfance renforcent la pression pour éviter toute séparation même passagère de la mère et de l'enfant. Quand une organisation étatique, l'Œuvre nationale de l'enfance (ONE) est fondée en 1919 pour coordonner, financer et superviser

¹² *Avis du Conseil supérieur d'hygiène publique, adopté en séance du 2 octobre 1902*, in « Bulletin du Service de Santé et de l'Hygiène publique », octobre 1902, p. 238.

¹³ P. Berryer, *Projet de loi sanitaire. Exposé des motifs*, in « Chambre. Documents parlementaires, séance du 5 décembre 1911 », Bruxelles, 1912, p. 402.

¹⁴ M. Depaape, F. Simon, *Les écoles gardiennes en Belgique. Histoire et historiographie*, in J.-N. Luc (ed.), n. thématique *L'École maternelle en Europe. XIX^e-XX^e siècles*, « Histoire de l'éducation », 82 (1999), pp. 73-99.

¹⁵ É. Gubin, *Les femmes d'une guerre à l'autre : réalités et représentations, 1918-1940*, in « Cahiers d'histoire du temps présent », 4 (1998), pp. 249-281 ; Marissal, *La protection du jeune enfant*, cit., pp. 158-165.

la protection sanitaire du jeune enfant, les crèches ne figurent pas dans ses attributions et les prises de position de son secrétaire général, Henri Velge, résument bien toute la défiance qui les frappe. Si ce catholique conservateur reconnaît leur utilité pour contrer les modes de garde clandestins, il précise aussi que « la place de l'enfant est au foyer familial et non à la crèche ; les soins, quelque dévoués qu'ils soient, donnés par le personnel des crèches, ne peuvent remplacer l'affection dont la mère entoure son enfant dès le berceau. Il faut, de plus, que la mère se rende compte de son devoir naturel, qui est de venir en aide aux enfants auxquels elle a donné le jour ; elle doit comprendre qu'elle ne peut se décharger de ce soin sur les institutions créées à cet effet, que dans le cas d'une impérieuse nécessité »¹⁶.

Si l'ONE décide finalement de les intégrer à ses missions, de les réglementer, les financer et les superviser, c'est surtout pour offrir une alternative aux parents qui continuent à recourir à des modes de garde incontrôlés. Mais durant tout l'entre-deux-guerres, elle ne cesse de répéter vouloir « éviter de généraliser des œuvres qui pourraient favoriser la séparation de la mère et de l'enfant »¹⁷, et sa réglementation réserve explicitement leur usage aux enfants dont « la mère se trouve dans l'impossibilité de leur donner tous les soins indispensables »¹⁸, et qui est contrainte, « par les nécessités de la vie, de se séparer de son enfant »¹⁹ (une enquête préalable à l'admission devant vérifier ce caractère inéluctable) et à l'enfant qui « ne peut être élevé dans de bonnes conditions dans sa famille même »²⁰. Dans ce contexte défavorable, les crèches s'ouvrent uniquement aux enfants des familles les plus vulnérables, avec pour effet la stigmatisation sur le long terme des parents « obligés » d'y recourir, une méfiance mutuelle et une absence de dialogue entre les crèches et les parents²¹.

Au niveau organisationnel, les priorités sanitaires se renforcent et façonnent des normes d'hygiène de plus en plus contraignantes. En 1938, une nouvelle réglementation impose un personnel qualifié (infirmières, puéricultrices ou éleveuses) et un cadre médicalisé pour minimiser les risques de contagion. Alors que des méthodes pédagogiques nouvelles s'implantent dans les écoles gardiennes (Montessori, Freinet, Decroly,...) et que l'ONE les expérimente dans ses institutions médico-pédagogiques et les com-

¹⁶ H. Velge, *La protection de l'enfance en Belgique : son passé, son avenir*, Bruxelles, 1919, p. 100.

¹⁷ ONE, *Loi du 5 septembre 1919*, Bruxelles, ONE, 1926, p. 17.

¹⁸ ONE, *Règlement*, Bruxelles, 1927, p. 47.

¹⁹ *Crèches. Enquêtes domiciliaires*, in « Revue de l'ONE », 6/2 (1924), p. 75.

²⁰ Carhif. Archives ONE. *Procès-verbal du Bureau du Conseil supérieur des œuvres de l'enfance*, 31/5/1937.

²¹ Vandenbroeck, *In verzekerde bewaring*, cit., p. 86.

mentent abondamment dans sa revue, l'épanouissement psycho-affectif des plus petits n'intéresse pas encore. Les formations de « puéricultrice » et d'« éleveuse » restent rudimentaires et surtout axées sur l'hygiène. Pour les spécialistes de l'enfance, les jeunes enfants doivent idéalement être élevés par leur mère et les crèches ne doivent en aucun cas faire concurrence à la pédagogie maternelle.

3. *La position ambiguë des organisations féminines*

Si les experts de l'enfance abhorrent les crèches, ceux et celles qui réclament une amélioration des conditions de vie de la classe ouvrière, continuent à vanter leurs mérites. À la fin du 19^e siècle, elles apparaissent dans les revendications des premières associations féminines et féministes, comme un service collectif à développer pour assurer la protection des enfants ouvriers. Pour l'inspectrice du travail Elise Van de Vyvere, qui milite en faveur de la protection de l'enfance mais qui réclame aussi des mesures en faveur des travailleuses, il s'agit d'une institution à laquelle toutes les ouvrières devraient légitimement avoir accès. Sans ambiguïté, elle déclare en 1910 que « la crèche, qui était hier l'institution de bienfaisance, d'assistance, de philanthropie, est appelée à être, en même temps, de nos jours, l'œuvre sociale démocratique par excellence [...] mon intention est de faire ressortir combien ces institutions sont directement utiles au peuple, combien leur extension, leur multiplication seraient désirables pour l'amélioration du sort des classes ouvrières »²². Elle regrette d'ailleurs que leur caractère philanthropique dissuade les parents d'y placer leur enfant, contrairement aux écoles gardiennes qui remportent un beau succès. Mais comme la plupart des militantes féministes idéalisent elles aussi le modèle de la mère au foyer, elles ne les conçoivent que pour les ouvrières « obligées » de travailler. Leur argumentation s'écarte finalement assez peu des discours des médecins et des hygiénistes.

Ces conceptions évoluent peu jusqu'aux années 1960. Tout au plus peut-on souligner que les organisations ouvrières féminines socialistes, qui connaissent un essor remarquable durant l'entre-deux-guerres, réclament avec insistance la création de crèches et de services de garde extra-scolaires pour les enfants des milieux ouvriers. Celles qui disposent de relais politiques efficaces parviennent d'ailleurs à faire intégrer cette revendication dans les programmes des partis politiques pour les élections municipales²³. Ce qui n'empêchera pas des voix discordantes de se faire régulièrement

²² Cité dans Vandebroek, *In verzeerde bewaring*, cit., pp. 45-46.

²³ Marissal, *Protéger le jeune enfant*, cit., p. 324 sv.

entendre, particulièrement parmi les organisations féminines chrétiennes qui ne cesseront de critiquer l'emploi rémunéré des mères à l'extérieur du foyer, et donc aussi les crèches supposées les y encourager²⁴.

Les organisations féminines et féministes ne débattent pas non plus de pédagogie. Ce qui les motive, c'est la création d'équipements collectifs pour faire « garder » les enfants des ouvrières dans de bonnes conditions d'hygiène, même si la surmédicalisation suscite parfois quelque sarcasme. En 1936, la socialiste Esther Chalmers, qui commente un article paru dans la *Revue de puériculture* sur l'aménagement des crèches et pouponnières, nous en offre un témoignage isolé mais éloquent : « On se croirait transporté dans un autre monde, un monde tellement stérilisé, tellement aseptique que l'on ne se retrouve plus. Dans ces pouponnières toutes de verre, d'émail, de métal anti-ci et anti-ça, les bébés seront maniés, non pas avec des pinces, certes, mais avec des gants de caoutchouc. [...] Oh ! Je sais que tout cela est admirable, et je m'incline devant les hautes compétences en puériculture. Mais il y a de tels contrastes, des extrêmes tellement frappants quand il s'agit d'élever les enfants, qu'on a l'impression de chavirer d'un irréel dans un autre »²⁵.

4. *Les ruptures des Trente Glorieuses*

Au lendemain de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, les progrès de la médecine et de l'hygiène, l'instauration des assurances sociales obligatoires pour les travailleurs salariés et l'amélioration des conditions de vie mènent à une forte diminution de la mortalité infantile. Mais la valorisation de la mère au foyer ne perd pas vigueur pour autant. Aux priorités sanitaires succèdent de nouvelles théories sur la psychologie de l'enfant, une discipline en plein essor depuis l'entre-deux-guerres. La théorie de l'hospitalisme du psychanalyste américain René Spitz et la théorie de l'attachement du psychiatre et psychanalyste anglais John Bowlby, qui mettent en exergue les carences affectives dont souffrent les enfants privés de soins maternels, jouent un rôle majeur dans cette évolution. Dans sa publication au succès immédiat *Maternal care and mental health* parue en 1951 sous les auspices de l'Organisation mondiale de la santé, Bowlby affirme que l'enfant a besoin pour sa santé mentale, certainement durant les trois premières années de sa vie, d'une relation affective exclusive avec sa mère. L'absence maternelle,

²⁴ C. Jacques, *Les féminismes et le changement social en Belgique 1918-1968. Programmes, stratégies et réseaux*, Thèse de doctorat en Histoire, ULB, 2007, vol. 2, p. 360 sv.

²⁵ E. Chalmers, *Triptyque*, « La Famille prévoyante », 6 (1936), pp. 6-7.

même momentanée, pour cause d'activité professionnelle par exemple, serait susceptible de provoquer de graves séquelles chez l'enfant²⁶.

Ces nouvelles certitudes, qui s'affinent et se déploient certainement jusqu'à la fin du 20^e siècle, ont un double effet. Elles apportent de nouveaux arguments pour limiter le travail des mères à l'extérieur du foyer et freiner le développement des services de garde extra-familiaux. Mais en pointant la détresse des enfants placés en institution, elles stimulent aussi de nombreuses recherches sur la manière de satisfaire les besoins psycho-affectifs des enfants, y compris dans les crèches. Parallèlement, les travaux des psychologues Henri Wallon et Irène Lézine, qui s'inspirent d'expériences menées dans des pays communistes, proposent des pédagogies innovantes à mettre en œuvre avec les jeunes enfants²⁷.

Cette évolution contrastée rejaillit sur les conceptions des crèches en Belgique. Les puissantes organisations familiales se saisissent des théories de Spitz et Bowlby et les répercutent auprès des familles et des professionnels de l'enfance. L'ONE continue aussi, certainement jusqu'aux années 1960, à se méfier de toute séparation précoce de la mère et du nourrisson. Mais ces organisations s'imprègnent aussi des nouvelles connaissances sur le développement psychomoteur et cognitif du jeune enfant et elles adaptent en conséquence les consignes éducatives données aux familles. Les crèches ne bénéficient cependant pas encore de ces avancées. Les théories de Wallon et Lézine sont à peine évoquées. Vandenbroeck pose l'hypothèse que la Guerre froide aurait jeté la suspicion sur des innovations teintées de communisme²⁸.

Au-delà des théories sur le bien-être de l'enfant, une autre évolution majeure modifie le regard porté sur les crèches. La conjoncture économique favorable des Trente Glorieuses stimule le retour des femmes sur le marché du travail. Le modèle de la mère au foyer, qui reste très valorisé, entre désormais en concurrence avec le besoin de main d'œuvre féminine et la volonté de plus en plus affirmée des femmes d'avoir un emploi rémunéré, quels que soient leur milieu social et leur situation familiale. Plusieurs conventions internationales confortent cette évolution en promouvant l'égalité des sexes et en condamnant explicitement les discriminations envers les femmes, y compris dans l'emploi : Charte des Nations unies (1945), Déclaration universelle des droits humains (1948), Convention de la Conférence internationale du travail (1951) et Traité de Rome (1957), ce dernier imposant en

²⁶ S. Garcia, *Mères sous influence : de la cause des femmes à la cause des enfants*, Paris, La Découverte, 2011.

²⁷ Humblet, *Analyse et évaluation*, cit., p. 178 sv.; Vandenbroeck, *In verzekerde bewaring*, cit., p. 98 sv.

²⁸ Vandenbroeck, *In verzekerde bewaring*, cit., p. 108.

outre l'égalité salariale entre les hommes et les femmes (art. 119) aux pays adhérant à la nouvelle Communauté économique européenne. Le modèle de la mère au foyer se fissure de plus en plus au profit d'autres modèles familiaux, plus flexibles et moins exclusifs²⁹.

5. *Le nouvel intérêt pour la pédagogie*

L'évolution du profil des travailleuses, qui sont de plus en plus diplômées et qui investissent des secteurs professionnels de plus en plus diversifiés et mieux rémunérés, se répercute sur le profil des familles à la recherche d'un lieu de garde pour les enfants. Alors que les crèches s'adressaient initialement aux femmes de la classe ouvrière, elles s'ouvrent désormais aux familles plus aisées. Or, ces parents plus instruits s'abreuvent des manuels éducatifs qui regorgent des nouvelles théories sur le développement psycho-affectif de l'enfant, et ils se préoccupent de la qualité des services auxquels ils confient leur enfant. Selon Vandebroek³⁰, le rapprochement socio-culturel qui s'opère durant cette période entre les milieux d'accueil et leurs bénéficiaires sera un moteur d'innovation déterminant. En l'absence de crèches en nombre suffisant, les parents des milieux aisés sont par ailleurs de plus en plus nombreux à confier leurs enfants à des sections « pré-gardiennes » qui s'accrochent aux écoles et qui reçoivent les enfants âgés de dix-huit mois jusqu'à leur entrée à l'école gardienne. Ces nouvelles structures, qui se développent à partir des années 1950 dans un environnement scolaire avec un personnel enseignant, se dotent de jouets éducatifs, d'instruments de musique, d'un jardin... Même si elles provoquent à l'origine la méfiance de l'ONE, qui affirmera en 1967 que leur rôle n'est pas « d'apprendre des rondes ou des chants, mais bien de remplacer la mère quelques heures par jour »³¹, elles suscitent aussi l'intérêt des pédagogues explorant les méthodes à mettre en œuvre pour les tout-petits.

La démocratisation de l'enseignement, qui met en exergue les problèmes d'apprentissage des enfants issus des familles précarisées, représente un autre moteur de changement³². Des expériences innovantes menées à l'étranger, notamment aux États-Unis auprès d'enfants afro-américains, pointent l'importance de la fréquentation des milieux d'accueil préscolaires pour niveler les effets des inégalités sociales entre les enfants et améliorer les taux de réussite à l'école primaire. Au début des années 1970, des cher-

²⁹ Marissal, *Mères et pères*, cit., p. 119 sv.

³⁰ Vandebroek, *In verzekerde bewaring*, cit., p. 117.

³¹ Cité par Vandebroek, *In verzekerde bewaring*, cit., p. 120.

³² *Ivi*, p. 103 sv.; pp. 149-152.

cheurs des départements de psychologie et de pédagogie des universités de Mons, Liège et Gand, se saisissent de ces théories et initient des projets pilotes dans quelques crèches. Épris des théories de Wallon et de Lézine, ils ne conçoivent plus les crèches comme un simple lieu de « garde », mais comme un maillon du système éducatif, complémentaire à la famille et bénéfique à l'enfant. Ces projets suscitent aussi l'intérêt des autorités publiques. En 1975, le ministère de la Culture de la Communauté française confie au Laboratoire de pédagogie expérimentale de l'Université de Liège un projet sur l'accueil des enfants qu'il mènera en partenariat avec les deux grandes organisations féminines socialiste et chrétienne³³. Dans la brochure *Construire une crèche, guide pratique* qui en résulte, les chercheuses dressent un bilan amer des pratiques de terrain : selon elles, les crèches se limitent encore trop souvent à des pratiques dictées par des considérations hygiéniques et par la volonté de « répliquer la famille », à l'origine de la sous-qualification du personnel (car il ne faut pas être formé pour « aimer les enfants » et « faire comme maman ») et de la culpabilisation des parents. Il s'ensuit des recommandations pour la professionnalisation du personnel et de vrais projets pédagogiques visant « l'épanouissement physique, moral et affectif de l'enfant »³⁴.

Les groupements néo-féministes qui se forment au début des années 1970 pour dénoncer la société patriarcale et réclamer l'égalité hommes/femmes dans tous les domaines, y compris dans l'emploi, vont plus loin³⁵. Les crèches n'échappent pas à leur regard acéré et elles dénoncent avec véhémence les conséquences des conceptions traditionnelles des rôles maternels sur leur organisation, leurs conditions d'admission (obligation pour les deux parents d'avoir un emploi rémunéré), leur non-gratuité, le manque criant de places et l'obsession de la figure maternelle qui freine toute innovation sur le plan pédagogique. Des obstacles qui disparaissent une fois que l'enfant, âgé de trois ans, peut accéder aux écoles gardiennes gratuites, en nombre suffisant et innovantes sur le plan pédagogique. Des synergies se forment d'ailleurs entre les féministes et les milieux académiques précités. En témoigne l'article publié en 1975 par deux chercheuses de l'Université de Liège dans le numéro *Les femmes et les enfants d'abord* de la revue féministe des *Cahiers du GRIF*. Elles y dénoncent les priorités données à « l'hygiène, la diététique, les soins physiques à donner aux enfants » au

³³ M.-L. Carels *et al.*, *Construire une crèche : guide pratique*, Liège, Femmes Prévoyantes Socialistes, [1977], pp. 1, 4, 7.

³⁴ M.-L. Carels, G. Manni, A.-M. Mengels, E. Paulet, *La crèche un lieu éducatif pour les petits. Une enquête auprès des parents. Des pistes de réflexion*, Liège, Service de Pédagogie expérimentale de l'Université de Liège, 1985.

³⁵ Vandenbroeck, *In verzekerde bewaring*, cit., p. 140.

détriment de la pédagogie, et présentent, à titre exemplatif, les méthodes expérimentées par les docteurs Emmi Pikler et Judit Falk à l'Institut Lóczy à Budapest. Pour elles, « C'est l'image de la femme qui détermine en partie les objectifs, le fonctionnement, le style des institutions d'accueil des enfants. [...] la collectivité d'enfants est perçue comme une contrainte ; il semble que rarement on exploite la chance d'avoir avec soi, 5, 10 enfants du même âge pour qui on peut élaborer un projet commun. [...] Réclamons des crèches mais aussi inventons d'autres choses [...]. Le souci 'éducatif' commence à apparaître dans les crèches ; on y parle de développement psychomoteur, d'acquisition du langage, de reconnaissance des couleurs... Mais la réglementation est toujours là, vieillie et inadaptée, et la rénovation que l'on prépare, dit-on, tarde à se manifester. [...] C'est clair, il faut changer l'éducation des petits »³⁶.

Tous ces changements convergent pour modifier le regard porté sur les crèches. La notion de « mal nécessaire » s'estompe au profit d'une vision positive : un mode de garde légitime pour faciliter l'insertion des femmes sur le marché du travail et un lieu d'épanouissement pour les enfants. Aux revendications quantitatives (des places en nombre suffisant) s'ajoutent à présent des attentes en matière de pédagogie. Mais ces prises de position, qui sont significatives de l'évolution des conceptions des rôles féminins et du bien-être de l'enfant, ne doivent pas trop faire illusion. Car les conceptions anciennes des crèches restent très influentes.

6. *La lente adaptation des milieux d'accueil*

Durant la deuxième moitié du 20^e siècle, l'adaptation des milieux d'accueil à l'évolution de la société paraît inéluctable. Durant les années 1960, les organisations féminines et les syndicats se mobilisent pour réclamer des services en nombre suffisant pour répondre aux besoins pressants des parents. Après de longs et houleux débats au Parlement, le gouvernement s'accorde finalement sur un refinancement et l'augmentation du nombre de places d'accueil, une mission qu'il confie à l'ONE³⁷. Un débat s'engage alors sur la forme des modes de garde à privilégier³⁸. Des organisations (souvent chrétiennes) privilégient les gardiennes à domicile, un mode de

³⁶ M.-L. Carels, G. Manni, *De l'enfant désiré à la crèche de nos désirs*, « Les Cahiers du GRIF », 9/10 (1975), pp. 28-39.

³⁷ A. Dubois, P. Humblet, F. Deven, *L'accueil des enfants de moins de trois ans*, n. thématique du « Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP », 1463/1464 (1994), p. 38 sv.

³⁸ Humblet, *Analyse et évaluation*, cit., p. 204 sv.; Kremer, *The politics of ideals of care*, cit., p. 276 sv.; Vandenbroeck, *In verzekerde bewaring*, cit., p. 168 sv.

garde supposé offrir aux jeunes enfants une mère « de substitution » dans un cadre familial. Ce système a aussi l'avantage d'être moins coûteux, plus flexible et de s'organiser aisément dans les régions rurales. Les femmes socialistes s'y opposent : elles dénoncent un mode d'accueil certes moins coûteux pour les pouvoirs publics, mais qui repose sur des travailleuses non formées et précarisées. Les autorités publiques refusent en effet de considérer cette activité comme une profession³⁹. C'est pourquoi elle ne donne droit à aucune protection sociale, une situation qui perdurera jusqu'en 2003⁴⁰. Les socialistes leur préfèrent les services collectifs (crèches, pré-gardiennats ou maisons d'enfants) qui emploient un personnel mieux formé et mieux rémunéré.

Ces deux formes d'accueil recevront finalement l'aval de l'ONE. Entre 1970 et 1983 (date à laquelle la politique de la petite enfance est fédéralisée selon les pôles linguistiques)⁴¹, les subsides aux crèches et pré-gardiennats explosent et le nombre de places, y compris auprès des gardiennes à domicile contrôlées par l'ONE, augmente régulièrement (environ 10% par an)⁴². Par conséquent, la proportion d'enfants âgés de moins de 3 ans placés dans un milieu de garde subsidié, passe de 4 à 12%⁴³. Si l'évolution est sensible, elle ne doit pas faire trop illusion car sous leurs différentes formes, les services d'accueil restent en nombre tout à fait insuffisant pour répondre aux réels besoins des parents.

L'augmentation quantitative se double de réflexions sur l'encadrement pédagogique. Dès 1970, l'ONE met en place des commissions d'étude qui réunissent une soixantaine d'experts (médecins, psychologues et représentants d'initiatives locales) chargés de proposer des réformes pour assurer « les conditions d'un développement harmonieux de l'enfant élevé en crèche (encadrement, jeux, stimulations...) »⁴⁴. Déposé en 1973, leur rapport propose une série de mesures prometteuses qui ne seront cependant jamais mises en œuvre en raison de conflits entre l'ONE et ses ministres de

³⁹ Carhif. Archives ONE. N. 553. *Circulaire aux directions des milieux d'accueil*, 24/8/1976.

⁴⁰ Sur l'histoire des gardiennes à domicile et la précarité de leur condition : Bauters, Vandenbroeck, *The professionalisation of family day care*, cit.

⁴¹ En 1983, conformément au processus de fédéralisation de l'État belge, l'ONE est séparée en deux nouvelles institutions compétentes respectivement pour les crèches francophones (Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance-ONE) et néerlandophones (Kind en Gezin).

⁴² Humblet, *Analyse et évaluation*, cit., pp. 231-232.

⁴³ P.C. Humblet, *Crèches et gardes d'enfants*, in É. Gubin et al. (eds.), *Encyclopédie d'histoire des femmes. Belgique, 19^e-20^e siècle*, Bruxelles, Racine, 2018, p. 106.

⁴⁴ Carhif. Archives ONE. N. 63. *PV Bureau de l'ONE*, 2/6/1970.

tutelle, de limitations budgétaires, mais aussi de controverses toujours agissantes sur le bien-fondé de la séparation mère-enfant⁴⁵. Jusqu'à la fin des années 1980, les crèches qui s'intéressent à la pédagogie restent finalement peu nombreuses. Toujours centrées sur des priorités sanitaires, elles restent encore trop souvent des espaces clos où les parents confient, à travers un guichet, leur enfant dénudé à un personnel fêru d'hygiène et de puériculture⁴⁶.

Ce sont des traités internationaux qui, à la fin du 20^e siècle, imposent finalement le changement. En 1989, la Convention internationale des droits de l'enfant (ONU) précise que les travailleurs doivent bénéficier de services de garde pour leurs enfants. Au niveau européen, les recommandations adoptées dans le cadre des Programmes d'action pour l'égalité des chances des hommes et des femmes jouent un rôle très influent. À la Recommandation du Conseil des ministres européens (1992), qui invite les États membres à prendre des mesures pour un accès des parents « à des services de garde d'enfants de bonne qualité »⁴⁷, s'ajoutent une série de recommandations du Réseau des modes de garde d'enfants fondé en 1986 auprès de l'Unité de l'égalité des chances de la Commission européenne. Composé d'experts, ce réseau vise l'amélioration de la qualité des milieux d'accueil au bénéfice de « tous les enfants et toutes les familles – quel que soit l'endroit où vivent les familles, que les parents travaillent ou pas, quels que soient les revenus familiaux, que les enfants aient des problèmes de santé, des handicaps ou pas »⁴⁸. Constatant sur le terrain la grande hétérogénéité des pratiques et l'insuffisance de projets pédagogiques explicites, il propose une série de réformes pour améliorer le financement, la couverture et l'accessibilité, l'encadrement, la formation et le statut du personnel, et les relations avec les parents⁴⁹. En 1996, ce Réseau fait un bilan mitigé pour la Belgique, pointant notamment la diversité des pratiques et la pénurie de places. Au niveau pédagogique, il salue les efforts réalisés en Communauté

⁴⁵ Humblet, *Analyse et évaluation*, cit., p. 198 sv.

⁴⁶ M.-L. Carels, G. Manni, *Vers la qualité des milieux d'accueil des jeunes enfants en Belgique francophone. Éclairage historique et enjeux actuels*, in « Analyse de l'IHOES », 209 (2020), p. 3.

⁴⁷ *Rapport de la Commission sur la mise en œuvre de la Recommandation du Conseil du 31 mars 1992 concernant la garde des enfants (92/241/CEE)*, CEE, 1998, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Réseau des modes de garde d'enfants et d'autres mesures destinées à concilier les responsabilités professionnelles et familiales, *Le réseau de la CE des modes de garde d'enfants, 1986-1996 : une décennie de réalisations*, 1996, p. 7.

⁴⁹ Réseau des modes de garde d'enfants et d'autres mesures destinées à concilier les responsabilités professionnelles et familiales, *Cibler la qualité dans les services d'accueil pour jeunes enfants : propositions pour un programme d'action de 10 ans, 1996*.

flamande, mais il constate qu'en Communauté française, « en général, la question de la qualité ne soulève pas encore de débats [...]. Il faut aborder ce problème de toute urgence »⁵⁰.

Ces recommandations internationales mènent aux réformes. Du côté francophone⁵¹, elles prennent forme avec la publication d'une *Charte de la petite enfance* (1991), d'un arrêté ministériel précisant que l'« accès à un milieu de qualité est un droit pour tous » (1993), d'une étude prévoyant la désignation de conseillers pédagogiques auprès de l'ONE (1996) et d'un Code de qualité (1999) fixant les objectifs psychopédagogiques que tous les milieux d'accueil devront désormais viser. Trois ans plus tard, ces objectifs sont explicités dans la brochure référentielle *Accueillir les plus petits. Oser la qualité* (2002)⁵² rédigée par un groupe de travail composé d'expertes de l'ONE, de pédagogues et de spécialistes de la santé mentale. Sur un ton provocateur, cet écrit, qui peut être considéré comme un manifeste, se présente comme un « défi »⁵³ et pointe le long chemin encore à parcourir pour s'affranchir des pratiques du passé. Les auteurs font référence aux travaux d'Irène Lézine, du docteur Emmi Pickler et du Centre de recherche de l'éducation spécialisée et de l'adaptation scolaire en France (fondé par Mira Stambak en 1969) dont une représentante signe d'ailleurs l'introduction. Ils puisent aussi dans les nombreuses études publiées depuis les années 1980 sur la qualité éducative des milieux d'accueil. Les pays nordiques sont cités en exemple, pour avoir investi dans des politiques familiales égalitaires et des services nombreux, efficaces et gérés par un personnel formé dans les universités.

Deux modèles sont mis en opposition : l'ancien (toujours influent), qui s'était construit en fonction de conceptions négatives du travail des femmes, et le nouveau (celui qu'ils entendent promouvoir). Soit, selon leurs propres mots, « 'Le dépôt d'enfants-valises à une consigne entretenue par un personnel (féminin) rémunéré (mal) par l'État qui se charge de la formation

⁵⁰ Commission européenne. Égalité des chances entre les femmes et les hommes, *Une étude des services pour les jeunes enfants dans l'Union Européenne, 1990-1995, Réseau des modes de garde d'enfants de la Commission européenne et d'autres mesures destinées à concilier les responsabilités professionnelles et familiales*, janvier 1996, pp. 27-32 ; 30 (citation).

⁵¹ Carels, Manni, *Vers la qualité des milieux d'accueil des jeunes enfants en Belgique francophone*, cit., pp. 16-17.

⁵² ONE, *Accueillir les tout-petits : oser la qualité. Une référentiel psycho-pédagogique pour des milieux d'accueil de qualité*, ONE, Fonds Houtman, 2002 : « https://www.one.be/fileadmin/user_upload/siteone/PRO/Brochures/referentiel-accueillir-les-tout-petits-osser-la-qualite-ONE.pdf » (consultation 06/06/2021).

⁵³ *Ivi*, p. 149.

(minimale) du personnel de surveillance, de l'entretien du bâtiment et du remplacement des serrures' ou 'l'accueil humanisé d'êtres humains en devenir par des personnes conscientes d'assumer un métier à haute responsabilité qui engage à la fois leur savoir, leur savoir-faire, leur savoir-être' »⁵⁴. Ils témoignent aussi de la persistance, au début du 21^e siècle, des polémiques sur la légitimité de placer des petits enfants dans des structures extrafamiliales : « Il ne s'agit pas de bénir les milieux d'accueil ou de les diaboliser. Il ne s'agit pas [...] de regretter la mère au foyer comme d'autres regrettent le temps des colonies. Il s'agit simplement de reconnaître leur existence comme une réalité d'aujourd'hui, de les adapter aux besoins fondamentaux des enfants »⁵⁵. Des recommandations suivent pour stimuler la sociabilité des enfants et nourrir leur curiosité, leur imagination et leur créativité, mais aussi pour améliorer la formation, les conditions de travail et les salaires d'un personnel majoritairement féminin et souvent précarisé. Les parents ne sont pas oubliés, qui sont présentés comme des partenaires à part entière du processus éducatif. Le vocabulaire est aussi revu : les « modes de garde » du passé cèdent la place aux « milieux accueil » qui sont « des lieux de vie et d'éducation » et les « puéricultrices » deviennent des « accueillantes ».

7. *Le poids du passé*

Ce référentiel résume à lui seul le poids du passé et l'extrême lenteur de l'évolution des pratiques dans un contexte économique, social et familial complètement renouvelé. Après les innovations des années 1970, il faudra encore attendre une trentaine d'années pour que les autorités publiques francophones recommandent des innovations pédagogiques dans tous les milieux d'accueil. Contrairement à d'autres pays, les services destinés aux enfants de moins de trois ans s'ouvrent donc tardivement à la pédagogie infantine. Les priorités sanitaires, étroitement associées à des conceptions de genre, retardent les innovations.

Mais malgré les avancées, l'héritage du passé reste visible. Si les crèches gagnent en qualité et en réputation, elles restent aujourd'hui en nombre insuffisant pour répondre aux besoins des familles. Alors que l'école est gratuite et qu'en 2020, l'obligation scolaire a été abaissée à 5 ans, les services d'accueil des enfants de moins de 3 ans restent payants et réservés, sauf exception, aux parents actifs sur le plan professionnel. Les familles se retrouvent dès lors souvent dans une situation critique, coincées entre un monde du travail exigeant disponibilité et flexibilité, et un manque chro-

⁵⁴ *Ivi*, p. 16.

⁵⁵ *Ivi*, p. 27.

nique de places dans les milieux d'accueil, ce qui les oblige encore trop souvent à délaisser momentanément le monde professionnel (surtout les femmes) ou à recourir à des modes de garde improvisés à la qualité aléatoire.

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The Rise of a Universal and Integrated Preschool Sector in Sweden

Johannes Westberg

Abstract – Swedish municipalities currently offer ECEC services in so-called preschools (*förskolor*) to all children between one and five years of age, at a low cost. As a result, by 2017, 84 per cent of all children in that age group were enrolled in preschools, which offer a combination of education and caregiving (the so-called Educare model). In this chapter, I will trace the historical processes that gave rise to this preschool sector. Following a short presentation of the comparatively limited Swedish preschool sector in the first half of the twentieth century, including privately run infant schools, crèches and kindergartens, I examine the historical processes that gave rise to a unitary preschool system that integrates both social and educational purposes. This chapter addresses landmark political decisions as well as changes in preschool practices of education and care, with an emphasis on developments since the 1970s. Consequently, this chapter presents how the sector expanded during the 1960s as a result of the economic boom in post-war Sweden and the rise of the Swedish welfare state. The main shift came in the 1970s, when the Preschool Law of 1975 was enacted. This law laid the political foundation for what was termed universal public preschool, which integrated the educational ambitions of kindergartens and nursery schools with the caregiving purposes of daycare centres. I then examine the dynamics of national politics, municipal supply and parental demand that enabled the remarkable expansion of the preschool sector, from providing access to a mere 33,800 children in 1970 to more than 493,600 children in 2017. In addition, this chapter will explore continuity and change in the educational and caregiving practices, and discuss more recent reforms that may be described in terms of marketisation and schoolification.

Introduction – The Swedish preschool model

During the last two decades, Sweden has been ranked high in international comparisons on early childhood care and education¹. Placed under the National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*), children aged one to five have a legal entitlement to attend so-called preschools (*förskolor*) that provide early childhood education and care. For children below the age of one, the government offers a total of 68 weeks of parental leave for mothers and fathers. Thus, Sweden belongs among the small number of countries that do not have a so-called childcare gap of services targeting children below school age².

Instead of differentiating between older and younger children – in Europe, commonly at the age of three – Swedish preschools provide an integrated setting for all children aged one to five that combines social care, health care, fostering and teaching³. As a part of the Swedish educational system, the preschool curriculum states that the purpose of preschools are to «promote all children’s development and learning, and a life-long desire to learn»⁴. Since full-time preschooling is affordable and adjusted to income – the maximum cost for a first child is 147 euros per month (1,487 Swedish kronor, 2019) – enrolment rates are high. In 2019, 85.4 per cent of all preschool-aged children (ages one to five) attended preschool, including 50.5 per cent of one-year-olds and 90.6 per cent of two-year-olds⁵.

In this chapter, I will trace the historical processes that gave rise to this unitary preschool sector for children aged one to five, which integrates both social and educational purposes. The chapter will address landmark political decision as well as changes in preschool practices of education and care, with an emphasis on the developments that took place from the 1970s and onwards. As such, this chapter will examine the debate concerning the dual purpose of preschools, catering both to children and parents, the debate on the schoolification of preschools, and the recent marketization reforms.

¹ I.P. Samuelsson, S. Sheridan, *Preschool Quality and Young Children’s Learning in Sweden*, in «International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy», 1 (2009), pp. 1-2.

² E. Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care*, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2019, pp. 51-52.

³ Skolverket, *Child Care in Sweden*, Stockholm, Skolverket, 2000; Eurydice 2020, Sweden Early Childhood Education and Care: «<https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/sweden/sweden>» (retrieved on 05/02/2021).

⁴ Skolverket, *Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 18*, Stockholm, Skolverket, 2019, p. 5.

⁵ Eurydice Sweden 2020.

1. Historical background

The history of early childhood care and education in Sweden reaches back to the 19th century. The first institutions were the infant schools (*småbarnsskolor*), which were established in Sweden from the 1830s onwards. These were inspired mainly by British models and emphasised teaching in reading, writing, arithmetic and religious education of children from poor families, from two, three or four years of age⁶. Then, from the 1850s onwards, so-called child cribs (*barnkrubbor*) were established that, in accordance with the French model (*crèche*), stressed the healthy care of children from an early age. Children most commonly entered at the age of one year, but could also be accepted from the age of nine months. At the turn of the 20th century, kindergartens (*barnträdgårdar*) took a foothold in Sweden. Based on the German *kindergarten*, these institutions advocated home-like care and upbringing of children, and in 1918 a national organization for these kindergartens were established: the Swedish Froebel Association (*Svenska Fröbel Förbundet*). However, these institutions remained comparatively few in number and were mainly located in the larger cities in southern Sweden. In 1932, only 15 infant schools, 33 kindergartens and 73 child cribs existed in Sweden⁷.

In the first half of the 20th century, further types of early care and education programmes developed within this sector that, during this period, was termed semi-open childcare (*halvöppen barnavård*). These institutions included day care centres (*daghem*, or *dagis* in everyday language), providing all-day care up to 12 hours per day for children aged from six months to seven years, and half-day care centres (*halvdaghem*) providing care for five to seven hours each day for the same age bracket. In addition, there were so-called preschools (*förskolor*) and play schools (*lekskolor*, or *lekis* in everyday language), with three hours of opening hours, which placed greater emphasis on educational activities for children aged three to seven⁸.

During the early 20th century, early care and education programs remained largely run by private individuals or organisations. Still, in 1950,

⁶ J. Westberg, *The transnational dissemination of the infant school to the periphery of Europe: the role of primary schools, religion, travels, and handbooks in the case of nineteenth-century Sweden*, in «Paedagogica historica», 1 (2022), pp. 99-119.

⁷ J. Westberg, *Förskolepedagogikens framväxt: Pedagogisk förändring och dess förutsättningar, ca 1835–1945*, Uppsala, Uppsala University Library, 2008, pp. 116-133, 212-214.

⁸ SOU 1951:15, pp. 15-20.

only 36 per cent of these institutions were owned by municipalities⁹. Although these preschools received an increasing municipal financial and organisational support, this involvement remained debated, and the supply of preschools did not match demand. In Stockholm, the lack of preschools was particularly notable in the 1950s and 1960s¹⁰. In total, the number of children attending preschool remained small; in 1950, day care centres only had capacity to cater to 9,700 children in Sweden¹¹.

Instead, contemporary studies indicated that parents met children's care needs through domestic help, working in shifts, or with the help of grandparents, other relatives, neighbours and acquaintances¹². Those who left their children in kindergartens were usually poor parents, often single mothers, which initially gave the mainly care-motivated day care centres a bad name. This is one reason why it remains controversial in Sweden to use the term day care centres (*daghem* or *dagis*) to denote 21st-century preschools: today, current preschool strives to be something more than just an emergency measure for poor mothers, as early 20th-century day care centres were.

2. *The expansion of the Swedish preschool*

The lack of capacity and coordination of the preschool sector was acknowledged during the first half of the 20th century. The promoters of this sector included the sisters Ellen and Maria Moberg, who were the main leaders of the kindergarten movement in Sweden, and Alva Myrdal, a renowned activist, politician and social scientist. Myrdal's proposal was to create so-called *storbarnkammare* (general nurseries) that would be a combination of child cribs and kindergartens¹³. Despite such efforts, the 1940s and the 1950s merely saw slow developments. As a result, Swedish early care and education was perceived as problematic in an international context. A government report from 1951 claimed that it was widely recognised

⁹ I. Tallberg Broman, *Perspektiv på förskolans historia*, Lund, Studentlitteratur, 1995.

¹⁰ A.-K. Hatje, *Från kvinno- till välfärdsfråga: Stockholms daghemspolitik från 1950- till 1970-tal*, in T. Nilsson (ed.), *Stockholm blir välfärdsstad: Kommunalpolitik i huvudstaden efter 1945*, Stockholm, Stockholmia, 2011, pp. 131-158.

¹¹ Statistikdatabasen, Statistics Sweden (SCB).

¹² SOU 1951:15, pp. 90-91.

¹³ See, e.g., A.-K. Hatje, *Confrontation and cooperation: Ellen and Maria Moberg's and Alva Myrdal's views on childcare and social policy in the 1930s*, in T. Vammen, B. Jordansson (eds.), *Charitable women. Philanthropic welfare 1780-1930. A Nordic and interdisciplinary anthology*, Odense, Odense University Press, 1998, pp. 251-276.

that early care and education institutions in Sweden lagged behind those in the USA, England and France¹⁴.

From the 1960s onwards, however, the Swedish preschool expanded significantly, and the sector began to transform. This development was part of a general and multifaceted transformation of Swedish society. During the post-war period, until the oil crisis of the 1970s, the economic boom (the so-called record years) affected gender relations and childcare, as the labour shortage created by the boom led to a debate on female labour and increased female labour market participation.

The rising political power of the Social Democratic party also promoted the creation of a welfare state. A characteristic of these reforms was that they included all stages of life, and aimed to address the entire Swedish population, not just the poor. These reforms included a national pension (1946), general child benefit (1947), and a general health insurance that provided free health care (1946). In line with this universal ambition, a formerly segmented school system was replaced by a comprehensive primary school (1962) for all school-aged children¹⁵.

Apart from promoting social equality, the politics of the Swedish welfare state supported gender equality. In 1970, a tax reform targeted married couples. They would no longer receive a tax credit if their wife stayed at home with the children, which increased the propensity of married women to work outside of home. Parental insurance was implemented in 1973, which gave parents the right to stay at home after birth and in the care of a sick child, and in 1976 a law on equality in the workplace was passed¹⁶.

As a result of these developments, the need for preschools increased and preschool enrolment more than tripled, from 10,270 in 1960 to 33,823 in 1970. At the same time, preschool became an important political issue in a context where the welfare state was expected to provide solutions to not

¹⁴ SOU 1951:15, cit., p. 21.

¹⁵ G. Esping-Andersen, W. Korpi, *From Poor Relief to Institutional Welfare States: The Development of Scandinavian Social Policy*, in «International Journal of Sociology», 3-4 (1986), pp. 39-74; L.-A. Norborg, *Sveriges historia under 1800- och 1900-talen: Svensk samhällsutveckling 1809–1992*, Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell, 1993, pp. 141-143; B. Martin Korpi, *Förskolan i politiken: Om intentioner och beslut bakom den svenska förskolans framväxt*, Stockholm, Utbildningsdepartementet, 2015, pp. 21, 31.

¹⁶ Esping-Andersen, Korpi, *From Poor Relief to Institutional Welfare States: The Development of Scandinavian Social Policy*, cit., pp. 39-74; Norborg, *Sveriges historia under 1800- och 1900-talen: Svensk samhällsutveckling 1809–1992*, cit., pp. 141-143; Korpi, *Förskolan i politiken: Om intentioner och beslut bakom den svenska förskolans framväxt*, cit., pp. 21, 31.

only general social problems, but also to the challenges that individuals experienced in their everyday life. In this context, child-care services became perceived as a service that (in principle) was essential for individuals and should therefore be universally provided¹⁷. As a result, the government inquiry *Barnstugeutredningen* (literally the Children's Cottage Inquiry) was launched in 1968 in order to present a comprehensive analysis of the place of preschool in Swedish society and its future¹⁸.

In line with the ambitious goals of the welfare state, this inquiry produced a two-volume report, covering more than 1,000 pages, which presented the economic, organisational, ideological and educational basis for preschools in Sweden. Here, the term preschool was launched as a general concept for institutions catering to children below school age – the earliest age for acceptance was noted as four months. A distinction was made between two kinds of preschools: full-time preschools, open for at least five hours per day, and half-day preschools, catering to children three hours per day¹⁹.

The direct result of the Children's Cottage Inquiry was the 1975 Child-care Act, which, in comparison with 21st-century legislation, was rather modest. It merely stated that municipalities had to either provide six-year-olds with one year's worth of preschool (525 hours), or provide five- and six-year-olds with two years of preschool (700 hours). Despite this, however, the inquiry and subsequent legislation were important, as they established that preschool was a municipal responsibility and a right for all children. Consequently, preschool was not only intended for the poor in society, but was instead re-imagined as a so-called "general preschool" for all children below school age, which the municipalities were obliged to plan²⁰.

While the Swedish government took steps towards strengthening the supply of early childhood education and care, demand also increased. An important reason for this was an increasing female labour market participation – 70 per cent of all women were in employment in 1980 – and

¹⁷ S. Gustafsson, F. Stafford, *Three Regimes of Child Care: The United States, the Netherlands, and Sweden*, in R.M. Blank (ed.), *Social protection versus economic flexibility: is there a trade-off?*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 335.

¹⁸ J. Westberg, *En förskola för alla? Rationaliteten bakom den svenska förskolans expansion*, in A. Berg, E. Larsson, M. Michaëlsson, J. Westberg, A. Åkerlund (eds.), *Utbildningens revolutioner: Till studiet av utbildningshistorisk förändring*, Uppsala, Uppsala universitet, 2017, pp. 211-232.

¹⁹ SOU 1972:26, p. 20. Regarding the suggested ages of preschool children, see SOU 1972:27, pp. 28-32.

²⁰ SOU 1972:27, *Barnstugeutredningen, Förskolan: betänkande. D. 2*, Stockholm, Liberförlag, 1977, ch. 15.

the shortage of preschool places was consequently a recurring problem²¹. Therefore, preschool became an important political issue that was the subject of high-profile political demonstrations, including the occupation of Nacka City Council in 1974 and a high-profile protest at the Swedish Parliament in the spring of 1975²².

In order to meet this demand for preschools, the Swedish government took additional steps. In 1976, in cooperation with the Swedish Association of Municipalities (*Svenska kommunförbundet*), the government decided to expand preschool capacity with 100,000 places within a five-year period, supported by new central government subsidies. As a result of this development, expansion continued at an extremely strong pace: more than 33,000 preschool places in 1970 multiplied to around 135,000 places in 1980²³.

Various factors can account for the almost unlikely expansion of preschool capacity in Sweden. Of course, families' demand for preschools was important, partly due to increasing female participation in the labour market. Political decisions, legitimated by Social Democratic ideology, and state financial support, enabled by the post-war economic boom, were obviously vital. Further studies will also be able to explore the perceptions of modern society, family, gender, economy and childhood – the latter formulated on the basis of Jean Piaget and Erik H. Erikson – that motivated the 1975 Childcare Act²⁴. However, we must not forget the crucial role played by the local municipalities in the expansion of the Swedish preschool sector. As principal owners, they bore the heaviest organisational and financial burden of the new preschools. From their perspective, a proper supply of high quality preschool nevertheless gave them an opportunity to increase tax revenues from mothers' gainful employment and provided an argument for retaining or attracting additional residents²⁵.

The expansion of the preschool sector continued to receive a strong backing by the central government. In 1985, the "Preschool for All Children" bill was enacted, which proposed that all preschool children from the

²¹ M. Korpi, *Förskolan i politiken: Om intentioner och beslut bakom den svenska förskolans framväxt*, cit., p. 31.

²² M. Gerdin, K. Ohrlander, *Ropen skalla – daghem åt alla: vittnesseminarium om daghemskampen på 70-talet*, Huddinge, Samtidshistoriska institutet, Södertörns högskola, 2007.

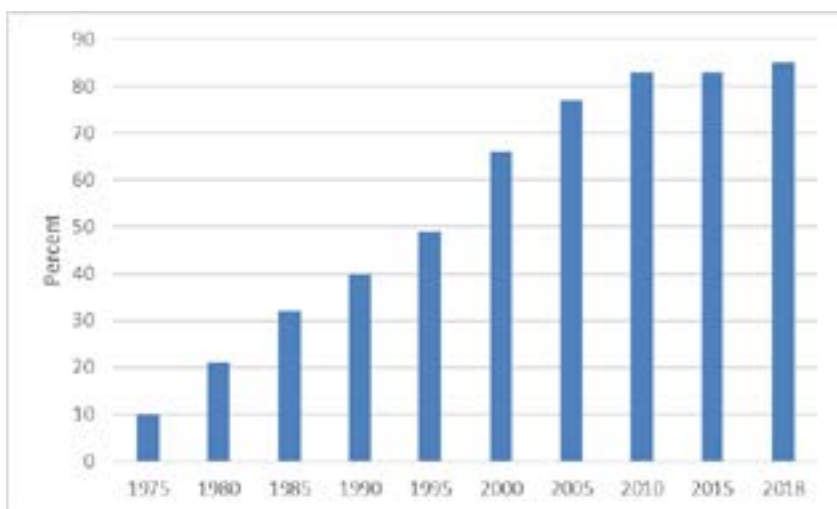
²³ Statistikdatabasen, *Statistics Sweden (SCB)*; Korpi, *Förskolan i politiken: Om intentioner och beslut bakom den svenska förskolans framväxt*, cit., pp. 31-33.

²⁴ Westberg, *En förskola för alla? Rationaliteten bakom den svenska förskolans expansion*, cit. pp. 211-232.

²⁵ Korpi, *Förskolan i politiken: Om intentioner och beslut bakom den svenska förskolans framväxt*, cit., pp. 34-35.

age of 18 months should be entitled to preschool, and the proposal added further state subsidies. The goal was ambitious: a fully developed preschool within five years for all children below school age, where the queues for preschools would be reduced by as much as a fifth each year. In 1990, in order to stimulate this development, a state action group was set up, which, in cooperation with the municipalities, would support an increase in the number of preschool places. The results were mixed, however, and only just over half of municipalities achieved full demand coverage in 1991²⁶. Nevertheless, the decade saw a steep rise in enrolments, from 21 per cent of all preschool children aged one to six in 1980 to 40 per cent in 1990 and then to 49 per cent in 1995 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Share of children under school age enrolled in preschool.



Source: Statistics Sweden (SCB). The years 1975–1995 refers to children aged one to six, and after the so-called preschool class was introduced in 1998, the data for the years 2000–2015 cover children aged one to five.

Efforts to increase enrolments continued, and the vision of a preschool for all was implemented with the 1995 childcare legislation. Municipalities were now obliged to provide all children from one year of age with preschool, after-school or family day care “without undue delay”. Since the government claimed that this was not a new commitment, but a principle

²⁶ *Ivi*, p. 45.

that should have been implemented already in 1991, it expected this sharpening of the legal entitlement to preschools be implemented immediately. However, the municipalities did not always share this view, noting the major challenge posed by providing preschool places “without undue delay”. According to a survey from the same year, however, as many as 80 per cent of municipalities succeeded in this regard²⁷.

As a result of the 1995 legislation, enrolments increased from 49 per cent of all preschool children in 1995 to 66 per cent at the turn of the century. Naturally, this placed a heavy strain on existing preschools. The average group size increased, and groups of over 15 children became common. As a result, municipalities took various measures to finance an increasingly costly activity. Among other things, preschool fees were increased in some municipalities, and in others, children with unemployed parents or parents on parental leave lost their right to attend preschool²⁸.

In order to address these challenges, further reforms were carried out. From January 2001, children of unemployed parents were allowed to attend preschool, and from 2002 this also applied to the children of parents on parental leave. In the same year, the so-called maximum rate (*maxtaxa*) was introduced, which was a voluntary upper limit for preschool fees. Despite its voluntary nature, most municipalities implemented it within a year. Despite fears that the maximum rate would imply larger groups and reduced availability for preschool places, this did not happen, and instead the enrolment rates increased from 68 per cent in 2001 to 77 per cent in 2005²⁹. This expansion continued, and in 2018, 85 per cent of all preschool children aged one to five attended preschool (see Figure 1). From merely being a political vision in the 1970s, a universal preschool for all children had now become a reality.

3. Care, development and learning

As the sector of early care and education expanded, the purpose of the preschools was reformulated. In the first half of the 20th century, day care centres for children below the age of three remained mainly motivated by children’s need for supervision while their parents were working, which was contrasted to the educational purposes of, for example, kindergartens. A government report from 1938 listed the main reasons children would need to attend day care centres: working mothers, a lack of siblings, overcrowd-

²⁷ *Ivi*, pp. 43-44; SOU 1990:80, pp. 10-20.

²⁸ *Ivi*, p. 70.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

ed apartments, and behavioural disorders. In addition, day care centres were deemed useful since they provided stay-at-home mothers with some leisure time and could also improve physical and psychological hygiene among children³⁰.

However, in line with the expanding Swedish welfare society, where social services were awarded universally regardless of income, this view of early care and education changed. In 1972, the Children's Cottage Inquiry concluded that the preschool was intended for all children, since everyone had the right to a proper childhood. The preschool was supposed to promote children's development and aptitude regardless of their social background. The inquiry noted that it was not only children of working mothers that benefited from preschools, but children from all kinds of settings: the social organisation of modern society into nuclear families created isolation and vulnerability also in wealthy families. In that respect, children in emotionally cold middle-class families were described as particularly vulnerable, since they were not targeted by other social policies³¹.

However, the preschool was not only an institution in the service of children. The Children's Cottage Inquiry argued that since the needs of children and parents were an "inseparable unit", the preschool had a dual function for both children and parents, where the preschool was described as "a service institution for the whole family"³².

In Sweden, this dual purpose of preschools has remained controversial. In the context of the increasing time that children spend in preschool, public debate has often set children's needs against the needs of parents and families. Should preschool not primarily look after the children's best interests, rather than parents' need for time for work and household chores? Many also questioned the fact that the preschool has been given an increasing responsibility for the upbringing of children. Still in the 2000s, some have questioned whether full-time preschool is in the best interests of the child. However, the dual function of the preschool has remained. According to the Swedish National Agency for Education, the aim of preschools remains to provide children with good conditions for growing up and to enable parents to combine parenting and work³³.

³⁰ SOU 1938:20, pp. 12-18.

³¹ SOU 1972:27, pp. 16-19.

³² SOU 1972:27, Barnstugeutredningen, *Förskolan: betänkande. D. 2*, cit., p. 225.

³³ Skolverket, *Descriptive data on child care and schools in Sweden in 2000*, Stockholm, National Agency for Education, 2000, pp. 11-12. For insights into the debate, see, e.g., B. Hammarström-Lewenhagen, *Den unika möjligheten: En studie av den svenska förskolemodellen 1968-1998*, Stockholm, Stockholms universitet, 2013, chapters 12 and 13.

The relationship between preschools and children's needs has also been debated. Are preschools mainly about care, supervision, or should they mainly have educational purposes? During the early 20th century, the child cribs represented a preschool institution that was mainly motivated by the need for care and supervision, while kindergarten has been an example of an educationally motivated institution. Starting from the 1970s, the Swedish preschool strove to merge these purposes. This ambition has been described in terms of a Swedish educare model, or as an attempt to create preschools in the form of a day care centre³⁴. In 2000, this was formulated as bringing together health care, social care, fostering and teaching, and in the most recent preschool curriculum (2018) as to allow «care, development and learning [to] form a whole»³⁵.

A full explanation as to why Sweden chose this education model requires further studies. However, a few factors might be highlighted. These include the Swedish reception of Jean Piaget, and not the least the ambition to provide all preschool children aged one to five with a uniform preschool. An “integrated educare model” is a fitting ideal for a single preschool organisation that caters to all preschool children, regardless of age.

4. *Change and continuity*

Like all institutions, Swedish preschools are marked by both continuity and change. Fundamental changes, which can be described in terms of secularisation, de-nationalisation and gender equality, are most evident from a long-term perspective. Early 20th-century kindergartens aimed to raise patriotic children with a Christian faith, where boys were encouraged to play with bricks and girls with dolls³⁶. In contrast, the preschools of the 21st century aim to prepare children for a society of cultural diversity through in a non-denominational institution, in which gender stereotypes and discrimination based on sexuality, ethnic origin or religion are to be “actively counteracted”³⁷.

³⁴ SOU 1997:157, cit., p. 30; Sjöstrand Öhrfelt, *Export och import av den svenska förskolemodellen via transnationell utbildningspolicy*, in «Utbildning & Demokrati», 1 (2019), p. 30.

³⁵ Skolverket, *Child Care in Sweden*, cit., p. 4. The quote is from Skolverket, *Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 18*, cit., p. 7.

³⁶ See, e.g., A.-C. Vallberg Roth, *De yngre barnens läroplanshistoria: Från 1800-talets mitt till idag*, Lund, Studentlitteratur, 2002, chapter 3.

³⁷ Skolverket, *Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 18*, cit., p. 5.

In relation to the early 20th-century kindergarten tradition, we can also see further changes. After World War II, a kindergarten pedagogy based on an idealized vision of middle-class homes, including activities such as songs, rhymes, drawing, modelling, gardening and fairy tales, was gradually replaced by pedagogical visions formulated in terms found in educational science, psychology and sociology. During the 1970s, this was expressed in a preschool pedagogy based on developmental psychology and so-called dialogue pedagogy (*dialogpedagogik*), where psychologists Jean Piaget and Erik H. Eriksson played an important role. This tradition which was clearly expressed in the policy-documents of the 1970s, was based on the interaction between children and preschool teachers, and emphasised the nurturing of independent and social children³⁸. During the 1990s, the preschool was incorporated into the school system, which affected how the preschool's purposes were formulated. I will go into this in more detail in the next section.

While the 20th and early 21st century saw some remarkable changes to the practices of early childhood care and education in Sweden, attention should also be paid to the fundamental continuity from the early 20th-century kindergarten tradition. As noted by Ann-Katrin Hatje, the Swedish model that developed from the 1960s onwards was not a complete break from the previous kindergarten tradition, but rather a reorientation³⁹. Content such as music, social issues, natural sciences, and language were already found in the kindergartens, and the emphasis placed on children's play in the kindergartens, recurs in formulations about the importance of play in the national curriculum of 1998. When organising pedagogical activities, the thematic approach in the national curriculum of 2018 also had counterparts in the so-called work centre (*arbetsmedelpunkt*) of kindergartens, and what were called centres of interest (*intressecentrum*) and theme work (*tematiskt arbete*) in the 1980s⁴⁰. As Sofia Grunditz has shown, the organisation of naptimes was also marked by significant continuity, and there are certainly good reasons to pay attention to continuities in the practices of serving of meals in Swedish preschool across the 20th century⁴¹.

³⁸ Westberg, *En förskola för alla? Rationaliteten bakom den svenska förskolans expansion*, cit., pp. 220-224.

³⁹ A.-K. Hatje, *Från trekläng till triangeldrama: Barnträdgården som ett kvinnligt samhällsprojekt under 1880–1940-talen*, Lund, Historiska media, 1999, p. 31.

⁴⁰ J.-E. Johansson, *Svensk förskolepedagogik under 1900-talet*, Lund, Studentlitteratur, 1994, pp. 49-58.

⁴¹ S. Grunditz, *Vilan i förskolan 1910–2013: Visuella material och visuell metodologi*, Stockholm, Stockholms universitet, 2018.

However, the way in which the content has been formulated and structured has changed. During the 1970s, the preschool pedagogical programme was organised in accordance with so-called activity areas (*aktivitetsområden*), which provided a comprehensive thematical overview of the content that preschool activities should address. These activity areas included the following: children talking to each other; dressing and undressing; eating and resting; playing with water, sand and mud; creating and interpreting images; experiencing sound, music and rhythm; role-playing and acting; using images and words; designing and building; sorting and classifying; using shapes, numbers and letters; solving puzzles and playing games; and discussing life⁴².

In the early 1980s, this division into activity areas was criticised for, by extension, leading to an overly fragmented and therefore disorganised programme. Instead, the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) advocated five so-called blocks of subjects (*ämneshöj*) in 1981: language; world orientation; nature orientation; image and form; sound and movement. The National Board of Health and Welfare revised these blocks and instead created three areas (*områden*) in 1987: nature (humankind, life, plants and animals, climate and environment, natural phenomena, mathematics); culture (including traditions, language, literature, image, song, movement, drama); and society (community, education for democracy, equality and solidarity)⁴³.

The 1998 curriculum abandoned these overarching thematic descriptions of the activities for 16 objectives (under the heading “development and learning”), which the preschool would pursue. In the curriculum of 2018, these objectives were increased to a total of 25, which include content similar to that which was previously identified as activity areas, blocks or areas. These included the objectives of developing children’s skills in image, drama, movement, singing and dance, their interest in stories, their knowledge of different cultures, their ability to discuss science, and knowledge and understanding of nature, plants and animals. Some revisions have also been made, which have stressed, among other things, the development of digital skills and the promotion of sustainable development⁴⁴. Taken together, these changing conceptualization of preschool pedagogy neverthe-

⁴² Socialstyrelsen, *Arbetsplan för förskolan I, Vår förskola: En introduktion till förskolans pedagogiska arbete*, Stockholm, Socialstyrelsen, 1977, pp. 72-73.

⁴³ Socialstyrelsen, *Förskolans pedagogiska verksamhet: mål och inriktning*, Stockholm, Socialstyrelsen, 1981; Socialstyrelsen, *Pedagogiskt program för förskolan*, Stockholm, Allmänna förlaget, 1987.

⁴⁴ Skolverket, *Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 18*, cit., pp. 14-16.

less indicate how Swedish preschools have been marked by both continuity and change during the last 50 years.

5. *Schoolification of preschools, or preschoolification of teaching?*

In addition to the preschool's relationship with children and their parents, the Swedish preschool's relationship with the primary school remains one of the most important and debated issues. The 19th-century infant schools were clearly inspired by primary schools, both in content and in form. In Sweden, promoters of the infant school formulated a concept of light-hearted teaching adapted to the abilities and interests of young children that would give the children school experience and an initial knowledge in, among other things, reading, writing and counting⁴⁵.

However, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, this vision was questioned, and some even argued that premature education could be harmful and create weak, lethargic, mediocre and unhappy children⁴⁶. Instead of a school, the good home became the dominant ideal of the first half of the 20th century. This also suited the organisational form of the preschools well. Since they were organised by private associations, placed under the supervision of the National Board of Health and Welfare and with special preschool teacher training schools, it is unsurprising that the early preschools of the 20th century distanced themselves from primary schools.

This relation to primary schools was indicated by government reports. In 1951, kindergartens were described as «for traditional school activities foreign institutions»⁴⁷. According to the Children's Cottage Inquiry, preschools should not be characterised by traditional teaching (*undervisning*) and, therefore, should not impose performance requirements on the children or be provided with binding curricula⁴⁸. The PreSchool--School Committee confirmed this position in 1985 by noting that the term teaching was not appropriate for preschool, as it was associated with traditional working methods that did not allow sufficient room for variation and mobility⁴⁹.

In the 1980s and 1990s, however, there were clear signs that the activities of the preschool were, in various ways, approaching, or coordinated

⁴⁵ Westberg, *The transnational dissemination of the infant school to the periphery of Europe*, cit.

⁴⁶ Westberg, *Förskolepedagogikens framväxt: Pedagogisk förändring och dess förutsättningar, ca 1835–1945*, cit., p. 51.

⁴⁷ SOU 1951:15, cit., p. 425.

⁴⁸ SOU 1972:26, cit., p. 41.

⁴⁹ SOU 1985:22, cit., p. 189.

with, the activities of schools. In the 1980s, pedagogical programmes began recommending activities that prepared children for reading and writing⁵⁰. For example, the Pedagogical Programme for Preschools published in 1987 stated that preschools should stimulate children's learning and interest in written language. It also pointed out that learning was not only a result of conscious planning on the part of the adult. Therefore, preschool schedules should be planned with an understanding that children did not only learn in arranged activities⁵¹.

The changing relationship to the primary schools was also indicated in other ways. In the early 1990s, when the concept of teaching (*undervisning*) had not yet been officially established in preschools, preschool teacher students nevertheless talked about preschool activities using concepts such as forest teaching, teaching play, and care lessons⁵². Arguments were also presented for the use of the teaching concept in preschool as well. In 1996, the Child Care and School Committee (BOSK) noted that the concept of teaching was rather narrow, and that it in the future should be extended to not only denote the activities of primary schools⁵³.

At the same time, organisational changes also took place. The preschool was transferred from the National Board of Health and Welfare to the Swedish National Agency for Education on 1 July 1996, which was probably facilitated by the fact that the municipalities (previously responsible for preschools) had gained greater responsibility for the school system a few years earlier⁵⁴. This changing relationship to the primary schools was also marked by the 2001 teacher education reform that provided a joint exam for all teachers, and the National Education Act (2010) that made preschool a separate form of school in the education system. Preschools, catering to children from the age of one, now became a fully integrated part of the Swedish school system that also included primary schools, secondary schools, and municipal adult education⁵⁵.

This development naturally affected the activities of preschool. Placed under the Swedish National Agency for Education, the preschools received

⁵⁰ B. Widebäck, *Förberedande läsning och skrivning i förskolan: Preparatory reading and writing in the preschool*, Stockholm, HLS, 1998, pp. 19-20.

⁵¹ Socialstyrelsen, *Pedagogiskt program för förskolan*, cit., pp. 23-24.

⁵² M.M. Rosenqvist, *Undervisning i förskolan? En studie av förskollärarstudenternas föreställningar*, Stockholm, HLS, 2000, p. 149.

⁵³ *Ivi*, p. 24.

⁵⁴ Korpi, *Förskolan i politiken: Om intentioner och beslut bakom den svenska förskolans framväxt*, cit., p. 52.

⁵⁵ S. Sheridan, P. Williams (eds.), *Undervisning i förskolan – En kunskapsöversikt*, Stockholm, Skolverket, 2018, p. 15.

their first national curriculum in 1998. The curriculum stated that preschool would promote children's learning and the development of knowledge and insights, which would «lay the foundations for life-long learning»⁵⁶. Since then, the formulations of the curriculum have been developed and adjusted in different ways. The 2006 revisions introduced objectives on mother tongue education, and in 2010 the objectives for languages, mathematics and science were revised. In 2016, formulations concerning transition to and interaction with schools were revised to better fit the primary school curriculum.

The 2018 national preschool curriculum introduced the concept of teaching (*undervisning*) for the first time. This was a controversial decision, since this concept had been used in the Swedish context to denote activities in schools, evoking images of schoolteachers, classrooms and rather traditional methods of education. However, it was a necessary adaption to a new reality where preschools were included in the National Education Act (2010) and thus needed to be included in the same definitions of education as primary education. The National Education Act defined teaching as «goal-driven processes that, under the direction of teachers or preschool teachers, aim to develop and educate through the acquisition and development of knowledge and values»⁵⁷.

What this conceptual shift from learning to teaching actually does imply can be discussed. The use of this concept has sometimes been interpreted as emphasising the planned activities of the preschool. Where the concept of learning denotes what happens within the individual who is learning something – with or without the influence of a teacher – the concept of teaching draws attention to activities organised by teachers or preschool teacher with the intention of teaching the child something⁵⁸.

However, the definition of teaching given in the 2018 curriculum should be interpreted somewhat more broadly. According to the curriculum, teaching was defined as «stimulating and challenging the children, taking the goals of the curriculum as a starting point and direction, and is aimed at encouraging development and learning among the children»⁵⁹. Although teaching was thus defined as a goal-oriented activity guided by the curriculum, this does not mean that teaching needs to be planned. Instead, the curriculum prescribed that the content of the teaching could be either planned or spontaneous. Mirroring the formulation from the pedagogical program

⁵⁶ Skolverket, *Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 18*, cit., p. 7.

⁵⁷ Skollag (2010: 800), ch. 1, § 3. My translation.

⁵⁸ A.S. Pihlgren, *Undervisning i förskolan: att skapa lärande undervisningsmiljöer*, Stockholm, Natur & Kultur, 2017, p. 12.

⁵⁹ Skolverket, *Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 18*, cit., p. 7.

of 1987, the 2018 curriculum claimed that «[t]eaching should be based on content that is planned or appears spontaneously, as children's development and learning take place at all times»⁶⁰.

The 2018 curriculum gave preschool teachers special responsibility for the pedagogical content of teaching and for promoting children's development and learning⁶¹. This responsibility was further described in objectives that, in part, directly prepared children for their future schooling, including giving children the opportunity to develop an interest in written language and understanding of symbols, the ability to use mathematics and the basic characteristics of quantities, patterns, numbers and orders. To clarify how teaching was an integrated part of the preschool programme of work, activities, projects, play and creation, the concept of «caring and playful education and teaching» has also been launched⁶².

The introduction of the concept of teaching has raised a number of questions concerning the relationship between preschools and primary schools. Critical voices have described this shift as part of a process of *schoolification*. Has preschool shifted away from its traditional task, becoming a kind of school where school preparation, children's academic skills, and traditions of school teaching are emphasised at the expense of play and care? This tendency has been linked to the academisation of the preschool teacher profession, where the academic abilities of the preschool teacher are valued at the expense of, for example, care⁶³. Studies have also shown how the place of teaching in preschool has been interpreted in different ways. Preschool staff can perceive teaching as a children's right, but also as a demanding concept that requires conscious planning and documentation⁶⁴.

How should this development be understood? That preschools are affected by primary schools is not unexpected. Primary schools are, without a doubt, the most influential institution in the field of education. The schoolification of Swedish preschools may also be understood from a broader international perspective, where the development of the Swedish preschool

⁶⁰ Ivi, p. 7.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*.

⁶² C. Eidevald, I. Engdahl, S. Frankenberg, H. Lenz Taguchi, A. Palmer, *Omsorgsfull och lekfull utbildning och undervisning i förskolan*, in S. Sheridan, P. Williams (eds.), *Undervisning i förskolan – En kunskapsöversikt*, Stockholm, Skolverket, 2018, p. 82.

⁶³ A. Löfdahl, M. Folke-Fichtelius, *Preschool's new suit: Care in terms of learning and knowledge*, in «Early Years: An International Research Journal», 3 (2015), pp. 260-272.

⁶⁴ A. Jonsson, P. Williams, I. Pramling Samuelsson, *Undervisningsbegreppet och dess innebörder uttryckta av förskolans lärare*, in «Forskning om undervisning och lärande», 1 (2017), pp. 98-102.

can be related to the emphasis placed by the OECD on the preschool as an educational institution⁶⁵.

At the same time, it is important to be careful when approaching the historical development of preschool. The fact that teaching is used to describe the activities of preschool, rather than (or together with) concepts such as learning, is a conceptual shift that does not need to be overinterpreted. The difference between consciously choosing content and working methods that «lead to learning and development» and conducting teaching «aimed at encouraging development and learning» is not necessarily significant⁶⁶. We also need to be aware of the broadened definition of teaching, both in the national curriculum and in the actual use of the concept in preschools. There are indications that the concept is used by preschool staff to encompass activities that stresses the distinctive character of preschools⁶⁷. Rather than being interpreted as a schoolification of preschool, the use of the concept of teaching may be interpreted as a pre-schoolification of this concept.

6. *Market reforms and the introduction of school vouchers*

Apart from establishing preschools as a universal and unitary institutions that all children aged between one and five are legally entitled to, the 1990s and early 2000s was marked by market reforms that originated from an earlier debate on the organisation of the Swedish welfare state. This political question received a lot of attention in 1983 when it was revealed that the home appliance manufacturer company Electrolux planned to open a private preschool under the name *Pysslingen* in 1983, with the aim of drawing attention to the issue of public sector organisation and financing⁶⁸. In the lively parliamentary debate that followed, the Social Democrats and the Left Party questioned private alternatives in childcare. It was seen as distinct from other sectors – «you cannot trade in children as you trade in

⁶⁵ Sjöstrand Öhrfelt, *Export och import av den svenska förskolemodellen via transnationell utbildningspolicy*, cit., pp. 29-53.

⁶⁶ The quotes are from Socialstyrelsen, *Pedagogiskt program för förskolan*, cit., p. 52; Skolverket, *Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 18*, cit., p. 7.

⁶⁷ A. Löfdahl Hultman, E. Hildén, A. Bergh, *I "Iarmrapportens" skugga – om undervisning och kvalitet i förskolan*, in A. Löfdahl Hultman, C. Olin-Scheller, M. Tanner, H. Pérez Prieto (eds.), *Berättelser – vänbok till Héctor Pérez Prieto*, Karlstad, Karlstads universitet, 2017, p. 67.

⁶⁸ J. Westberg, E. Larsson, *Winning the war by losing the battle? The marketization of the expanding preschool sector in Sweden*, in «Journal of Education Policy», 37, 5, 2022, pp. 705-722.

cars or televisions» – and the very idea of business enterprises providing education, health and social care was perceived as alien⁶⁹. The result was *Lex Pyslingen* (1984), a law that blocked state subsidies from for-profit preschools.

Following the political changes of the 1980s, in which market ideology had won a stronger foothold in the Swedish political debate, the regulations on private enterprise in the preschool sector were relaxed. In 1990, the Social Democratic government proposed that staff-run kindergartens could receive state subsidies under certain conditions, and when a right-wing four-party government took office the following year, the *Lex Pyslingen* was abolished. Private preschools could now receive public support if they were included in the municipalities' childcare plan, and had staff with adequate training and a reasonable childcare fee. However, this did not impose an obligation on municipalities to pay for private preschools and municipalities were free to keep private alternatives out of their childcare plan⁷⁰.

Instead, freedom of establishment was introduced in 2006 on the initiative of the nonsocialist parties, which in 2009 was followed by the introduction of a publicly funded childcare voucher system (*barnomsorgspengen*). This meant that municipalities could no longer keep private preschools out of their childcare plan. Instead, municipalities were obliged to allocate a defined sum of money per child to preschools that met the same criteria as municipal preschools. While this system promoted the establishment of private preschools within the publicly funded preschool sector, it also meant adapting the preschool sector to the rest of the school system, where publicly funded school vouchers had already been introduced in 1992⁷¹.

The interpretation of these reforms may be debated. On one hand, they may be described as a result of a neoliberal ideology that meant that private preschools became an important part of the preschool sector. In the 2018–2019 academic year, about 28 per cent of Sweden's preschool units were run by private organisations, including corporations, parent-led cooperatives and non-profit associations⁷². On the other hand, these market reforms may be interpreted as a successful defence of a publicly funded preschools for all children. Despite the increasing strength of market ideology in the Swedish public debate, the creation of childcare vouchers has not stopped, but rather solidified, a publicly funded preschool in Sweden.

⁶⁹ The quote from the debate is noted in M. Linnarsson, *Problemet med vinster: riksdagsdebatter om privat och offentlig drift under 400 år*, Lund, Nordic Academic Press, 2017, pp. 200, 214.

⁷⁰ Westberg, Larsson, *Winning the war by losing the battle?*, cit.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

⁷² Statistics of the National Agency for Education.

7. In conclusion

Sweden is an interesting case in the history of early care and education, not because of where the history started but because of where it ended. As elsewhere in Europe, early 20th century Sweden featured the same institutions that catered to children below school age: infant schools, child cribs and kindergartens. With the economic boom of the post-war period and the rise of the Swedish welfare state, this situation changed. With the first law on preschools in 1975, preschools were defined as a public responsibility, and an incredible expansion of the preschool sector began, which also included a redefinition of the institution itself. Preschools were now to integrate education and care in a uniform organisational setting for all children aged one to five.

While this preschool model, like those of Sweden's Nordic neighbours, may be perceived as unique from an international standpoint, it is clearly marked by its history. The universal access and public funding fit the universal ambitions of the Swedish welfare state to include the entire population in its welfare schemes. The integration of education and care is apt for a sector covering all children from one to five that, since the late 1990s, has been incorporated in the national school system. The introduction of childcare vouchers may be seen both as a defence of, and an adaptation to, this extensive public system of preschools. By introducing such a market reform, the public funding of, and universal access to, preschools could be kept, while the preschools were simultaneously placed in line with the publicly funded school voucher system of the primary and secondary school.

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Education and Care Services for Young Children in Norway. From Private Initiative to State Intervention

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Abstract – This chapter reconstructs the history of day nurseries in Norway, with a particular focus on the changes that occurred in the 1960s and '70s. Using a historical and narrative approach that takes into account pedagogy and culture, we explore the key factors that influenced the development of the early childhood education policy in Norway. We outline the context-specific patterns and characteristics of childcare centres for all children up to six years of age. An educational service model for the youngest was developed mainly within a pedagogical model, and the history of this model is discussed in more detail. With this analysis, we attempt to identify the factors that stimulated the creation of an all-day time policy for early childhood education in the 1970s. We also look to discover the pedagogical hallmarks of ECEC in those processes, especially concerning the role of the ECEC profession. In addition, we shed light on the developments in education and care services since the 2000s.

1. *Introduction*

In Norway and other European countries, never before have children so young begun participating in publicly designed education and care for so many hours a day. In Norway in particular, all children up to 6 years and registered as living in a municipality have had a statutory right to day care since 2006. With other transformations, full-time day care institutions, called *barnehage* (literacy: kindergarten), and children's homes have become the foremost venues for the socialisation of children, including from 1 to 3 years old. As a result, early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings have become a major part of children's everyday lives in Norway.

During 2000s, Norway, together with the other Nordic countries, has been ranked high in international comparisons on ECEC¹.

According to Statistics Norway, only 6% of all children more than 3 years old in 1990 could access a day care institution. In 2019, by contrast, approximately 92% of all children up to 6 years, 85% of all children 1–2 years old, and a whopping 97% of all children 3–5 years old were attending one *barnehage* on daily basis. Thus, in less than three decades, *barnehager* had become widely accepted by the citizens of Norway, especially current and future parents of young children².

Figure 1. Enrolment of children in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in Norway, 1970–2019.

Year	Total (%)	Under 3 years (%)	Over 3 Years (%)
1970	3	1	2
1990	37	6	52
2000	62	37	81
2019	92	85	97

Note. Values represent percentages of all children in Norway in their age group enrolled in a regulated ECEC arrangement, including centre and family day care, whether privately and publicly funded.

Sources: Statistics, Norway: *NOS Child Welfare (NOS Barneomsorg)* (1970); Statistics, Norway: *Daginstitusjoner* (1972); Statistics, Norway: *Barnehager* (2020).

In this chapter, we focus on the history of state intervention in ECEC, beginning after World War II when ECEC for children in Norway was marginal. In fact, only 2% of all children of compulsory school age during the period of the 1950s to the 1970s attended an ECEC institution. Even so, by encompassing the foundation of educational hallmarks of ECEC in Norway, the period heavily influenced the pedagogical development of the country's day nurseries and ECEC regulations to this day.

¹ UNICEF - Innocenti Research Centre, *The Child Care Transition. A league table of early childhood education and care in economically advanced countries*, Report Card 8, Florence, 2008, p. 8: <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc8_eng.pdf> (retrieved on 10/2/2021).

² Statistics, Norway, *Barnehager*, Oslo, 2020: <<https://www.ssb.no/utdanning/statistikker/barnehager/aar-endelige>> (retrieved on 10/02/2021).

In Norway and other European countries, the history of education, caring, and play for young children is deeply embedded in the social, economic, political, and cultural history of the nation³. By the same token, in ECEC systems in Scandinavia, the role of state interventions has been crucial. Thus, probing the history of ECEC for insights into the development of ECEC institutions in diverse national contexts often placed certain characteristics of Norway's ECEC system in the spotlight. Drawing upon insights from the historical comparative studies, we illuminate the state's active role⁴. This in cooperating with the profession and practitioners of ECEC in developing not only Norway's system but also a new everyday life for the country's youngest residents and their parents⁵.

Questions and sections

Beginning with child asylums and kindergartens in the 19th century, as establishments in which private initiatives dominated, ECEC and childcare in general in Norway gradually 'went public', so to speak, in the latter half of the 20th century. With ECEC increasingly characterised as an important investment for the welfare state and an essential service for all children, ever-evolving conditions of parenthood and childhood in modern society became a major driving factor in the overarching narrative of ECEC in the

³ See E.C. Melhuish, P. Moss (eds.), *Day care for young children: international perspectives*, London, Routledge, 1991; K. Nawrotzki, *New Perspectives on Preschooling: The National and Transnational in Early Childhood Education*, in «History of Education Quarterly», 49/2 (2009); P.-L. Rauhala, *Child Care as an Issue of Equality and Equity: The Example of the Nordic Countries*, in K. Scheiwe, H. Willekens (eds.), *Child Care and Preschool Development in Europe: Institutional Perspectives*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; A. Leira, *From Poverty Relief to Universal Provision: The Changing Grounds for Childcare Policy Reforms in Norway*, in H. Willekens, K. Scheiwe, K. Nawrotzki (eds.), *The Development of Early Childhood Education in Europe and North America. Historical and Comparative perspective*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015; D. Caroli, *Day Nurseries and Childcare in Europe, 1800–1939*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017; V. Pacini-Ketchabaw, P. Moss, *Early Childhood Pedagogy: Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw Interviews Peter Moss*, «Journal of Childhood Studies», 45/2 (2020).

⁴ For more, see Melhuish, Moss (eds.), *Day care for young children: international perspectives*; Rauhala, *Child Care as an Issue of Equality and Equity: The Example of the Nordic Countries*, cit.; Willekens, Scheiwe, Nawrotzki, *Introduction: The Longue Durée – Early Childhood Institutions and Ideas in Flux*, cit., pp. 1-28.

⁵ T. Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, Oslo, Abstrakt, 2005, pp. 75-201.

country⁶. In analysing that narrative, we attempt to answer two questions. On the one hand, what factors supported the state's intervention and the establishment of a public preschool system, and what was the role of ECEC practitioners and the ECEC profession therein? On the other, what were the pedagogical hallmarks of ECEC in those processes, especially concerning the role of the ECEC profession?

To examine that narrative, we have organised this chapter into various sections. In the first section, we initially focus on ECEC in Norway in the 1930s and 1940s, after which we turn to its transformations beginning in the 1950s. From that point forward, Norway developed into a modern welfare state that prioritised welfare reforms, including social ones, for its residents in light of the universal principle of providing social support for all people within its borders. During that same period, a controversial and demanding pedagogical and psychological-medical discourse regarding very young children in institutions arose.

In the second section, we shift to the 1960s and 1970s, when structural changes in the labour market, especially the coming large-scale entry of women into the workforce, stimulated a new approach to childcare that included children up to 3 years old. The structural changes illuminated factors supporting interventions by an active government that had become sensitive to changing conditions for parents with children in the process of establishing a public preschool system.

In Norway's case, the nation was thus suitably positioned to begin developing a new system for ECEC in the 1970s that would come to (re) construct public childcare from that point forward⁷. At the same time, as a rather young nation, independent since 1905, and thus without any strong traditions upon which to build, unlike those undergirding other national ECEC systems in Europe – for instance, the traditions of the church and/or pre-existing ECEC systems – Norway had the opportunity to introduce reforms without having to overcome heavily entrenched norms in kindergartens and nursery schools.

Thus, in the 1970s, two parallel, partly interrelated processes unfolded in Norway: the transition from the private to predominantly public regulation of childcare and education and, at the same time, from the selective targeting of at-risk children to publicly funded ECEC centres for all children (i.e.

⁶ T. Korsvold, *Perspektiver paa barndommens historie*, Bergen, Fagbokforlaget, 2016, pp. 152-176.

⁷ T. Korsvold, *Dilemmas over childcare in Norway, Sweden and West Germany after 1945*, in A.T. Kjærholt, J. Qvortrup (eds.), *The Modern Child and the Flexible Labour Market. Exploring early Childhood Education and Care*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 19-37.

barnehager). This will be discussed in the third section. As a consequence, education and care services became universally available under what was identified as a new social right of all parents⁸. Formerly separate institutional systems based upon tiers were thus united to form a single institution for all children before entering compulsory school age, the *barnehage*.

In this section, we also briefly discuss the professional training of ECEC practitioners in Norway in order to shed light on its pedagogical hallmarks and characterise the power and role of pre-primary teachers as a way to clarify the pedagogy being implemented in ECEC settings in connection with state intervention.

In the fourth section, we discuss briefly trends in ECEC in Norway that have developed since 2000 and continued to alter its history. In the fifth and final section, we end the chapter by conclusion.

Theoretical and methodological approach

Needless to say, all kinds of theoretical and methodological frameworks that seek to inform ways of understanding the world and that represent different ways of approaching research are based on certain epistemological assumptions and theories of knowledge. In that case, the historical study of narratives about ECEC in Norway, in seeking to elucidate certain transitions and the state's role in creating new forms of welfare for residents, can benefit from taking the approach of discourse analysis. Although the term *discourse* can be understood in different ways at different levels, in this chapter we understand it to mean 'ways of representing part of the world'⁹. As part of discourse, narratives are constructed and reconstructed over time, and ones concerning ECEC are all informed by phenomena involving certain cultural and historical aspects, changing perspectives, various types of children, childhood, and families. For that reason, we have referred to past studies when performing historical research, as demonstrated in the footnotes of the chapter, studies that build on extended historical sources.

2. *Growing up with siblings and an extended family*

As mentioned, until the 1970s, attending an ECEC institution was an extremely marginal social phenomenon among children less than 3 years old. In fact, less than 1% of children in that age group in Norway enjoyed

⁸ Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, cit., pp. 106-113.

⁹ N. Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 26.

that opportunity. Among the reasons why, established institutions such as crèches and day nurseries were few, largely owing to their social stigma¹⁰.

For children above school age until the 1970s and 1980s, growing up with older siblings, kin, and extended family was the dominant structure and narrative of childhood in Norway. Unlike in other European countries, particularly Great Britain and Germany, no form of nanny to a certain degree existed at the time. In fact, due to the egalitarian tradition of Norway and other Nordic countries, which had less class-based societies and thus no noble or similar class, only middle-class families living in a few Norwegian towns practised that form of childcare¹¹. While working to support their households, parents in rural and urban areas did not generally leave caring for infants and toddlers to individuals outside the family. An exception was single mothers, however, who were more or less forced to work paying jobs in order to keep their families together. In such cases, infants were generally left to the care of grandmothers or, if available, other relatives who lived nearby. Far more commonly, working-class families delegated the care of their youngest children to their older siblings. Especially in the countryside, when neither a grandmother nor siblings, especially older daughters, could look after them, infants were kept in a variant of a playpen or other form of protective structure.

Among the indigenous Sami people living in northern Norway, the traditional strategy for mothers who needed to combine childcare and work was to carry their infant or toddler on their backs, with the child wrapped snugly in cloth and placed in a small, portable, handcrafted cradle. Such cradles were constructed so that, in the winter, parents could place them upright in the snow and carry on with their work. Thus, on the whole, when it came to caring for the youngest family members, children remained within their nuclear or at least within their extended families.

Crèches for a few infants in the 19th century

During industrialisation in the late 19th century, as more mothers began to work in factories, the demand for childcare increased. Beginning in the 1830s, private initiatives for the introduction of new types of childcare institutions proposed child asylums and crèches, albeit to a lesser extent in Norway than elsewhere in Europe. In particular, crèches offered all-day care for children 0 to 3 years old whose poor, working-class mothers could not care for them while on the job. The chief function of crèches, which

¹⁰ Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, cit., pp. 48-51.

¹¹ Korsvold, *Perspektiver paa barndommens historie*, cit., pp. 153-176.

were often free of charge, was to care for the very youngest children and prevent social harm.

Beginning in the 1930s, the number of crèches declined, and after World War II, only a few remained¹². By the early 1950s, that form of ECEC institution had all but disappeared or else been transformed into other forms of day nurseries, including ones for young children more than 3 years old in nursery schools and day nurseries. In the former, although no educational requirements seemed to be necessary, a local study conducted in Stavanger, a major town in Norway, has shown that some women working in crèches were deaconesses, nursery nurses, or ward sisters. Another study on the history of childcare in Stavanger has additionally documented that the Salvation Army and Lutheran congregations established a few crèches for children up to 2.5 years old belonging to working-class mothers and that the staff, including nurses and deaconesses, emphasised cleanliness and strict routines¹³.

Against that background, kindergartens and nursery schools operating as *barnehager* overlapped in the 1930s. Established such that parents paid for the half-day service, the kindergartens followed the ideas of German educator Friedrich Froebel and, as such, targeted better cognitive and social education for children in their methods and activities¹⁴. Eventually applied in day care systems even for the youngest children, the Froebelian pedagogical tradition was particularly embraced in the early post-war period, and Froebel's influence became especially important for pre-primary teachers in that period.

After World War II, a new development unfolded in ECEC for the youngest children. From 1945 to the 1960s, most crèches had evolved into departments within day care centres, nursery schools, or day nurseries with advanced pedagogical approaches, as evidenced by child-size furniture, the variety of play materials, larger playgrounds, and new buildings designed by architects. In those settings, educated pre-primary teachers or *barnehagelaerere* (literacy: kindergarten teachers) implemented their pedagogy of care and play in all institutions, those for very young children included¹⁵.

¹² Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, cit., pp. 59-60.

¹³ M. Rothle, *Barnehagene i Stavanger: fra veldedighet til velferdsgode*, Aarbok, Museum Stavanger, 2015, pp. 22-23: «https://uis.brage.unit.no/uis-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2461089/Roothle_Barnehagene.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y» (retrieved on 15/02/2021).

¹⁴ K. Brehony, *Transforming theories of childhood and early childhood education: Child study and the empirical assault on Froebelian rationalism*, in «*Paedagogica Historica*», 45/4-5 (2009), pp. 585-604.

¹⁵ Rothle, *Barnehagene i Stavanger: fra veldedighet til velferdsgode*, cit., p. 29-36.

Care, stimulation, and, above all, play were prioritised as activities, and the weight of their value rested upon their capacity to allow children to meet peers and socialise within a form of all-round-pedagogy.

In sum, the educational-pedagogical orientation of ECEC in Norway today emanated from the *barnehage*, even for day nurseries with very young children. The few early childhood or pre-primary teachers who existed eagerly embraced the idea of Frobel's kindergarten, despite Norway's lack of a particular education system or even extended network from which ECEC could draw¹⁶.

3. *State intervention, regulation, and reform, 1945–1970*

To start with, in this first main section, in Norway, as was the case elsewhere in Europe, the primary providers of all forms of childcare during the first post-war period were philanthropic associations or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The very few institutions for the youngest children in Norway belonged to the social and welfare system, not the education system.

In general, in the first decades after World War II, politicians of all parties regarded public investment in families and children not only as a social and moral good, as well as a necessary condition for peace and democracy, but also as a necessity for continued economic growth and development. Beginning in the 1960s, policymakers thus increasingly focused on early childhood education as an economic investment and argued for a combination of education and care in full-time day care centres for all children 1–6 years old¹⁷.

Nevertheless, within the narrative of ECEC in Norway, it was not until the late 1960s, when the percentage of women and mothers who worked outside the home began to increase steadily, that the discourse began to change and that all-day childcare became a social demand. As a result, albeit not before the 1970s, the goal of governmental policy increasingly became providing all groups of children, especially those from less privileged backgrounds, equal access to publicly funded, all-day childcare and education.

One of the earliest examples of that shift in policy for families and children was the introduction of *barnetrygd* in 1946: a flat-rate, tax-free al-

¹⁶ A. Greve, T. Thorsby Jansen, M. Solheim, *Kritisk og begeistret. Barnehagelaernes fagpolitiske historie*, Bergen, Fagbokforlaget, 2013, pp. 29-32; Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, cit., p. 102.

¹⁷ Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, cit., pp. 75-103.

lowance granted to all mothers regardless of marital or employment status. Replacing the former child tax deduction, the child allowance was paid directly to all mothers, with very few exceptions. Added to that, in 1964 a parental benefit was introduced for widows and unmarried mothers. With the National Insurance Act of 1967, the name was changed to *overgangsstønad* ('transitional benefit'), and, beginning in 1971, divorced or separated mothers also received that benefit when needed in order to take care of their children¹⁸.

Nevertheless, the 1950s and 1960s marked a period when women in Norway were encouraged to concentrate on domestic life. As the government stimulated new industries and invested in the infrastructure of the still agrarian Norwegian countryside by building roads and expanding the electrical power supply, caring for young children increasingly became conceived as the exclusive responsibility of mothers. In parallel, women's work in industry and the service sector was mostly not needed until the 1960s. The low employment rate among women in post-war Norway indicated that development, as it was mostly single mothers who engaged in paid work outside the household. According to Statistics Norway, 53% of all women more than 15 of age were registered as housewives in 1950, and by 1960, the percentage was even higher: nearly 60%¹⁹.

In the narrative of ECEC, the 1950s are therefore often described in literature as the 'golden era of the family' or the 'era of happy childhood'²⁰. The majority of Norwegian women supported the mentioned policies of the government and did not demand more all-day childcare facilities. As a result of those policies, the percentage of children attending ECEC institutions in 1963, when Statistics Norway first documented registration in ECEC across Norway, remained quite low, at approximately only 2%. Most children with working mothers were therefore supervised in private care arrangements with relatives or neighbours. Surprisingly, in that 'golden era of the family' or the 'era of a happy childhood', state interventions and reforms in ECEC began emerging. The sector was provided with new laws and regulations such as the Child Welfare Act (*Lov om barnevern*) in 1954 and its Regula-

¹⁸ T. Korsvold, *In the Best Interests of the Child: Child Care and Pre-School Education in Norway and Sweden after 1945: A Comparison*, in C. Allemann-Ghionda, K. Hagemann, K.H. Jarausch (eds.), *States, Families, and Children: The 'Time Politics' of Child Care and School Education in Post-War Europe*, Oxford, Berghahn, 2011.

¹⁹ T. Korsvold, *Barn og barndom i velferdsstatens smaabarnspolitikk. En sammenlignende studie av Norge, Sverige og Tyskland 1945–2000*, Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 2008.

²⁰ M. Rudberg, *Dydige, sterke, lykkelige barn. Ideer om oppdragelse i borgerlig tradisjon*, Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1983.

tions for Day Care Centres for Children (*Forskrifter for daginstitusjoner for barn*) that same year²¹. This will be discussed in the following.

New regulations 1950s–1970s

For Norway's new regulations, pre-primary teachers, as the dominant professionals of *barnehager*, provided great input. Child welfare inspectors from the Ministry of Social Affairs were all recruited from the ranks of those professionals, and it was exclusively members of the profession who worked tirelessly to implement the national ECEC regulations of 1954, namely by visiting all day care institutions in the country²².

With their exclusive knowledge as educated persons in the field, those pedagogical practitioners influenced the regulations for ECEC in Norway. As a consequence, bureaucrats in the Ministry of Social Affairs exhibited common ways of interpreting what ECEC should involve as a domain in which the Ministry had more or less inadequate knowledge. In response, the specialised knowledge and professional training of educated pre-primary teachers became indispensable. Unsurprisingly, the Regulations for Day Care Centres for Children in 1954 were conspicuously similar to those of the profession's so-called 'Kindergarten Guidelines' adopted a few years earlier. Thus, knowledge of the ECEC profession became hegemonic, and pre-primary teachers became the dominant position in the field²³.

In parallel, the very few educated pre-primary teachers were organised into a professional trade union, the Norwegian Kindergarten Teachers' Union, in 1948. Prior to that, the Ministry of Social Affairs had employed inspectors, all of them pre-primary teachers, to audit every day care institution in the country and to ensure that they sustained a certain standard of quality, including being educationally ambitious and dependent upon well-educated pre-primary teachers. As those trends converged, no other profession or professional group defined childcare pedagogy as precisely as Norway's *barnehagelaerere*.

In turn, with state intervention in ECEC in the 1950s and 1960s came new regulations regarding staff qualifications and training. From 1954, the Regulations for Day Care Centres for Children, specifically Section VIII ('Staff'), required every ECEC setting to have a manager and every day

²¹ *Forskrifter for daginstitusjoner for barn. Fastsatt av Sosialdepartementet*, august 1954.

²² O. Tremoen, *Tilsyn eller pedagogikk? Barnehagens tradisjonelle grunnlag. Barnevernsinspektørene og institusjonsutvikling i perioden 1945 1975*, MA thesis, NTNU, 2014.

²³ Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, cit., pp. 83–94.

care centre open all day to have an assistant, in addition to other persons employed for housekeeping²⁴. On top of that, the manager had to be an educated pre-primary teacher with 2 years of professional training from a school or college²⁵. In day nurseries for children under 3 years of age, the managers at that time were usually educated nurses. Training in childcare, lasting 6 months, was one of several qualifications that had to be met before entering a college to become a pre-primary teacher. Thus, the Regulations for Day Care Centres for Children stated in brackets that educated pre-primary teachers should usually also have education in childcare²⁶. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, another requirement for commencing pre-primary teacher education was passing an examination in childcare.

For those reasons, in the decades that followed, one professional group dominated ECEC institutions in Norway – pre-primary teachers – as the regulations from 1954 remained in effect until the first Kindergarten Law (*barnehageloven*) was passed in 1975²⁷. Their dominance will be discussed in the next section.

Childcare and early childhood pedagogy: A medical or pedagogical model?

In the overarching narrative of ECEC in Norway, shifts in the rationales, elements, and pedagogical hallmarks that legitimised ECEC and the role of the practitioners – that is, pre-primary teachers – in state interventions raise an important question: whether ECEC institutions upheld a psychological-medical model or an educational-pedagogical model. In the following, that question guides our discussion as we seek to clarify some of those increasingly visible hallmarks, the degree to which new influences became part of the new nationwide education system, and how.

In that narrative, impulses from scientist John Bowlby's deprivation theory from the late 1940s and the importance of keeping mothers and their children together in family-like environments also reached Scandinavia, albeit with a delay. Initially coming into play in the early 1960s an implication of Bowlby's work was that time in institutions can harm children, especially full-day stays for children less than 3 years old. That implication, by forging an invisible boundary above and over 3 years old in child care,

²⁴ *Forskrifter for daginstitusjoner for barn. Fastsatt av Sosialdepartementet*, august 1954, cit., p. 5.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Forskrifter for daginstitusjoner for barn. Fastsatt av Sosialdepartementet*, august 1954, p. 5.

²⁷ Lov om nr. 30 om barnehager m. v., datert 6. juni 1975.

became important in designing ECEC settings in several European countries, including Norway²⁸.

However, for Norway, a close look at the sources reveals the more nuanced psychological influences on ECEC in the country, especially the influences of Bowlby's research. Perhaps most notably, the Ministry of Social Affairs' Day Care Committee in its recommendations issued in 1961, appended a separate document regarding children's psychological development, one stating 'the Committee's recommendation to investigate certain questions about day care institutions for children'²⁹. Although the document did not present any specific scientific findings or state whether foreign practices could be transferred to Norway, it did state that [i]n recent years, numerous studies have been conducted that show that, in such relationships [mother-child relationships], the ability to be contacted, the harmonious development of emotional life, and self-esteem and security appear to be intimately linked to the experiences of the child makes during his or her first years of life. [...] Often, one believes that misalignments such as juvenile delinquency may have their origin in early mistakes [made in those relationships]³⁰.

The excerpt identifies associations between time in institutions in the first 3 years of life and the possibility of harm in child development, because a child's detachment from other people could later cause problems such as alcoholism and juvenile delinquency. Added to such warnings about the risk of denying maternal contact, more or less pragmatic knowledge and insights motivated ECEC institutions to be designed to best benefit the youngest children: 'Children who are away from home must have contact with others, and conditions have to be optimal in every way'³¹. In that light, the alternative to day nurseries – that is, having single mothers leave their children in foster homes – was seldom pursued.

Following those insights, the Committee's members strove to develop the arrangement that would best reduce the risk of harm for the youngest children. To that purpose, psychoanalytical and psychological studies investigating what harm mothers' occupational activities might cause to such children were applied in constructive, supportive ways. As a case in point, when studies suggested that children older than 3 years would benefit

²⁸ T. Korsvold, *Moralsk panikk. Bruk av psykologisk og sosiologisk kunnskap i utformingen av velferdsordninger for barn*, in «Psykologi tidsskrift», 8/3 (2005), pp. 46-51.

²⁹ *Komiteén til aa utrede spørsmålet om daginstitusjoner m. v. for barn*, Sosialdepartementet, 1961, pp. 63-64.

³⁰ *Ivi*, p. 63.

³¹ *Ivi*, p. 64.

from institutional stays with older children and adults more than younger children would, that infants receive the best care from their own mothers. That short stays in ECEC settings were preferable to long ones, institutions assigned specific groups of children a staff member who would act as care persons for them at certain times of day to prevent maternal deprivation.

Of course, following established best practices, those ‘temporary mums’ were typically educated staff members who provided intimate contact for children in small groups. In that way and others, research in developmental psychology was productively applied to limit the length of children’s stays in day nurseries and to ensure that a sufficient number of well-educated pre-primary teachers were available during their stays to provide each child with sufficient care.

At the same time, as had occurred elsewhere, the discourse on child-care, children, and childhood seemed to forge a regime of truth in the narrative of ECEC in Norway that continued to dismiss predominantly by child psychology. Until the 1960s, the Norwegian government had hesitated to support childcare, especially day nurseries. Even in 1963, when the state finally began to subsidise day nurseries and kindergartens, policymakers who continued to regard public nurseries as harmful to children argued that 3 to 4 hours was the maximum length of stay that could be in the best interest of the child³².

All told, the hallmarks legitimising ECEC and its practitioners upheld a psychological-pedagogical model in which the youngest children (i.e. 0–3-year-olds) were cared for in small groups by trained pedagogues during shorter or longer stays at nurseries multiple days a week.

This was important for the coming period, and will be discussed in the next and third section.

4. *State intervention and universality since the 1970s*

As was the case in other European countries, reforms in ECEC in the 1970s were influenced by a new understanding of education and care in Norway as an economic resource that could stimulate the labour supply and thus economic growth³³. Because industrial growth, in turn, meant increased welfare for all, especially young families, parenthood became politicised³⁴.

³² Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, cit., pp. 96-100.

³³ For more, see Rauhala, *Child Care as an Issue of Equality and Equity*, cit.

³⁴ A.-L. Ellingsater, A. Leira, *Politicising Parenthood in Scandinavia*, London, Policy Press, 2006.

In 1977, the Norwegian government introduced paid parental leave, albeit with the expectation that both parents would return to work when paid leave ended. At that point, the legislation assumed, parents would entrust their children to the care of publicly founded and financed ECEC institutions, which had attained qualitative equivalence with private care provided by the family³⁵. The kindergarten form, the *barnehage*, was extended to include all-day care even for children 0–3 years old, thereby strengthening, ECEC's educational orientation without severing the intimate connection between a social-pedagogical view on education and care³⁶.

Understanding the influences of pedagogical practitioners and the ECEC profession on those developments requires examining factors that supported the state interventions that occurred in the 1970s, especially their new ideas about appropriate ages for ECEC and ways of structuring time in ECEC settings. As early as 1964, the Norwegian government had set the stage for a national day care policy by launching a permanent financial incentive system for all ECEC institutions. In the 1970s, for each child that they enrolled, approved institutions or centres received a government grant calculated according to the child's age and attendance. That grant, however, covered only a third of the operating costs, with the remainder to be paid by whoever owned the regulated arrangements that provided ECEC – sometimes municipalities and/or NGOs – and by the parents.

A new understanding of childhood, one holding that young children should spend some time at home and some at all-day centres, and a new gender contract, one that recognised a woman's right to pursue a career and achieve economic independence, were well-suited to the needs of the expanding labour market in the late 1960s and 1970s. As a result, two parallel but partly interrelated processes emerged. On the one hand, the regulation of ECEC institutions shifted from entirely private to predominantly public control. On the other, poverty relief shifted from selectively targeting at-risk children to publicly funding universally available childcare as a right of parents, albeit in the form of only one institution for all children: the all-day *barnehager*³⁷.

By the end of the period, in the end of the 1980s, ECEC had become firmly established as a public responsibility, not simply the duty of employers, private institutions, and/or NGOs. Soon after, the pre-existing system of day nurseries, which were primarily childcare institutions and half-day kindergartens, would be reformed under the influence of similar thinking into

³⁵ Korsvold, *Barn og barndom i velferdsstatens smaabarnspolitik*, cit., p. 148.

³⁶ Leira, *From Poverty Relief to Universal Provision: The Changing Grounds for Childcare Policy Reforms in Norway*, cit., pp. 112-131.

³⁷ Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, cit., pp. 104-134.

modern, publicly funded, universal all-day childcare centres that closely integrated education and childcare as inseparable activities for all children 1–6 years old. That reform's principal goal was improving early childhood education, which Norwegian society now thought should be available to all children and their parents³⁸.

The pedagogical model of the nursery school

Owing to changes in the 1970s, the formerly heterogeneous systems of ECEC institutions in Norway were merged into one. Those uniformly all-day, centre-based institutions, *barnehager*, became the first settings where children 1–6 years old of all social backgrounds could form their identities as residents in the same spatial and social environment. Even so, part of the pedagogy of the former kindergartens, with 4-hour stays affording all children regardless of (dis)abilities opportuniand national ties to play and learn both indoors and outdoors, found its way into the new system. Those pedagogical hallmarks, already associated with kindergartens, were now extended to all-day services for the youngest children as well. Beyond that, education for pre-primary teachers, with its pedagogy of play developed into a well-integrated form of all-round pedagogy prioritising care for children and children's learning – continued to dominate³⁹.

As a consequence, the former class-divided system, which had been in place for more than a century and dated back to kinder asylums and crèches, became definitively dismantled in the 1970s as it became less stigmatising for parents to leave their children at all-day care centres. At the same time, given the goal of establishing a system of educational and learning institutions for all children, the new ECEC institution became a place where children from all family backgrounds could meet.

Nevertheless, the narrative of resistance to all-day childcare persisted. Public provision of and a certain degree of access to ECEC institutions in Norway did not occur until the Kindergarten Act came into force in 1975, and even then, it was expanded only slightly in the 1980s and only to the very youngest children beginning in 2000 (Figure 1).

The resistance may have been due to the persistent cultural ideal of a so-called 'good childhood', a concept that inevitably went hand-in-hand

³⁸ Ivi, pp. 105-113.

³⁹ Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, p. 142; I. Tallberg Broman, *Svensk förskola i kontinuitet och förändring*, in B. Ridderspore, S. Persson (eds.), *Utbildningsvetenskap för förskolan*, Stockholm, Natur & Kultur, 2017; J.-E. Johansson, *Barnehagens opprinnelse, styring og praksis*, Bergen, Fagbokforlaget, 2020, p. 47.

with deeply rooted ambivalence about the institutionalisation of childcare, especially for children up to 3 years of age⁴⁰.

Considering all of the above, we nevertheless face the questions of whose knowledge had power in that narrative of transition and what knowledge about important factors in state intervention was heeded. As pre-primary teachers performed their duties in day nurseries, they were also responsible for early childhood education for children 1–3 years old.

Although we have only some information about how they were trained, it seems that the professionalisation of ECEC and its practitioners has been pivotal in developing the educational hallmarks of early childhood education since the 1970s⁴¹. Of course, ascertaining which staff groups and professions could access work in day nurseries required scrutinising their education, and by way of state regulations, those individuals became preferred and were given responsibility for entire groups of children.

As a result, pre-primary teacher education became essential for teaching groups of children aged 1–6 years old and continues to be in Norway today. Once young children gained the right to spend their days supervised by educated adults in settings focused on play and with an all-around pedagogy for all children, the youngest children soon enjoyed that right as well. In that way, a Froebelian understanding of ECEC became translated – or better yet, *transformed* – into an understanding of developmental psychology and of reliable new theories to be applied to all children in Norway's day care institutions.

5. *New state regulations since 2000: Narratives of access and learning*

In the fourth and penultimate section, we take a closer look at the last to forming decades⁴². Today, nearly all ECEC institutions in Norway provide all-day care for all children 1–6 years old, and the routine of having both

⁴⁰ Korsvold, *In the Best Interests of the Child: Child Care and Pre-School Education in Norway and Sweden after 1945*, cit., pp. 199-200.

⁴¹ Greve, Thorsby, Solheim, *Kritisk og begeistret. Barnehagelaerernes fagpolitiske historie*, cit., pp. 105-135.

⁴² In reference to statistics, Norway does not belong to the European Union (EU). In 1972, the country rejected membership in the European Community by referendum, and another referendum in 1994 yielded the same result. However, the European Economic Area, established in 1992 with an agreement between the EU and member countries of the European Free Trade Association, grants Norway access to the EU's inner market and to various forms of cooperation in diverse fields, including education and research. This also means publishing ECEC data of Norway, which we refer to.

parents work outside the home while children, even 1–3-year-olds, attend ECEC centres enjoys widespread acceptance. As such, ECEC services are considered to be the public's responsibility and are financed for all parents by state and local municipalities, although with some parental fees.

From a longer-term perspective, ECEC in Norway has become a far more politicised field of interest since the end of the 20th century than in previous decades. As the Norwegian population's level of education increased substantially, the field of ECEC, once the domain of the social system and the welfare system, became the domain of the education system, namely from 2006. In this year, ECEC was transferred from the Ministry of Children and Family to the Ministry of Education and Research. This transfer had major consequences for society's expectations for children's learning outcomes. In parallel, growing political interest in ECEC reflects a stronger focus on early childhood as a valuable, important period in life. The ECEC profession, for its part, has continuously emphasised the intrinsic value of childhood, of children's everyday lives, and of play as the most important characteristic of day care.

However, the chief objective of ECEC has remained the same: to meet children's needs for care and play and to promote learning and formative development as a basis for all-round pedagogy: Play, friendship, and children's well-being have thus been pervasive themes in political documents addressing ECEC and its development within the Norwegian welfare state⁴³. For that reason, play, care, learning, and formative development should be examined in context. If so, then the historical narrative of Norway reveals a uniquely Nordic pedagogy for ECEC geared towards fulfilling both pedagogical aims and the needs of children and their families. Indeed, being mindful of childhood's intrinsic value receives mention in no less than the first paragraph of the Kindergarten Act. This law and the Framework Plan of Kindergartens, a regulatory framework for the content and task in child-care centres, govern the ECEC institutions⁴⁴.

⁴³ T. Korsvold, *Barnehagelaerrollen i et profesjonsperspektiv- et kunnskapsgrunnlag. Kap. 3. Historiske perspektiver paa barnehagelaerrollen*. Ekspertgruppen for barnehagelaerrollen. Rapport. Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2018, pp. 65-80: <<https://nettsteder.regjeringen.no/barnehagelaerrollen/files/2018/12/Barnehagel%C3%A6rrollen-i-et-profesjonsperspektiv-et-kunnskapsgrunnlag.pdf>> (retrieved on 15/02/2021).

⁴⁴ Lov om barnehager (barnehageloven), Lovdata, sist endret 01.01.2021: <<https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2005-06-17-64>>; <<https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2005-06-17-64>> (retrieved on 11/02/2021); *Framework Plan of Kindergartens*, Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017: <<https://www.udir.no/globalassets/filer/barnehage/rammeplan/framework-plan-for-kindergartens2-2017.pdf>> (retrieved on 15/02/2021).

Access to ECEC

Since 2000, political initiatives in ECEC have had such a profound impact that no less than 90% of Norwegian children aged 1–5 years attended ECEC institutions in the previous decade. Beginning in 2009, each child at least 1 year of age has been guaranteed a place in a full-time day care centre, while paid parental leave has been extended from birth to the child's first birthday. The transition from parental care to institutional care is established even to the extent that few parents apply for their children's placement in ECEC before they turn a year old. In fact, since 2006, municipalities in Norway have been responsible for assigning places to parents and for securing enough places to meet the demand⁴⁵.

In keeping with that responsibility, ECEC centres are financed by municipalities, although also by modest fees from parents. According to regulations under the Kindergarten Act (*Barnehageloven*) in force since 2005, the fee that parents have to pay for placement has a fixed maximum that applies to both public and private owners of ECECs. In effect, the reform of the maximum fee in 2003 has not only amounted to established prices that favour parents but also made access to ECEC affordable for more parents of young children and thus promoted social equity in the use of ECEC institutions⁴⁶.

In general, counties and municipalities in Norway enjoy considerable autonomy in allocating resources between sectors and in organising welfare services for their inhabitants, including ECEC institutions. At the same time, the work of municipalities and counties is regulated by local government acts and special legislation related to different services and sectors. The autonomy of ECEC institutions, in turn, depends on the delegation of responsibilities from the county and/or municipality. Whereas the county governor supervises the municipal and county authorities' fulfilment of their legislated duties to secure high-quality ECEC for all children, the municipality is at once the owner and local authority for ECEC centres.

In that role, the municipality provides guidance to the centres and ensures that they are operated in accordance with current national state regulations⁴⁷. Most important, the municipalities are mandated to secure enough places to meet the demand of parents, who may choose which institution their children attend by simply sending an application to the municipality.

⁴⁵ Lovdata, Lov om barnehager, 01.01.2006.

⁴⁶ European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice, *Key data on early childhood education and care in Europe: 2019 edition*, Publications Office, 2019, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/894279> (retrieved on 28/07/2022).

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

In the coordinated admissions process that follows, the equal treatment of children and equal treatment of municipal and private owned ECEC settings are prioritised.

Beyond that, in the past two decades, corporations of privately owned companies within ECEC have become a new and controversy trend. Although approximately 50% of all ECEC institutions were owned by municipalities in 2019, joint private-commercial ownership of ECEC corporations, often diverse in character, is growing rapidly, albeit more in some districts than in others⁴⁸.

In the light of *marketing*, the competing marked between either profit or non-profit welfare services has become an increased political discussion. Starting out with the Kindergarten agreement (*Barnehageforliket*) of 2003, one particular change was equal financial treat for municipal and private-commercial ownership of ECEC corporations, with financial support from the government to the both of them⁴⁹. Taking, with the time, a more dominate position, the financial profit of the private-commercial ownership has been discussed and the way the profit associations has become an integrational part of the Norwegian landscape. In addition, the question is how and in which ways this new trend have influences of the pedagogical hallmarks of ECEC institutions, challenging the profession's pedagogy⁵⁰.

Learning in ECEC

Although children in Norway are not formally assessed at the pre-primary level, the role of pre-primary teachers is to ensure that the parents and the ECEC institutions have regular opportunities to exchange observations and evaluations concerning every child's health, well-being, experiences, development, and learning. In the process, the staff are required justify their evaluations to parents and consider their views. Such evaluative information is normally conveyed both during conversations when parents drop off or fetch their children at ECEC institutions and during more formal one-to-one conferences to which the parents are invited.

Thus, knowledge of the well-being and all-round development of children as individuals and in groups remains important to ensuring the provi-

⁴⁸ Statistics, Norway, *Barnehager*, 2020.

⁴⁹ *St.meld. nr. 24 (2002-2003). Barnehage tilbud til alle - økonomi, mangfold og valgfrihet*. 1 Barnehageavtalen.

⁵⁰ H. Fehn Dahle, *Butikk eller pedagogikk? En studie av private barnehagekjeder i Norge*, Doctoral thesis, Høgskolen Innlandet, 2020: «https://brage.inn.no/inn-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2711734/Digital%20publisering%20Fehn-Dahle_Avhandling.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y» (retrieved on 15/02/2021).

sion of adaptable, high-quality ECEC for all children, as consistent with the Kindergarten Act and detailed in the law's accompanying Framework Plan, introduced 1996 and revised in 2011 and 2017. Since the start in 1996 the Framework Plan has been developed and adjusted in different ways. According to the legislation and the revisions introduced in 2017, every child's well-being and all-round development need to be continually monitored and assessed in light of their individual circumstances and the staff's knowledge of children's development and needs. In particular, the Kindergarten Act requires the child's experiences and opinions to be part of the material used for evaluation, whereas the Framework Plan affords ECEC staff flexibility in tailoring its guidelines to suit local conditions. In Norway the pre-primary teachers still talk about ECEC activities as play, care and learning within an all-round pedagogy⁵¹.

Nevertheless, the development of the Norwegian ECEC can be seen from a broader international perspective, related to the emphases placed on the OECD and learning outcomes. *Schoolification*, that is to give children school experiences and knowledge in, among other things, maths, reading and writing before compulsory school, is a most discussed topic. The development has raised a number of different issues, and it has been described as a process changing from traditional tasks with play, care and learning within an all-round –pedagogy discourse to a learning discourse with learning as a hallmark for quality⁵².

Regarding the ever-important role of pre-primary teachers in sustaining the quality of ECEC, in 2018, after protests from parents and ECEC staff about the regulations in place, a new norm regulating and, at the time, reducing staff-child ratios was introduced in Norway's ECEC institutions. For children less than 3 years old, at least one staff member is required per three children and one pedagogical leader or qualified pre-primary teacher for every seven children; for older children, the staff-child ratio is one to six, while the teacher-child ratio is one to 14. As regulated by law, meeting those ratios is the responsibility of the institution's owner(s). Again, analysing the main narrative reveals the need for ECEC professionals and other agents to play active roles in transformations and new reforms in the field.

As part of Norway's national higher education system since the 1970s, pre-primary teacher education has undergone reforms, including the requirement of 3 years in university colleges since the beginning of the 1980s. As a result, the educational leaders of ECEC have studied in university

⁵¹ M. Nygaard, *Barnehagen som læringsarena i endring. Politiske ideologier og barnhagelaereres fortolkninger*, Doctoral theses, Trondheim, NTNU, 2017: <<https://ntnuopen.ntnu.no/ntnu-xmlui/handle/11250/2451746?show=full>> (retrieved on 20/3/2022).

⁵² *Ivi*, pp. 57-61.

and/or university colleges and, since 2006, have needed to have earned a bachelor's degree. In 2017, the qualification for primary school education was extended to the completion of a 5-year master's programme, and for pre-primary teachers, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education in 2010 advocated also requiring a master's degree in order to accommodate the complexity of ECEC and meet the need for more in-depth, updated knowledge⁵³.

To keep pace and develop higher-quality ECEC, academic credentials are thus fundamental throughout the ECEC sector. Even so, professionalisation and the professional development of staff remain key elements in creating competent ECEC for all children and all age groups.

6. *Closing remarks*

In this fifth and final section we can state that exploring the roots of early childhood education, childcare, childhood services, and childcare facilities can illuminate several discursive transformations within national ECEC systems as well as capture their uniqueness. By examining the origins and growth of each system, scholars and practitioners can make the features of each system more visible. In our case, we have argued that the ECEC sector has rather an independent position within the education system as a whole, and were the pre-primary teachers and their pedagogical traditions developed into a well-integrated pedagogy still play a dominant role.

In our case, we have investigated factors supporting state intervention and the establishment of a public preschool system for children in Norway and, in the process, the important role of the ECEC profession and ECEC practitioners therein. In response to a secondary question, we have also examined the educational hallmarks of ECEC emerging from those processes. Overall, the factors that have supported state intervention and the establishment of public preschools in Norway have been closely connected to the history of Norway's entire welfare system and the role of the state in constructing a new welfare state. The raising Norwegian welfare state created new conditions for families with children and was a dominating factor. The ECEC profession and practitioners have thus played an important role in forming the system's pedagogical hallmarks. Such transformations are not

⁵³ Nasjonal organ for kvalitet i utdanning (NOKUT), *Evaluering av førskolelærerutdanningen i Norge. Del 1: Hovedrapport, 2010*, p. 102: «Komitéen mener at førskolelærerutdanningen av faglige grunner bør ligge paa masternivaa»: «https://www.nokut.no/contentassets/40568ec86aab411ba43c5a880ae339b5/hovedrapport_flueva.pdf» (retrieved on 11/02/2021).

merely the inevitable products of economic and political forces⁵⁴. On the contrary, changing political discourses afford a picture of the kind of status and standards that the state legitimises. In processes of reform, ideologies come into play, and, in turn, discourses become ideologically transformed. In Norway, although the state exercised regulative power, its regulations were maintained by the acceptance of that power from the agents tasked with executing it. In that case, ECEC professionals have taken part in the transformative processes of creating new everyday life for the majority of the youngest children living in Norway.

In the 1970s, a new concept of childhood took root that, in time, found broad support in society and came to have enormous consequences for public policy. Among the factors influencing that state's intervention may have been that most residents in this country trust the government, politicians, and public authorities, typically within a culture marked by a high level of political consensus. That consensus, at least in Norway, can be traced back to the country's perennial egalitarian structure in, among other things, solving problems as a community.

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⁵⁴ J. Clarke and J. Newman, *The Managerial State. Power, Politics and Ideology in the Remaking of Social Welfare*, London, Sage, 1997.

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Education and Care Services for Young Children in Norway. From Private Initiative to State Intervention

Tora Korsvold

Abstract – This chapter reconstructs the history of day nurseries in Norway, with a particular focus on the changes that occurred in the 1960s and '70s. Using a historical and narrative approach that takes into account pedagogy and culture, we explore the key factors that influenced the development of the early childhood education policy in Norway. We outline the context-specific patterns and characteristics of childcare centres for all children up to six years of age. An educational service model for the youngest was developed mainly within a pedagogical model, and the history of this model is discussed in more detail. With this analysis, we attempt to identify the factors that stimulated the creation of an all-day time policy for early childhood education in the 1970s. We also look to discover the pedagogical hallmarks of ECEC in those processes, especially concerning the role of the ECEC profession. In addition, we shed light on the developments in education and care services since the 2000s.

1. *Introduction*

In Norway and other European countries, never before have children so young begun participating in publicly designed education and care for so many hours a day. In Norway in particular, all children up to 6 years and registered as living in a municipality have had a statutory right to day care since 2006. With other transformations, full-time day care institutions, called *barnehage* (literacy: kindergarten), and children's homes have become the foremost venues for the socialisation of children, including from 1 to 3 years old. As a result, early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings have become a major part of children's everyday lives in Norway.

During 2000s, Norway, together with the other Nordic countries, has been ranked high in international comparisons on ECEC¹.

According to Statistics Norway, only 6% of all children more than 3 years old in 1990 could access a day care institution. In 2019, by contrast, approximately 92% of all children up to 6 years, 85% of all children 1–2 years old, and a whopping 97% of all children 3–5 years old were attending one *barnehage* on daily basis. Thus, in less than three decades, *barnehager* had become widely accepted by the citizens of Norway, especially current and future parents of young children².

Figure 1. Enrolment of children in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in Norway, 1970–2019.

Year	Total (%)	Under 3 years (%)	Over 3 Years (%)
1970	3	1	2
1990	37	6	52
2000	62	37	81
2019	92	85	97

Note. Values represent percentages of all children in Norway in their age group enrolled in a regulated ECEC arrangement, including centre and family day care, whether privately and publicly funded.

Sources: Statistics, Norway: *NOS Child Welfare (NOS Barneomsorg)* (1970); Statistics, Norway: *Daginstitusjoner* (1972); Statistics, Norway: *Barnehager* (2020).

In this chapter, we focus on the history of state intervention in ECEC, beginning after World War II when ECEC for children in Norway was marginal. In fact, only 2% of all children of compulsory school age during the period of the 1950s to the 1970s attended an ECEC institution. Even so, by encompassing the foundation of educational hallmarks of ECEC in Norway, the period heavily influenced the pedagogical development of the country's day nurseries and ECEC regulations to this day.

¹ UNICEF - Innocenti Research Centre, *The Child Care Transition. A league table of early childhood education and care in economically advanced countries*, Report Card 8, Florence, 2008, p. 8: <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc8_eng.pdf> (retrieved on 10/2/2021).

² Statistics, Norway, *Barnehager*, Oslo, 2020: <<https://www.ssb.no/utdanning/statistikker/barnehager/aar-endelige>> (retrieved on 10/02/2021).

In Norway and other European countries, the history of education, caring, and play for young children is deeply embedded in the social, economic, political, and cultural history of the nation³. By the same token, in ECEC systems in Scandinavia, the role of state interventions has been crucial. Thus, probing the history of ECEC for insights into the development of ECEC institutions in diverse national contexts often placed certain characteristics of Norway's ECEC system in the spotlight. Drawing upon insights from the historical comparative studies, we illuminate the state's active role⁴. This in cooperating with the profession and practitioners of ECEC in developing not only Norway's system but also a new everyday life for the country's youngest residents and their parents⁵.

Questions and sections

Beginning with child asylums and kindergartens in the 19th century, as establishments in which private initiatives dominated, ECEC and childcare in general in Norway gradually 'went public', so to speak, in the latter half of the 20th century. With ECEC increasingly characterised as an important investment for the welfare state and an essential service for all children, ever-evolving conditions of parenthood and childhood in modern society became a major driving factor in the overarching narrative of ECEC in the

³ See E.C. Melhuish, P. Moss (eds.), *Day care for young children: international perspectives*, London, Routledge, 1991; K. Nawrotzki, *New Perspectives on Preschooling: The National and Transnational in Early Childhood Education*, in «History of Education Quarterly», 49/2 (2009); P.-L. Rauhala, *Child Care as an Issue of Equality and Equity: The Example of the Nordic Countries*, in K. Scheiwe, H. Willekens (eds.), *Child Care and Preschool Development in Europe: Institutional Perspectives*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; A. Leira, *From Poverty Relief to Universal Provision: The Changing Grounds for Childcare Policy Reforms in Norway*, in H. Willekens, K. Scheiwe, K. Nawrotzki (eds.), *The Development of Early Childhood Education in Europe and North America. Historical and Comparative perspective*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015; D. Caroli, *Day Nurseries and Childcare in Europe, 1800–1939*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017; V. Pacini-Ketchabaw, P. Moss, *Early Childhood Pedagogy: Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw Interviews Peter Moss*, «Journal of Childhood Studies», 45/2 (2020).

⁴ For more, see Melhuish, Moss (eds.), *Day care for young children: international perspectives*; Rauhala, *Child Care as an Issue of Equality and Equity: The Example of the Nordic Countries*, cit.; Willekens, Scheiwe, Nawrotzki, *Introduction: The Longue Durée – Early Childhood Institutions and Ideas in Flux*, cit., pp. 1-28.

⁵ T. Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, Oslo, Abstrakt, 2005, pp. 75-201.

country⁶. In analysing that narrative, we attempt to answer two questions. On the one hand, what factors supported the state's intervention and the establishment of a public preschool system, and what was the role of ECEC practitioners and the ECEC profession therein? On the other, what were the pedagogical hallmarks of ECEC in those processes, especially concerning the role of the ECEC profession?

To examine that narrative, we have organised this chapter into various sections. In the first section, we initially focus on ECEC in Norway in the 1930s and 1940s, after which we turn to its transformations beginning in the 1950s. From that point forward, Norway developed into a modern welfare state that prioritised welfare reforms, including social ones, for its residents in light of the universal principle of providing social support for all people within its borders. During that same period, a controversial and demanding pedagogical and psychological-medical discourse regarding very young children in institutions arose.

In the second section, we shift to the 1960s and 1970s, when structural changes in the labour market, especially the coming large-scale entry of women into the workforce, stimulated a new approach to childcare that included children up to 3 years old. The structural changes illuminated factors supporting interventions by an active government that had become sensitive to changing conditions for parents with children in the process of establishing a public preschool system.

In Norway's case, the nation was thus suitably positioned to begin developing a new system for ECEC in the 1970s that would come to (re) construct public childcare from that point forward⁷. At the same time, as a rather young nation, independent since 1905, and thus without any strong traditions upon which to build, unlike those undergirding other national ECEC systems in Europe – for instance, the traditions of the church and/or pre-existing ECEC systems – Norway had the opportunity to introduce reforms without having to overcome heavily entrenched norms in kindergartens and nursery schools.

Thus, in the 1970s, two parallel, partly interrelated processes unfolded in Norway: the transition from the private to predominantly public regulation of childcare and education and, at the same time, from the selective targeting of at-risk children to publicly funded ECEC centres for all children (i.e.

⁶ T. Korsvold, *Perspektiver paa barndommens historie*, Bergen, Fagbokforlaget, 2016, pp. 152-176.

⁷ T. Korsvold, *Dilemmas over childcare in Norway, Sweden and West Germany after 1945*, in A.T. Kjærholt, J. Qvortrup (eds.), *The Modern Child and the Flexible Labour Market. Exploring early Childhood Education and Care*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 19-37.

barnehager). This will be discussed in the third section. As a consequence, education and care services became universally available under what was identified as a new social right of all parents⁸. Formerly separate institutional systems based upon tiers were thus united to form a single institution for all children before entering compulsory school age, the *barnehage*.

In this section, we also briefly discuss the professional training of ECEC practitioners in Norway in order to shed light on its pedagogical hallmarks and characterise the power and role of pre-primary teachers as a way to clarify the pedagogy being implemented in ECEC settings in connection with state intervention.

In the fourth section, we discuss briefly trends in ECEC in Norway that have developed since 2000 and continued to alter its history. In the fifth and final section, we end the chapter by conclusion.

Theoretical and methodological approach

Needless to say, all kinds of theoretical and methodological frameworks that seek to inform ways of understanding the world and that represent different ways of approaching research are based on certain epistemological assumptions and theories of knowledge. In that case, the historical study of narratives about ECEC in Norway, in seeking to elucidate certain transitions and the state's role in creating new forms of welfare for residents, can benefit from taking the approach of discourse analysis. Although the term *discourse* can be understood in different ways at different levels, in this chapter we understand it to mean 'ways of representing part of the world'⁹. As part of discourse, narratives are constructed and reconstructed over time, and ones concerning ECEC are all informed by phenomena involving certain cultural and historical aspects, changing perspectives, various types of children, childhood, and families. For that reason, we have referred to past studies when performing historical research, as demonstrated in the footnotes of the chapter, studies that build on extended historical sources.

2. Growing up with siblings and an extended family

As mentioned, until the 1970s, attending an ECEC institution was an extremely marginal social phenomenon among children less than 3 years old. In fact, less than 1% of children in that age group in Norway enjoyed

⁸ Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, cit., pp. 106-113.

⁹ N. Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 26.

that opportunity. Among the reasons why, established institutions such as crèches and day nurseries were few, largely owing to their social stigma¹⁰.

For children above school age until the 1970s and 1980s, growing up with older siblings, kin, and extended family was the dominant structure and narrative of childhood in Norway. Unlike in other European countries, particularly Great Britain and Germany, no form of nanny to a certain degree existed at the time. In fact, due to the egalitarian tradition of Norway and other Nordic countries, which had less class-based societies and thus no noble or similar class, only middle-class families living in a few Norwegian towns practised that form of childcare¹¹. While working to support their households, parents in rural and urban areas did not generally leave caring for infants and toddlers to individuals outside the family. An exception was single mothers, however, who were more or less forced to work paying jobs in order to keep their families together. In such cases, infants were generally left to the care of grandmothers or, if available, other relatives who lived nearby. Far more commonly, working-class families delegated the care of their youngest children to their older siblings. Especially in the countryside, when neither a grandmother nor siblings, especially older daughters, could look after them, infants were kept in a variant of a playpen or other form of protective structure.

Among the indigenous Sami people living in northern Norway, the traditional strategy for mothers who needed to combine childcare and work was to carry their infant or toddler on their backs, with the child wrapped snugly in cloth and placed in a small, portable, handcrafted cradle. Such cradles were constructed so that, in the winter, parents could place them upright in the snow and carry on with their work. Thus, on the whole, when it came to caring for the youngest family members, children remained within their nuclear or at least within their extended families.

Crèches for a few infants in the 19th century

During industrialisation in the late 19th century, as more mothers began to work in factories, the demand for childcare increased. Beginning in the 1830s, private initiatives for the introduction of new types of childcare institutions proposed child asylums and crèches, albeit to a lesser extent in Norway than elsewhere in Europe. In particular, crèches offered all-day care for children 0 to 3 years old whose poor, working-class mothers could not care for them while on the job. The chief function of crèches, which

¹⁰ Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, cit., pp. 48-51.

¹¹ Korsvold, *Perspektiver paa barndommens historie*, cit., pp. 153-176.

were often free of charge, was to care for the very youngest children and prevent social harm.

Beginning in the 1930s, the number of crèches declined, and after World War II, only a few remained¹². By the early 1950s, that form of ECEC institution had all but disappeared or else been transformed into other forms of day nurseries, including ones for young children more than 3 years old in nursery schools and day nurseries. In the former, although no educational requirements seemed to be necessary, a local study conducted in Stavanger, a major town in Norway, has shown that some women working in crèches were deaconesses, nursery nurses, or ward sisters. Another study on the history of childcare in Stavanger has additionally documented that the Salvation Army and Lutheran congregations established a few crèches for children up to 2.5 years old belonging to working-class mothers and that the staff, including nurses and deaconesses, emphasised cleanliness and strict routines¹³.

Against that background, kindergartens and nursery schools operating as *barnehager* overlapped in the 1930s. Established such that parents paid for the half-day service, the kindergartens followed the ideas of German educator Friedrich Froebel and, as such, targeted better cognitive and social education for children in their methods and activities¹⁴. Eventually applied in day care systems even for the youngest children, the Froebelian pedagogical tradition was particularly embraced in the early post-war period, and Froebel's influence became especially important for pre-primary teachers in that period.

After World War II, a new development unfolded in ECEC for the youngest children. From 1945 to the 1960s, most crèches had evolved into departments within day care centres, nursery schools, or day nurseries with advanced pedagogical approaches, as evidenced by child-size furniture, the variety of play materials, larger playgrounds, and new buildings designed by architects. In those settings, educated pre-primary teachers or *barnehagelaerere* (literacy: kindergarten teachers) implemented their pedagogy of care and play in all institutions, those for very young children included¹⁵.

¹² Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, cit., pp. 59-60.

¹³ M. Rothle, *Barnehagene i Stavanger: fra veldedighet til velferdsgode*, Aarbok, Museum Stavanger, 2015, pp. 22-23: «https://uis.brage.unit.no/uis-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2461089/Rootle_Barnehagene.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y» (retrieved on 15/02/2021).

¹⁴ K. Brehony, *Transforming theories of childhood and early childhood education: Child study and the empirical assault on Froebelian rationalism*, in «*Paedagogica Historica*», 45/4-5 (2009), pp. 585-604.

¹⁵ Rothle, *Barnehagene i Stavanger: fra veldedighet til velferdsgode*, cit., p. 29-36.

Care, stimulation, and, above all, play were prioritised as activities, and the weight of their value rested upon their capacity to allow children to meet peers and socialise within a form of all-round-pedagogy.

In sum, the educational-pedagogical orientation of ECEC in Norway today emanated from the *barnehage*, even for day nurseries with very young children. The few early childhood or pre-primary teachers who existed eagerly embraced the idea of Frobel's kindergarten, despite Norway's lack of a particular education system or even extended network from which ECEC could draw¹⁶.

3. *State intervention, regulation, and reform, 1945–1970*

To start with, in this first main section, in Norway, as was the case elsewhere in Europe, the primary providers of all forms of childcare during the first post-war period were philanthropic associations or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The very few institutions for the youngest children in Norway belonged to the social and welfare system, not the education system.

In general, in the first decades after World War II, politicians of all parties regarded public investment in families and children not only as a social and moral good, as well as a necessary condition for peace and democracy, but also as a necessity for continued economic growth and development. Beginning in the 1960s, policymakers thus increasingly focused on early childhood education as an economic investment and argued for a combination of education and care in full-time day care centres for all children 1–6 years old¹⁷.

Nevertheless, within the narrative of ECEC in Norway, it was not until the late 1960s, when the percentage of women and mothers who worked outside the home began to increase steadily, that the discourse began to change and that all-day childcare became a social demand. As a result, albeit not before the 1970s, the goal of governmental policy increasingly became providing all groups of children, especially those from less privileged backgrounds, equal access to publicly funded, all-day childcare and education.

One of the earliest examples of that shift in policy for families and children was the introduction of *barnetrygd* in 1946: a flat-rate, tax-free al-

¹⁶ A. Greve, T. Thorsby Jansen, M. Solheim, *Kritisk og begeistret. Barnehagelaernes fagpolitiske historie*, Bergen, Fagbokforlaget, 2013, pp. 29-32; Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, cit., p. 102.

¹⁷ Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, cit., pp. 75-103.

lowance granted to all mothers regardless of marital or employment status. Replacing the former child tax deduction, the child allowance was paid directly to all mothers, with very few exceptions. Added to that, in 1964 a parental benefit was introduced for widows and unmarried mothers. With the National Insurance Act of 1967, the name was changed to *overgangsstønad* ('transitional benefit'), and, beginning in 1971, divorced or separated mothers also received that benefit when needed in order to take care of their children¹⁸.

Nevertheless, the 1950s and 1960s marked a period when women in Norway were encouraged to concentrate on domestic life. As the government stimulated new industries and invested in the infrastructure of the still agrarian Norwegian countryside by building roads and expanding the electrical power supply, caring for young children increasingly became conceived as the exclusive responsibility of mothers. In parallel, women's work in industry and the service sector was mostly not needed until the 1960s. The low employment rate among women in post-war Norway indicated that development, as it was mostly single mothers who engaged in paid work outside the household. According to Statistics Norway, 53% of all women more than 15 of age were registered as housewives in 1950, and by 1960, the percentage was even higher: nearly 60%¹⁹.

In the narrative of ECEC, the 1950s are therefore often described in literature as the 'golden era of the family' or the 'era of happy childhood'²⁰. The majority of Norwegian women supported the mentioned policies of the government and did not demand more all-day childcare facilities. As a result of those policies, the percentage of children attending ECEC institutions in 1963, when Statistics Norway first documented registration in ECEC across Norway, remained quite low, at approximately only 2%. Most children with working mothers were therefore supervised in private care arrangements with relatives or neighbours. Surprisingly, in that 'golden era of the family' or the 'era of a happy childhood', state interventions and reforms in ECEC began emerging. The sector was provided with new laws and regulations such as the Child Welfare Act (*Lov om barnevern*) in 1954 and its Regula-

¹⁸ T. Korsvold, *In the Best Interests of the Child: Child Care and Pre-School Education in Norway and Sweden after 1945: A Comparison*, in C. Allemann-Ghionda, K. Hagemann, K.H. Jarausch (eds.), *States, Families, and Children: The 'Time Politics' of Child Care and School Education in Post-War Europe*, Oxford, Berghahn, 2011.

¹⁹ T. Korsvold, *Barn og barndom i velferdsstatens smaabarnspolitik. En sammenlignende studie av Norge, Sverige og Tyskland 1945–2000*, Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 2008.

²⁰ M. Rudberg, *Dydige, sterke, lykkelige barn. Ideer om oppdragelse i borgerlig tradisjon*, Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1983.

tions for Day Care Centres for Children (*Forskrifter for daginstitusjoner for barn*) that same year²¹. This will be discussed in the following.

New regulations 1950s–1970s

For Norway's new regulations, pre-primary teachers, as the dominant professionals of *barnehager*, provided great input. Child welfare inspectors from the Ministry of Social Affairs were all recruited from the ranks of those professionals, and it was exclusively members of the profession who worked tirelessly to implement the national ECEC regulations of 1954, namely by visiting all day care institutions in the country²².

With their exclusive knowledge as educated persons in the field, those pedagogical practitioners influenced the regulations for ECEC in Norway. As a consequence, bureaucrats in the Ministry of Social Affairs exhibited common ways of interpreting what ECEC should involve as a domain in which the Ministry had more or less inadequate knowledge. In response, the specialised knowledge and professional training of educated pre-primary teachers became indispensable. Unsurprisingly, the Regulations for Day Care Centres for Children in 1954 were conspicuously similar to those of the profession's so-called 'Kindergarten Guidelines' adopted a few years earlier. Thus, knowledge of the ECEC profession became hegemonic, and pre-primary teachers became the dominant position in the field²³.

In parallel, the very few educated pre-primary teachers were organised into a professional trade union, the Norwegian Kindergarten Teachers' Union, in 1948. Prior to that, the Ministry of Social Affairs had employed inspectors, all of them pre-primary teachers, to audit every day care institution in the country and to ensure that they sustained a certain standard of quality, including being educationally ambitious and dependent upon well-educated pre-primary teachers. As those trends converged, no other profession or professional group defined childcare pedagogy as precisely as Norway's *barnehagelaerere*.

In turn, with state intervention in ECEC in the 1950s and 1960s came new regulations regarding staff qualifications and training. From 1954, the Regulations for Day Care Centres for Children, specifically Section VIII ('Staff'), required every ECEC setting to have a manager and every day

²¹ *Forskrifter for daginstitusjoner for barn. Fastsatt av Sosialdepartementet*, august 1954.

²² O. Tremoen, *Tilsyn eller pedagogikk? Barnehagens tradisjonelle grunnlag. Barnevernsinspektørene og institusjonsutvikling i perioden 1945 1975*, MA thesis, NTNU, 2014.

²³ Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, cit., pp. 83–94.

care centre open all day to have an assistant, in addition to other persons employed for housekeeping²⁴. On top of that, the manager had to be an educated pre-primary teacher with 2 years of professional training from a school or college²⁵. In day nurseries for children under 3 years of age, the managers at that time were usually educated nurses. Training in childcare, lasting 6 months, was one of several qualifications that had to be met before entering a college to become a pre-primary teacher. Thus, the Regulations for Day Care Centres for Children stated in brackets that educated pre-primary teachers should usually also have education in childcare²⁶. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, another requirement for commencing pre-primary teacher education was passing an examination in childcare.

For those reasons, in the decades that followed, one professional group dominated ECEC institutions in Norway – pre-primary teachers – as the regulations from 1954 remained in effect until the first Kindergarten Law (*barnehageloven*) was passed in 1975²⁷. Their dominance will be discussed in the next section.

Childcare and early childhood pedagogy: A medical or pedagogical model?

In the overarching narrative of ECEC in Norway, shifts in the rationales, elements, and pedagogical hallmarks that legitimised ECEC and the role of the practitioners – that is, pre-primary teachers – in state interventions raise an important question: whether ECEC institutions upheld a psychological-medical model or an educational-pedagogical model. In the following, that question guides our discussion as we seek to clarify some of those increasingly visible hallmarks, the degree to which new influences became part of the new nationwide education system, and how.

In that narrative, impulses from scientist John Bowlby's deprivation theory from the late 1940s and the importance of keeping mothers and their children together in family-like environments also reached Scandinavia, albeit with a delay. Initially coming into play in the early 1960s an implication of Bowlby's work was that time in institutions can harm children, especially full-day stays for children less than 3 years old. That implication, by forging an invisible boundary above and over 3 years old in child care,

²⁴ *Forskrifter for daginstitusjoner for barn. Fastsatt av Sosialdepartementet*, august 1954, cit., p. 5.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Forskrifter for daginstitusjoner for barn. Fastsatt av Sosialdepartementet*, august 1954, p. 5.

²⁷ Lov om nr. 30 om barnehager m. v., datert 6. juni 1975.

became important in designing ECEC settings in several European countries, including Norway²⁸.

However, for Norway, a close look at the sources reveals the more nuanced psychological influences on ECEC in the country, especially the influences of Bowlby's research. Perhaps most notably, the Ministry of Social Affairs' Day Care Committee in its recommendations issued in 1961, appended a separate document regarding children's psychological development, one stating 'the Committee's recommendation to investigate certain questions about day care institutions for children'²⁹. Although the document did not present any specific scientific findings or state whether foreign practices could be transferred to Norway, it did state that [i]n recent years, numerous studies have been conducted that show that, in such relationships [mother-child relationships], the ability to be contacted, the harmonious development of emotional life, and self-esteem and security appear to be intimately linked to the experiences of the child makes during his or her first years of life. [...] Often, one believes that misalignments such as juvenile delinquency may have their origin in early mistakes [made in those relationships]³⁰.

The excerpt identifies associations between time in institutions in the first 3 years of life and the possibility of harm in child development, because a child's detachment from other people could later cause problems such as alcoholism and juvenile delinquency. Added to such warnings about the risk of denying maternal contact, more or less pragmatic knowledge and insights motivated ECEC institutions to be designed to best benefit the youngest children: 'Children who are away from home must have contact with others, and conditions have to be optimal in every way'³¹. In that light, the alternative to day nurseries – that is, having single mothers leave their children in foster homes – was seldom pursued.

Following those insights, the Committee's members strove to develop the arrangement that would best reduce the risk of harm for the youngest children. To that purpose, psychoanalytical and psychological studies investigating what harm mothers' occupational activities might cause to such children were applied in constructive, supportive ways. As a case in point, when studies suggested that children older than 3 years would benefit

²⁸ T. Korsvold, *Moralsk panikk. Bruk av psykologisk og sosiologisk kunnskap i utformingen av velferdsordninger for barn*, in «Psykologi tidsskrift», 8/3 (2005), pp. 46-51.

²⁹ *Komiteén til aa utrede spørsmålet om daginstitusjoner m. v. for barn*, Sosialdepartementet, 1961, pp. 63-64.

³⁰ *Ivi*, p. 63.

³¹ *Ivi*, p. 64.

from institutional stays with older children and adults more than younger children would, that infants receive the best care from their own mothers. That short stays in ECEC settings were preferable to long ones, institutions assigned specific groups of children a staff member who would act as care persons for them at certain times of day to prevent maternal deprivation.

Of course, following established best practices, those ‘temporary mums’ were typically educated staff members who provided intimate contact for children in small groups. In that way and others, research in developmental psychology was productively applied to limit the length of children’s stays in day nurseries and to ensure that a sufficient number of well-educated pre-primary teachers were available during their stays to provide each child with sufficient care.

At the same time, as had occurred elsewhere, the discourse on child-care, children, and childhood seemed to forge a regime of truth in the narrative of ECEC in Norway that continued to dismiss predominantly by child psychology. Until the 1960s, the Norwegian government had hesitated to support childcare, especially day nurseries. Even in 1963, when the state finally began to subsidise day nurseries and kindergartens, policymakers who continued to regard public nurseries as harmful to children argued that 3 to 4 hours was the maximum length of stay that could be in the best interest of the child³².

All told, the hallmarks legitimising ECEC and its practitioners upheld a psychological-pedagogical model in which the youngest children (i.e. 0–3-year-olds) were cared for in small groups by trained pedagogues during shorter or longer stays at nurseries multiple days a week.

This was important for the coming period, and will be discussed in the next and third section.

4. *State intervention and universality since the 1970s*

As was the case in other European countries, reforms in ECEC in the 1970s were influenced by a new understanding of education and care in Norway as an economic resource that could stimulate the labour supply and thus economic growth³³. Because industrial growth, in turn, meant increased welfare for all, especially young families, parenthood became politicised³⁴.

³² Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, cit., pp. 96-100.

³³ For more, see Rauhala, *Child Care as an Issue of Equality and Equity*, cit.

³⁴ A.-L. Ellingsater, A. Leira, *Politicising Parenthood in Scandinavia*, London, Policy Press, 2006.

In 1977, the Norwegian government introduced paid parental leave, albeit with the expectation that both parents would return to work when paid leave ended. At that point, the legislation assumed, parents would entrust their children to the care of publicly founded and financed ECEC institutions, which had attained qualitative equivalence with private care provided by the family³⁵. The kindergarten form, the *barnehage*, was extended to include all-day care even for children 0–3 years old, thereby strengthening, ECEC's educational orientation without severing the intimate connection between a social-pedagogical view on education and care³⁶.

Understanding the influences of pedagogical practitioners and the ECEC profession on those developments requires examining factors that supported the state interventions that occurred in the 1970s, especially their new ideas about appropriate ages for ECEC and ways of structuring time in ECEC settings. As early as 1964, the Norwegian government had set the stage for a national day care policy by launching a permanent financial incentive system for all ECEC institutions. In the 1970s, for each child that they enrolled, approved institutions or centres received a government grant calculated according to the child's age and attendance. That grant, however, covered only a third of the operating costs, with the remainder to be paid by whoever owned the regulated arrangements that provided ECEC – sometimes municipalities and/or NGOs – and by the parents.

A new understanding of childhood, one holding that young children should spend some time at home and some at all-day centres, and a new gender contract, one that recognised a woman's right to pursue a career and achieve economic independence, were well-suited to the needs of the expanding labour market in the late 1960s and 1970s. As a result, two parallel but partly interrelated processes emerged. On the one hand, the regulation of ECEC institutions shifted from entirely private to predominantly public control. On the other, poverty relief shifted from selectively targeting at-risk children to publicly funding universally available childcare as a right of parents, albeit in the form of only one institution for all children: the all-day *barnehager*³⁷.

By the end of the period, in the end of the 1980s, ECEC had become firmly established as a public responsibility, not simply the duty of employers, private institutions, and/or NGOs. Soon after, the pre-existing system of day nurseries, which were primarily childcare institutions and half-day kindergartens, would be reformed under the influence of similar thinking into

³⁵ Korsvold, *Barn og barndom i velferdsstatens smaabarnspolitik*, cit., p. 148.

³⁶ Leira, *From Poverty Relief to Universal Provision: The Changing Grounds for Childcare Policy Reforms in Norway*, cit., pp. 112-131.

³⁷ Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, cit., pp. 104-134.

modern, publicly funded, universal all-day childcare centres that closely integrated education and childcare as inseparable activities for all children 1–6 years old. That reform's principal goal was improving early childhood education, which Norwegian society now thought should be available to all children and their parents³⁸.

The pedagogical model of the nursery school

Owing to changes in the 1970s, the formerly heterogeneous systems of ECEC institutions in Norway were merged into one. Those uniformly all-day, centre-based institutions, *barnehager*, became the first settings where children 1–6 years old of all social backgrounds could form their identities as residents in the same spatial and social environment. Even so, part of the pedagogy of the former kindergartens, with 4-hour stays affording all children regardless of (dis)abilities opportuniand national ties to play and learn both indoors and outdoors, found its way into the new system. Those pedagogical hallmarks, already associated with kindergartens, were now extended to all-day services for the youngest children as well. Beyond that, education for pre-primary teachers, with its pedagogy of play developed into a well-integrated form of all-round pedagogy prioritising care for children and children's learning – continued to dominate³⁹.

As a consequence, the former class-divided system, which had been in place for more than a century and dated back to kinder asylums and crèches, became definitively dismantled in the 1970s as it became less stigmatising for parents to leave their children at all-day care centres. At the same time, given the goal of establishing a system of educational and learning institutions for all children, the new ECEC institution became a place where children from all family backgrounds could meet.

Nevertheless, the narrative of resistance to all-day childcare persisted. Public provision of and a certain degree of access to ECEC institutions in Norway did not occur until the Kindergarten Act came into force in 1975, and even then, it was expanded only slightly in the 1980s and only to the very youngest children beginning in 2000 (Figure 1).

The resistance may have been due to the persistent cultural ideal of a so-called 'good childhood', a concept that inevitably went hand-in-hand

³⁸ Ivi, pp. 105-113.

³⁹ Korsvold, *For alle barn. Barnehagens framvekst i velferdsstaten*, p. 142; I. Tallberg Broman, *Svensk förskola i kontinuitet och förändring*, in B. Ridderspore, S. Persson (eds.), *Utbildningsvetenskap för förskolan*, Stockholm, Natur & Kultur, 2017; J.-E. Johansson, *Barnehagens opprinnelse, styring og praksis*, Bergen, Fagbokforlaget, 2020, p. 47.

with deeply rooted ambivalence about the institutionalisation of childcare, especially for children up to 3 years of age⁴⁰.

Considering all of the above, we nevertheless face the questions of whose knowledge had power in that narrative of transition and what knowledge about important factors in state intervention was heeded. As pre-primary teachers performed their duties in day nurseries, they were also responsible for early childhood education for children 1–3 years old.

Although we have only some information about how they were trained, it seems that the professionalisation of ECEC and its practitioners has been pivotal in developing the educational hallmarks of early childhood education since the 1970s⁴¹. Of course, ascertaining which staff groups and professions could access work in day nurseries required scrutinising their education, and by way of state regulations, those individuals became preferred and were given responsibility for entire groups of children.

As a result, pre-primary teacher education became essential for teaching groups of children aged 1–6 years old and continues to be in Norway today. Once young children gained the right to spend their days supervised by educated adults in settings focused on play and with an all-around pedagogy for all children, the youngest children soon enjoyed that right as well. In that way, a Froebelian understanding of ECEC became translated – or better yet, *transformed* – into an understanding of developmental psychology and of reliable new theories to be applied to all children in Norway's day care institutions.

5. *New state regulations since 2000: Narratives of access and learning*

In the fourth and penultimate section, we take a closer look at the last to forming decades⁴². Today, nearly all ECEC institutions in Norway provide all-day care for all children 1–6 years old, and the routine of having both

⁴⁰ Korsvold, *In the Best Interests of the Child: Child Care and Pre-School Education in Norway and Sweden after 1945*, cit., pp. 199-200.

⁴¹ Greve, Thorsby, Solheim, *Kritisk og begeistret. Barnehagelaerernes fagpolitiske historie*, cit., pp. 105-135.

⁴² In reference to statistics, Norway does not belong to the European Union (EU). In 1972, the country rejected membership in the European Community by referendum, and another referendum in 1994 yielded the same result. However, the European Economic Area, established in 1992 with an agreement between the EU and member countries of the European Free Trade Association, grants Norway access to the EU's inner market and to various forms of cooperation in diverse fields, including education and research. This also means publishing ECEC data of Norway, which we refer to.

parents work outside the home while children, even 1–3-year-olds, attend ECEC centres enjoys widespread acceptance. As such, ECEC services are considered to be the public's responsibility and are financed for all parents by state and local municipalities, although with some parental fees.

From a longer-term perspective, ECEC in Norway has become a far more politicised field of interest since the end of the 20th century than in previous decades. As the Norwegian population's level of education increased substantially, the field of ECEC, once the domain of the social system and the welfare system, became the domain of the education system, namely from 2006. In this year, ECEC was transferred from the Ministry of Children and Family to the Ministry of Education and Research. This transfer had major consequences for society's expectations for children's learning outcomes. In parallel, growing political interest in ECEC reflects a stronger focus on early childhood as a valuable, important period in life. The ECEC profession, for its part, has continuously emphasised the intrinsic value of childhood, of children's everyday lives, and of play as the most important characteristic of day care.

However, the chief objective of ECEC has remained the same: to meet children's needs for care and play and to promote learning and formative development as a basis for all-round pedagogy: Play, friendship, and children's well-being have thus been pervasive themes in political documents addressing ECEC and its development within the Norwegian welfare state⁴³. For that reason, play, care, learning, and formative development should be examined in context. If so, then the historical narrative of Norway reveals a uniquely Nordic pedagogy for ECEC geared towards fulfilling both pedagogical aims and the needs of children and their families. Indeed, being mindful of childhood's intrinsic value receives mention in no less than the first paragraph of the Kindergarten Act. This law and the Framework Plan of Kindergartens, a regulatory framework for the content and task in child-care centres, govern the ECEC institutions⁴⁴.

⁴³ T. Korsvold, *Barnehagelaerrollen i et profesjonsperspektiv- et kunnskapsgrunnlag. Kap. 3. Historiske perspektiver paa barnehagelaerrollen*. Ekspertgruppen for barnehagelaerrollen. Rapport. Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2018, pp. 65-80: <https://nettsteder.regjeringen.no/barnehagelaerrollen/files/2018/12/Barnehagel%C3%A6rrollen-i-et-profesjonsperspektiv-et-kunnskapsgrunnlag.pdf> (retrieved on 15/02/2021).

⁴⁴ Lov om barnehager (barnehageloven), Lovdata, sist endret 01.01.2021: <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2005-06-17-64>; <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2005-06-17-64> (retrieved on 11/02/2021); *Framework Plan of Kindergartens*, Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017: <https://www.udir.no/globalassets/filer/barnehage/rammeplan/framework-plan-for-kindergartens2-2017.pdf> (retrieved on 15/02/2021).

Access to ECEC

Since 2000, political initiatives in ECEC have had such a profound impact that no less than 90% of Norwegian children aged 1–5 years attended ECEC institutions in the previous decade. Beginning in 2009, each child at least 1 year of age has been guaranteed a place in a full-time day care centre, while paid parental leave has been extended from birth to the child's first birthday. The transition from parental care to institutional care is established even to the extent that few parents apply for their children's placement in ECEC before they turn a year old. In fact, since 2006, municipalities in Norway have been responsible for assigning places to parents and for securing enough places to meet the demand⁴⁵.

In keeping with that responsibility, ECEC centres are financed by municipalities, although also by modest fees from parents. According to regulations under the Kindergarten Act (*Barnehageloven*) in force since 2005, the fee that parents have to pay for placement has a fixed maximum that applies to both public and private owners of ECECs. In effect, the reform of the maximum fee in 2003 has not only amounted to established prices that favour parents but also made access to ECEC affordable for more parents of young children and thus promoted social equity in the use of ECEC institutions⁴⁶.

In general, counties and municipalities in Norway enjoy considerable autonomy in allocating resources between sectors and in organising welfare services for their inhabitants, including ECEC institutions. At the same time, the work of municipalities and counties is regulated by local government acts and special legislation related to different services and sectors. The autonomy of ECEC institutions, in turn, depends on the delegation of responsibilities from the county and/or municipality. Whereas the county governor supervises the municipal and county authorities' fulfilment of their legislated duties to secure high-quality ECEC for all children, the municipality is at once the owner and local authority for ECEC centres.

In that role, the municipality provides guidance to the centres and ensures that they are operated in accordance with current national state regulations⁴⁷. Most important, the municipalities are mandated to secure enough places to meet the demand of parents, who may choose which institution their children attend by simply sending an application to the municipality.

⁴⁵ Lovdata, Lov om barnehager, 01.01.2006.

⁴⁶ European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice, *Key data on early childhood education and care in Europe: 2019 edition*, Publications Office, 2019, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/894279> (retrieved on 28/07/2022).

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

In the coordinated admissions process that follows, the equal treatment of children and equal treatment of municipal and private owned ECEC settings are prioritised.

Beyond that, in the past two decades, corporations of privately owned companies within ECEC have become a new and controversy trend. Although approximately 50% of all ECEC institutions were owned by municipalities in 2019, joint private-commercial ownership of ECEC corporations, often diverse in character, is growing rapidly, albeit more in some districts than in others⁴⁸.

In the light of *marketing*, the competing marked between either profit or non-profit welfare services has become an increased political discussion. Starting out with the Kindergarten agreement (*Barnehageforliket*) of 2003, one particular change was equal financial treat for municipal and private-commercial ownership of ECEC corporations, with financial support from the government to the both of them⁴⁹. Taking, with the time, a more dominate position, the financial profit of the private-commercial ownership has been discussed and the way the profit associations has become an integrational part of the Norwegian landscape. In addition, the question is how and in which ways this new trend have influences of the pedagogical hallmarks of ECEC institutions, challenging the profession's pedagogy⁵⁰.

Learning in ECEC

Although children in Norway are not formally assessed at the pre-primary level, the role of pre-primary teachers is to ensure that the parents and the ECEC institutions have regular opportunities to exchange observations and evaluations concerning every child's health, well-being, experiences, development, and learning. In the process, the staff are required justify their evaluations to parents and consider their views. Such evaluative information is normally conveyed both during conversations when parents drop off or fetch their children at ECEC institutions and during more formal one-to-one conferences to which the parents are invited.

Thus, knowledge of the well-being and all-round development of children as individuals and in groups remains important to ensuring the provi-

⁴⁸ Statistics, Norway, *Barnehager*, 2020.

⁴⁹ *St.meld. nr. 24 (2002-2003). Barnehagetilbud til alle - økonomi, mangfold og valgfrihet*. 1 Barnehageavtalen.

⁵⁰ H. Fehn Dahle, *Butikk eller pedagogikk? En studie av private barnehagekleder i Norge*, Doctoral thesis, Høgskolen Innlandet, 2020: «https://brage.inn.no/inn-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2711734/Digital%20publisering%20Fehn-Dahle_Avhandling.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y» (retrieved on 15/02/2021).

sion of adaptable, high-quality ECEC for all children, as consistent with the Kindergarten Act and detailed in the law's accompanying Framework Plan, introduced 1996 and revised in 2011 and 2017. Since the start in 1996 the Framework Plan has been developed and adjusted in different ways. According to the legislation and the revisions introduced in 2017, every child's well-being and all-round development need to be continually monitored and assessed in light of their individual circumstances and the staff's knowledge of children's development and needs. In particular, the Kindergarten Act requires the child's experiences and opinions to be part of the material used for evaluation, whereas the Framework Plan affords ECEC staff flexibility in tailoring its guidelines to suit local conditions. In Norway the pre-primary teachers still talk about ECEC activities as play, care and learning within an all-round pedagogy⁵¹.

Nevertheless, the development of the Norwegian ECEC can be seen from a broader international perspective, related to the emphases placed on the OECD and learning outcomes. *Schoolification*, that is to give children school experiences and knowledge in, among other things, maths, reading and writing before compulsory school, is a most discussed topic. The development has raised a number of different issues, and it has been described as a process changing from traditional tasks with play, care and learning within an all-round –pedagogy discourse to a learning discourse with learning as a hallmark for quality⁵².

Regarding the ever-important role of pre-primary teachers in sustaining the quality of ECEC, in 2018, after protests from parents and ECEC staff about the regulations in place, a new norm regulating and, at the time, reducing staff-child ratios was introduced in Norway's ECEC institutions. For children less than 3 years old, at least one staff member is required per three children and one pedagogical leader or qualified pre-primary teacher for every seven children; for older children, the staff-child ratio is one to six, while the teacher-child ratio is one to 14. As regulated by law, meeting those ratios is the responsibility of the institution's owner(s). Again, analysing the main narrative reveals the need for ECEC professionals and other agents to play active roles in transformations and new reforms in the field.

As part of Norway's national higher education system since the 1970s, pre-primary teacher education has undergone reforms, including the requirement of 3 years in university colleges since the beginning of the 1980s. As a result, the educational leaders of ECEC have studied in university

⁵¹ M. Nygaard, *Barnehagen som læringsarena i endring. Politiske ideologier og barnhagelaereres fortolkninger*, Doctoral theses, Trondheim, NTNU, 2017: <<https://ntnuopen.ntnu.no/ntnu-xmlui/handle/11250/2451746?show=full>> (retrieved on 20/3/2022).

⁵² *Ivi*, pp. 57-61.

and/or university colleges and, since 2006, have needed to have earned a bachelor's degree. In 2017, the qualification for primary school education was extended to the completion of a 5-year master's programme, and for pre-primary teachers, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education in 2010 advocated also requiring a master's degree in order to accommodate the complexity of ECEC and meet the need for more in-depth, updated knowledge⁵³.

To keep pace and develop higher-quality ECEC, academic credentials are thus fundamental throughout the ECEC sector. Even so, professionalisation and the professional development of staff remain key elements in creating competent ECEC for all children and all age groups.

6. *Closing remarks*

In this fifth and final section we can state that exploring the roots of early childhood education, childcare, childhood services, and childcare facilities can illuminate several discursive transformations within national ECEC systems as well as capture their uniqueness. By examining the origins and growth of each system, scholars and practitioners can make the features of each system more visible. In our case, we have argued that the ECEC sector has rather an independent position within the education system as a whole, and were the pre-primary teachers and their pedagogical traditions developed into a well-integrated pedagogy still play a dominant role.

In our case, we have investigated factors supporting state intervention and the establishment of a public preschool system for children in Norway and, in the process, the important role of the ECEC profession and ECEC practitioners therein. In response to a secondary question, we have also examined the educational hallmarks of ECEC emerging from those processes. Overall, the factors that have supported state intervention and the establishment of public preschools in Norway have been closely connected to the history of Norway's entire welfare system and the role of the state in constructing a new welfare state. The raising Norwegian welfare state created new conditions for families with children and was a dominating factor. The ECEC profession and practitioners have thus played an important role in forming the system's pedagogical hallmarks. Such transformations are not

⁵³ Nasjonal organ for kvalitet i utdanning (NOKUT), *Evaluering av førskolelærerutdanningen i Norge. Del 1: Hovedrapport, 2010*, p. 102: «Komitéen mener at førskolelærerutdanningen av faglige grunner bør ligge paa masternivaa»: «https://www.nokut.no/contentassets/40568ec86aab411ba43c5a880ae339b5/hovedrapport_flueva.pdf» (retrieved on 11/02/2021).

merely the inevitable products of economic and political forces⁵⁴. On the contrary, changing political discourses afford a picture of the kind of status and standards that the state legitimises. In processes of reform, ideologies come into play, and, in turn, discourses become ideologically transformed. In Norway, although the state exercised regulative power, its regulations were maintained by the acceptance of that power from the agents tasked with executing it. In that case, ECEC professionals have taken part in the transformative processes of creating new everyday life for the majority of the youngest children living in Norway.

In the 1970s, a new concept of childhood took root that, in time, found broad support in society and came to have enormous consequences for public policy. Among the factors influencing that state's intervention may have been that most residents in this country trust the government, politicians, and public authorities, typically within a culture marked by a high level of political consensus. That consensus, at least in Norway, can be traced back to the country's perennial egalitarian structure in, among other things, solving problems as a community.

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⁵⁴ J. Clarke and J. Newman, *The Managerial State. Power, Politics and Ideology in the Remaking of Social Welfare*, London, Sage, 1997.

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‘Why Should I Get a Degree to do a Minimum Wage Job?’ ECEC in Scotland, Past and Present

Janet de Vigne

Abstract – The words, spoken by a recently qualified primary school teacher, were spoken to me in answer to my question about why they had not entered the Early Childhood Education and Care sector after their first degree. In the post-pandemic 21st century, Early Years Education is in crisis in the UK. The most recent report (February 2022) has found that policy and provision do not match, and that the crisis in which young children find themselves in now, post COVID, places the onus firmly on government to find a solution. This chapter is organised according to the issues raised by the most recent report on the crisis facing the sector, examining the genesis of its themes.

Early Years Education (EYE) in the UK has been a contested area since its inception. The challenges it has faced – and is facing – range from threats to government funding, to staffing and training issues – including confusion concerning ‘qualificationism’ arising at and continuing from the emergence of awarding bodies, and the articulation of concepts of ‘quality’. This chapter acknowledges the historical development of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in the UK and more specifically Scotland, contextualising the 1945 Education Act Scotland, moving from an emphasis on ‘mothercraft’ to the stages of development reconfiguring the ‘nursery nurse’ as an education professional. This is traced through the inception and re-formation of a number of bodies registering and training practitioners, culminating in the nursery education degrees prevalent but not ubiquitous today. Inequity and confusion are discussed, as are perceptions of the stratification of qualifications desirable for the early years’ workforce. Alongside this, provision and access to early years’ education is considered, where possible for children aged 0–3, with the identification of four typical providers: Local Authority school nurseries (not all schools have kindergartens), Local Authority nurseries (separate from schools), private and volunteer childcare facilities. Public resources in Scotland supporting this provision are outlined, issues of entitlement to these places are discussed, as well as the possible impact on children of qualified vs non-qualified care in these organisations.

1. Introduction: Historical Background

Care of children before school age (i.e. between zero to five years) has long been of interest in the UK and Scotland, from the earliest utopian experiments of the Victorian philanthropists to today's inevitably – and continually – contested government funding of nursery places¹. Educational development of the population was initially recognised as a necessary driver of the industrial revolution and the need to compete. In economic growth at the time, the UK was behind France and Germany, as well as educationally – in Prussia schooling was compulsory by 1763, in France an educational infrastructure was set in law by 1803 and 1806².

Scotland claims the earliest nursery school in the world, established by industrialist and philanthropist Robert Owen in New Lanark in 1816. Interest in the field burgeoned at this time – Owen had visited Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi in Yverdon (as had people from all over Europe who were interested in new ideas regarding the education of the poor), but it was James Greaves who translated and published Pestalozzi in London in 1827 (preceded by publication in Ireland in English by Synge and Mayo between 1815–1819³).

By 1831 there were five nursery schools (at least) in Scotland. Teaching manuals of the period include the British and Foreign School Society (1831) *Manual of the System of Primary Instruction* by Nisbet, Darton and Harvey published by Longman & Co. in London (new editions forthcoming in 1847 and 1854). Although the UK's Education Act of 1870 had made a state system of elementary education available, this was not made compulsory until 1880 and was supplied at a cost to parents until 1891. Further north, the Education Act (Scotland) of 1872 established a Board of Education and school provision including infant schooling for children under 7 years. These were to be public schools, but parents were still expected to pay. If they could not, some provision was made for the fees to be covered by the poor fund. This applied to children aged 5 and above.

Nursery provision for children younger than 5 was more haphazard. Jumping forward to the Education (Scotland) Act of 1918, it was noted

¹ B. Wright, *A History of the National Nursery Examination Board*, St Albans, The Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education, 1999.

² D. Gillard, *Education in England, a history*, 2018: «<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/index.html>» (retrieved on 20/05/2021).

³ G. Compayre, *Pestalozzi and Elementary Education* (Trans by R. Jago), London, Harrap, 1908: «<http://urweb.roehampton.ac.uk/digital-collection/froebel-archive/pestalozzi-elementary-education/Pestalozzi%20&%20Elementary%20Ed%20complete.pdf>» (retrieved on 22/05/2021).

that, in Scotland, ‘nursery schools may be provided for children over 2 and under 5 years of age (or a later age), if approved by the Scottish Education Department’⁴ by the Local Authorities newly set up to manage the country’s emerging educational infrastructure. By 1923, the Nursery School Association had been formed in Manchester and by 1924 Scottish members had joined. Vice Presidents of the NSA included the then Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald (leader of the first but minority Labour government in the UK) and Bertrand Russell, philosopher and Nobel laureate (literature).

Between 1923 and the advent of the Second World War, the push for nursery education in the UK gained momentum. The 1927 Archbishop of Canterbury’s commission on education recommended that the Church of England add influence and support; the return of the Labour government in 1929 encouraged local authorities (LAs) to open nursery schools; the Hadow Report (England & Wales) of 1933, whose aim was ‘To consider and report on the training and teaching of children attending nursery schools and infants’ departments of public elementary schools, and the further development of such educational provision for children up to the age of 7+’ traced the history and policy of nursery provision, and concluded thus⁵:

In the environment of the nursery school, some of the most valuable discoveries in infant education assume greater definiteness and precision. Teaching in the nursery stage, though it is primarily derived from the experience of the infant school, has thus become a new form of specialism, to the development of which home training, as well as school training, medical research and psychological investigation have all contributed. In its turn, it may render a useful service in the place of its origin, if only in removing any vestiges of an unduly bookish and academic tradition which may still haunt the infant school. For this reason, we desire to see the nursery school developing separately, fulfilling its own particular purposes, and perfecting its own methods⁶.

To a great extent the issues covered in this report (in the section above, the conflict between the academic and non-academic education and training of nursery staff), the ‘internal economy’, the staffing and planning of school buildings and the focus on the child’s senses, are still with us today as mat-

⁴ J.E. Scott-Keltie, *The Statesman’s Yearbook* 1922, London, Macmillan and Co, Limited, 1922, p. 36.

⁵ W.H. Hadow, *Report of The Consultative Committee on infant and nursery schools*, London, Printed and published by His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1933, in *Education in England – the history of our schools*: <<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/hadow1933/hadow1933.html>> (retrieved on 22/05/2021).

⁶ *Ibidem*.

ters of contention at the policy and the individual level. It may be possible to argue that an extra push at this time arose from the economic benefit of allowing women to work (through the provision of nursery schooling) – this became increasingly apparent from 1938 with the soon realised threat of war, although, in a typically politically short-sighted fashion, it was not continued thereafter. Thousands of children were evacuated from the cities and the UK's Board of Education and Ministry of Health encouraged the set-up of nursery centres with the promise of full funding to accommodating authorities.

The organisation of nurseries and the push for better provision for children continued during the war – the value of wartime day nursery provision for children ages 0–2 was acknowledged in the House of Commons – and the UK Education Act of 1944 stated that all local authorities should provide nursery schools or classes for those parents who wanted them. The war required women to work – but this was not the only driver of nursery schooling, as its value to the child, particularly those in difficult socio-economic circumstances, was recognised and provision offered to those considered disadvantaged thereafter. The Education (Scotland) Act of 1945 stated something similar – the provision of nurseries was to be driven by parental demand. Quite how this demand might present itself is another question.

2. *Postwar Reforms*

In 1945, however, it was decided centrally (i.e. in Westminster) to concentrate public funding on primary schools and new places at nursery schools were restricted. This continued into the next decade with a threat to withdraw funding from existing maintained schools in 1954, although it should be noted that at parliamentary level, this government action was contested. The UK government forbade the opening of new nursery schools through the infamous Circular 155, but prompt action by members of the Nursery School Association partially averted closures, and despite the Circular, new schools were opening. On balance, though, the net result of this policy decreased the number of nursery places to an all-time low in the 1960s⁷. The government at this time avoided statutory provision of nursery education, but both encouraged and contested this at local authority level. This resulted in a patchwork throughout the UK with some areas experiencing little to none and others more. Lewis states that the UK government's

⁷ J. Lewis, *The Failure to Expand Childcare Provision and to Develop a Comprehensive Childcare Policy in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s*, in «Twentieth Century British History», 24/2 (2013), pp. 249-274.

failure to create a workable infrastructure for ECEC during the years following the war is responsible for the fractures that persist today⁸.

As a further contributing factor, the persistence of the ideas of the female ideal as care giver and a focus on provision for the disadvantaged only, rather than an entitlement for all children, further held UK policy back in comparison with Sweden, Denmark and France. In France in particular, attempts were being made through welfare provision to draw women back into the workforce⁹. In the UK, moving into the 60s, the Ministry of Education circular 8/60 entitled 'No More Expansion in Nursery Schools' maintained the reduction rather than growth of nursery education¹⁰.

The 1967 Plowden Report is notable in that it focuses on the needs of the children, rather than the working mothers. Although this report reluctantly recommended part time nursery provision for a percentage of 3- and 4-year olds, the economically beleaguered Labour government of the day took fright at the potential demand – estimating the number of children whose carers might take up any offer of provision to be over one million. The issue was further complicated because it fell between two stools – the Department of Health, and the Department of Education. This problem was not addressed until 1998¹¹ when childcare moved to the Department of Education, and it was only in 2003 that Westminster appointed the first Minister for Children¹².

The pattern of the development of education and training in the ECEC field follows a similar trajectory. Hadow's 1933 statement articulating a preference for the removal of the 'bookish' training traditions associated with the infant school and acknowledging the emergence of a new specialism¹³ was not always reflected in the types of training on offer. Wright's history of the National Nursery Examination Board (NNEB)¹⁴ details the complex iteration that training of nursery practitioners took from the war years up until its date of publication. Her treatise examines the rise of private qualifications and the nanny academies as well as local authority, differing nursery education bodies, and more central government involvement in certification of practitioners.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ B. Wright, *A History of the National Nursery Examination Board*, St Albans, The Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education, 1999.

¹¹ E. Melhuish, *Longitudinal research and early years policy development in the UK*, in «International Journal of Childcare and Education Policy», 10/3 (2016), pp. 1-18.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ Hadow, *Report of The Consultative Committee on infant and nursery schools*, cit.

¹⁴ Wright, *A History of the National Nursery Examination Board*, cit.

The NNEB became the most important of these bodies as the years continued. Different emphases on the medical and educational skills required arose in almost every decade, and the way in which examinations pertaining to these changed in the response to demand might be described as reactive, also affected by government policy. Wright shows that in 1950, over 2,000 candidates passed the NNEB examination, but by 1960, this figure had reduced to 1,431. The format of the examinations changed frequently. As it became increasingly impossible for a doctor and two further practitioners to interview every candidate, a move to written exams occurred; arguments over who should examine and what practical versus academic knowledge might be desirable resulted in further changes to the system. An exam leading to a particular qualification one year might change beyond recognition the next, with levels of difficulty rising or falling concomitantly.

By the late 1950s standardisation was to some degree achieved by requiring students to undertake practical training, replacing the interview with observations conducted by experts¹⁵. The system settled to a workable structure with the introduction of new Further Education (FE) colleges in the UK, where vocational courses, including childcare, were taught. Many Local Authorities sited their nursery training in these colleges and, although demand far exceeded the number of places available, the courses were generally successful. The Plowden Report (1967) specifically commended the NNEB for its contribution to nursery education, as the Board had kept going throughout a period of little or no support from government.

The repercussions of Plowden were significant. It recommended nursery education for all 4-year olds, specific interventions in areas deemed 'deprived' and resulted in an expansion of provision that required a ready supply of practitioners. By the 1970s, and with the new social provision and educational expansion that occurred in that decade, there were many new qualifications and courses, ranging from care of children from a few months to two years of age. At this point it became clear that this type of training did not include the care of the new-born, but that students wishing to specialise in this area could do so after the initial qualification. Not every course could offer access to children of this age, and the idea of a further qualification was intended to mitigate this. Another interesting point was that students admitted to these courses before this point were mostly young girls – structured provision for the training of more mature women began in the 1970s. With the advent of the NNEB's statutory qualification came further benefits – standardisation of training etc., but as the qualifications moved to FE colleges outside the statutory sector, problems with government funding were to arise. For the moment though, the old issue of theory

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

vs practice became more balanced with students expected to attend college for three days a week and engage in practical work for another two.

Qualifications at this stage were not at today's higher education degree level, but proposals were already underway in 1975 to create an Advanced Certificate of the NNEB¹⁶ that would be at Higher National Certificate (HNC) level. In the UK, this is a qualification at level 4, where an undergraduate bachelor's degree would be at level 6. The HNC was in operation by the late seventies, but it should be noted that the qualification still did not address the care of children 0–3, principally because many colleges could not provide training with this age group. The problem became apparent when the number of students qualifying did not get the jobs they might have expected – one agency reported over 800 vacancies for work with new-borns but with private families¹⁷ – students, however, preferred to work with the ages with which they had trained.

The NNEB attempted to address this gap by the 1980s, but as Local Authority funding began to be reduced by central government, the infrastructure of all nursery provision began to crumble. In a review of the work of the NNEB, the June 1981 Brierley Report stated: «Nursery Nursing, though a satisfying occupation in itself, is undervalued and the potentialities of Nursery Nurses are not fully recognised and used»¹⁸. Two further statements from this report are relevant: «Nursery Nursing was, and would remain, for the foreseeable future, a useful and satisfying occupation»¹⁹ and «Experienced nursery nurses required support, in service training and an identifiable career structure»²⁰.

Both these quotations are still relevant today – not much has changed. By the early 1980s, the NNEB was commissioning research on the effects of day care on the under 5s, the development of new-borns, and parental involvement. Certification in various different forms of ECEC began to burgeon. Among them were the Certificate of Play skills (North London Polytechnic) later introduced into sixth form colleges (at level 3), the Certificate of Nursing Practice (children from 0–5, Kids Unlimited), and the BTEC Diploma in Caring Services (Nursery Nursing), a level 3 qualification – all not yet at undergraduate degree level, although some were edging towards first- or second-year undergraduate status. At this point, in the early 1990s, a new qualification body was formed – the Council for Early Years Awards (CEYA). At this stage, the UK government introduced a new schema of

¹⁶ *Ibidem.*

¹⁷ Wright, *A History of the National Nursery Examination Board*, cit.

¹⁸ *Ibidem.*

¹⁹ *Ibidem.*

²⁰ *Ibidem.*

awards – the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). The NNEB and CEYA (as an NVQ awarding body) eventually merged, forming the Council for Awards in Children’s Care and Education (CACHE) in 1993.

In 1995, the Scottish Office Education Department, while still part of the UK government, commissioned a 2-year report concerning the provision of care for the under 5s, specifically those aged between 2 and 4. This report researched providers of care, the needs of these children and the quality of the provision available. It identified a split between education and care and the differing “philosophies and rationales”²¹ behind each. However, the findings of the report challenged the traditional idea that nursery schools provided educational possibilities where nurseries offered solely care – children were, it seems, experiencing learning opportunities in whichever context they found themselves. There was also not much difference between the input from nursery nurses and teachers in the nurseries studied. In Scotland, a teacher is defined as someone who has undertaken specific pedagogical training and is registered with the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS). This is not the case for nursery nurses.

The report noted that parents would use a variety of different modes of provision as almost nothing on offer could provide a whole day’s care from Monday to Friday. It considered child minders as well as day nurseries organised by Local Authorities and private organisations such as nurseries and playgroups. Costs as well as the time deficit were identified by providers as problematic for parents. Numbers of qualified staff ranged from 33% to 45% across the range of provision; most wanted more training and development opportunities. Children whose first language was not English were not having their needs met. The report also identified a requirement for models of integration for children with special needs especially as they would be moving into primary schools with less favourable staff-student ratios.

The findings here are not surprising, and again, they remain with us today. Although children at age 4 are mentioned specifically here, there is less information about those aged 0–3.

3. *New Millennium reforms*

Scotland and the UK remain less committed to children’s education from years 0–3 than some European countries, such as Spain, where this

²¹ Scottish Council for Research in Education – SCRE (1995), *We are getting them ready for life – Provision for the pre 5s in Scotland*, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, SCRE, 1995.

period (0–3 years) is considered the first cycle of a child's educational experience. In Scotland and England, guidance on this period of a child's life has been provided since 2005²² and 2002 (England)²³, principally because: «children younger than three should be receiving care and learning experiences tuned to their wide ranging individual needs and not be subject to a prescriptive agenda»²⁴.

As mentioned earlier, the focus here remains on the children, rather than the needs of the mothers, but the problem in Scotland (and the UK) was still that education and care were not conceptually distinct, partly because of the historical, traditional attitudes to early years' provision.

In 2010 the Educational Institute for Scotland produced a report for the Nursery Education working party clearly identifying the problems: the continuing dichotomy between education and care, by this time resolved in many other European countries, and outlining threats from neoliberal policy to the status of nursery teachers, as trained teachers rather than technicians. The concepts underlying education for this age group were identified as outdated; funding was too low, affecting training and provision, attempts to fuse public and private partnerships were not providing the services required, too few children had access to a qualified teacher. This report was nothing short of an indictment – local authorities were not following government guidance and could be identified as such. This statement from the report perhaps summarises the situation: «Policy and practice are at risk of focusing less on the rights of the child than on economic policy»²⁵.

The report emphasised the lack of statutory provision of nursery education by local authorities and the consequent redeployment of GTCS registered nursery teachers. The statutory requirement to have them present at this level had been removed in 2002. This left many providers without degree-qualified staff and valuable pedagogical knowledge was lost. It also meant that the sector relied increasingly on private provision. Clearly, with the new Curriculum for Excellence under development and the fact that this educational reform was to apply to children aged 3–18, something had to be done. Scotland was not following the European guidelines on nursery education set out by the Euridyce report of 2009:

²² Learning and Teaching Scotland, *Birth to three: supporting our youngest children*, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive, 2005.

²³ T. David, *Birth to three matters*, UK Government, London, Department of Education, 2022.

²⁴ C. Steven, *Early years education: perspectives from a review of the international literature*, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive Education Department, 2006.

²⁵ The Educational Institute of Scotland, *Nursery Education: Research Review Report*, Edinburgh, The Educational Institute of Scotland, 2010.

ECEC [Early childhood Education and Care] programmes for 3–6 year-olds exist in all European countries and at this level (ISCED 0), the mission to educate is clear and overrides the child-minding function related to parental employment²⁶.

The report again highlights the problem of low pay and the quality issues in the workforce that accompany this. The next report commissioned by the EIS in 2016²⁷ identified a ratio of one GTCS registered teacher to 84 children in the nursery sector. It states that understanding of the role and practice nursery teacher is inconsistent and that they are not sufficiently acknowledged or supported. The numbers of teachers had declined by 29%, but the number of children only by 4%. Clearly, if the aims of a) improving education through the Curriculum for Excellence aimed at children 3–18 and b) an increase in nursery provision by 2020 for children aged 2 and above were to be achieved, something needed to change and quickly. One of these reports stated aims was to strengthen the concept:

A strong policy narrative in relation to early childhood, using terms such as ‘getting it right’, “best possible start in life”, ‘best place to grow up’ to promote the importance of these earliest years for long-term success...²⁸.

To bring the concepts of care and education together is a stated aim: ‘It is therefore essential that professionals in early learning and childcare bring their different strengths together to work effectively in positive communities of practice that benefit children and families’²⁹. This would be carried forward in future attempts by the Scottish Government to address the care and education of all children in a more holistic way, resulting in the development of multi-agency policy such as Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

Guidance was updated in 2010 in the Pre-birth to Three – Positive Outcomes for Scotland’s Children and Families policy. This document coined the term Early Learning and Childhood (ELC) in Scottish policy and gives advice on four distinct areas: the rights of the child, relationships, respon-

²⁶ Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, *Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities*, Brussels, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2009.

²⁷ The Child’s Curriculum Group, *Sustaining the Ambition: The contribution of GTCS-registered teachers as part of the early learning and childcare workforce in Scotland*, Edinburgh, The Educational Institute for Scotland, 2016.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

sive care and respect³⁰. Within these, advice is given on training and a move from crisis management to early intervention is emphasised. In this sense it does not seek to provide specifics, but more general ideas, including the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and My World conceptual frameworks. These emphasise, as stated previously, a multi-agency response in support of children, and function as a spiral rather than a series of thresholds. The policy aims to support parents (caregivers) also, but its main thrust is to support transition into the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) ages 3–18, the most recent (in the past decade) change to Scotland's educational curriculum.

Policy was updated again in Scotland in 2020 with the release of the new *Realising the Ambition: Being Me National Practice Guidance*³¹. Here, various international approaches are recommended (Te Whariki (New Zealand), Reggio Emilia (Italy), Nature Kindergartens, the work of Froebel). The policy points to further training and development opportunities with the aim of increasing quality provision:

The document has been creatively and sensitively designed to guide and support all those who work with babies and children in the early learning and childcare sector and beyond into the early years of primary school in Scotland³².

Together with this advice, the Scottish government is increasing the hours of childcare available for all 3–4-year olds to 1140 hours per year and also aims to provide 25% of 2-year olds with funded care. A further intention to improve quality in the sector was indicated with a blueprint for improvement created in 2017³³ that attempts to address the issue of a fair wage for the sector by increasing pay to the living wage. In 2022, this is just

³⁰ Scottish Government, *Independent review of Scotland's early learning and out of school care workforces*, Edinburgh, Scottish Government, 2015: «<https://www.gov.scot/publications/independent-review-scottish-early-learning-childcare-elc-workforce-out-school/>» (retrieved on 22/05/2021).

³¹ Education Scotland, *Realising the Ambition: Being Me*, Livingstone, Education Scotland, 2020: «<https://education.gov.scot/media/3bjpr3wa/realisingtheambition.pdf>» (retrieved on 22/05/2021).

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ The Scottish Government, *A blueprint for 2020: the expansion of early learning and childcare in Scotland*, Edinburgh, The Scottish Government, 2017: «<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2017/10/blueprint-2020-expansion-early-learning-childcare-scotland-quality-action-plan/documents/00526782-pdf/00526782-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00526782.pdf>» (retrieved on 22/05/2021).

£9.50 an hour, with people under the age of 21 legally permitted to receive less. The problem remains – ‘why should I get a degree to do a minimum wage job’? In Scotland, a student’s first bachelor’s degree tuition remains free – this is at least one benefit to studying for such a qualification. However, the personal investment required; the lack of a career path and the very low wages are real negatives. The problems with the workforce now also include young graduates in their first jobs being preferred for management positions when older, more experienced but less qualified candidates are disadvantaged.

The 2020 report from the Early Years Alliance (EYA) in England noted the catastrophic effects of the COVID pandemic on the sector in England (Early Years Alliance, 2020). Parents could not take up places during the pandemic; working practices have changed and many providers still expect to go out of business due to not just a lack of support but governmental confusion over furlough arrangements and last-minute changes. Unforeseen costs, e.g. of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and deep cleaning were also factors not taken into consideration. In 2021, The British Educational Research Association found similar threats to provision across England, Scotland and Wales, stating that previous issues concerning staff recruitment, retention, qualifications and continuing professional development have been exacerbated by COVID’s impact³⁴.

In April 2022, the Department for Education’s research into the impact on provider finances, staff recruitment and retention has revealed a sector on the brink of collapse. Neil Leitch, Chief Executive of the EYA commented on this research:

A combination of inadequate government funding, severe staffing challenges and the ongoing impact of the pandemic has created a perfect storm of challenges-one that has left far too many settings on the brink of permanent closure³⁵.

The Scottish Government’s response thus far has been to provide a helpful list of trauma resources and training to help practitioners cope with the

³⁴ S. Bonetti, J. Cottell, *The impact of Covid-19 on early years settings and their staffing decisions*, London, British Educational Research Association, 2021: «<https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-early-years-settings-their-staffing-decisions>» (retrieved on 22/07/2021).

³⁵ C. Wadham, *DfE research reveals “perfect storm” of challenges for providers*, Early Years Alliance, 2022: «<https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/news/2022/04/dfere-search-reveals-%E2%80%9Cperfect-storm%E2%80%9D-challenges-providers>» (retrieved on 22/05/2021).

negative effects of Covid-19 on young children³⁶. From its monthly updates, in February 2022 financial support for ventilation costs was offered to both Local Authorities and business providers. The parental income ceiling was also raised to enable more 2 years olds to access care provision. This update also states that there has been an increase in applications for care for this age group – described as ‘great progress in challenging circumstances’³⁷ and contains a promise to investigate the costs to providers of ELC over the coming months. The aim of this is to enable Local Authorities to make decisions about partner providers (both voluntary and private), rather than to benefit the sector as a whole.

From these reactions, it may be argued that a lack of long term forward planning very early on at the governmental level in the British Early Years education sector has left gaps that, with the additional pressure of Covid-19, will require concerted and well thought out action to remedy. The problems of the war years, the conceptual underpinning of mother as sole primary care giver with its narrow focus, the low wages and higher qualification expectations all contribute to difficult times ahead for the sector.

The wider influence of this on the working practices of adults and the economy also remain to be seen – early years’ provision touches so many other areas. It may be that we see a further reduction in the working population as a consequence. It is to be hoped that governments of the UK will step up to the mark and look at creating policy to rebuild a lasting infrastructure for Early Years Education and Care that will benefit not just today’s children, but the society in which they will play their part as informed and engaged citizens – with children of their own.

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³⁶ Scottish Government, *Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young children Resources and Training to support ELC practitioners*, Edinburgh, Scottish Governments, 2021: <<https://education.gov.scot/media/5cvj1vkj/elc-impacts-of-the-covid-resources-for-practitioners-april-2021.pdf>> (retrieved on 22/05/2021).

³⁷ Scottish Government, *Coronavirus (COVID-19): Early learning and childcare expansion monthly update - February 2022*, Edinburgh, Scottish Governments, 2022: <<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-learning-and-childcare-expansion-monthly-update-february-2022/>> (retrieved on 22/05/2021).

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From Care to Education in the Spanish Nurseries for Children Aged 0 to 3 Years (1990–2020)

Carmen Sanchidrián Blanco

Abstract – This chapter looks into the evolution of day nurseries and educational services for children aged zero to three years in Spain from 1945 to 1990, and how they compare with those for children aged three to six. The main reforms, actors and legislation will be analysed. At least two different periods may be identified: from 1945 to the breakdown of fascism in 1975, and from then to 1990. The three most important educational laws were the *Ley de 17 de Julio de 1945 sobre Educación Primaria*, dividing preschool education into *maternales* and *escuelas de párvulos* that remained the first level of primary school); the *Ley 1970 Law of education*, introducing important changes to the education system (preschool was considered the first level of the education system and it was divided into two stages: *jardín de infancia* for two- and three-year-olds, and *escuelas de párvulos* for those aged four and five years); and the National Organic Law of Education (*Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo*, or LOGSE), introduced in 1990, that, for the first time, introduced two age groups: four months to three years, and three to six years. As a result, there was spectacular progress in ECEC for children aged three and over, while ECEC for children under three saw rather meagre development. Spain is an example of a country developing early childhood facilities in the context of the education system: care for children under three is not administered by welfare, but by educational authorities. This model causes difficulties for families since the characteristics of the preschool model (long holidays, rigid hours, large classes and so on) do not always satisfy the needs of either working parents or children.

Introduction

Over the past few decades, scientists have discovered that even the youngest children know more than what was previously thought. Studies have shown that children learn about the world the same way scientists do,

by experimenting, analysing results and coming up with theories about their physical, biological, and psychological realities. Furthermore, our knowledge about the mechanisms that underlie these skills has changed the way we see children, providing us with a new image of human nature¹. From an evolutionary approach, one of the most amazing aspects of human beings is our period of immaturity. Our childhood lasts longer than in any other species and children need help for a longer time, which also helps develop more valuable skills than most species. In sum, the attention paid to children is essential to Humanity. Nonetheless, when reviewing the history of education in 0–3-year-old children, one cannot help but to notice the scant attention that has been given to this period as compared to school-aged children and children aged 3–6. Early childhood education from 0 to 3 years old has been addressed by families, especially by mothers, and it was only when mothers could no longer care exclusively for their children that external “solutions” began to emerge, such as external help or ways of sharing this task other than family support.

Most of the research on the history of early childhood education has focused on preschool education in 4 and 5-year-old children, which developed due to industrialisation and in which the educational aspect was very clear². In Spain, only since 1990 early childhood education has been including children from birth to 6 years old, and it is a non-compulsory educational level. It is divided into two stages: the first one includes ages from 0 to 3 and is generally not free of charge, whereas the second stage includes ages from 3 to 5 and is free in public and state-subsidised centres. Although compulsory school begins in the year children turn 6, almost all 3, 4 and 5-year-olds are already in school. In general terms, children are sent to kindergarten in the year they turn 3, so approximately one third of them have not yet turned 3 when they start kindergarten, regardless of their family background or their parents’ employment situation.

The history of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is more than the history of children’s education itself³. Reports from UNESCO and

¹ A. Gopnik, *The Philosophical Baby: What Children’s Minds Tell Us about Truth, Love, and the meaning of Life*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

² C. Sanchidrián, *Historia de la infancia. Historia de la educación infantil*, in J.-L. Guereña, J. Ruiz Berrio, A. Tiana (eds.), *Nuevas miradas historiográficas sobre la educación en España de los siglos XIX y XX*, Madrid, Ministerio de Educación, 2010, pp. 67-104.

³ C. Valiente, *(Pre)School Is Not Childcare. Preschool and Primary School Education in Spain since the 1930s*, in K. Hagemann, K.H. Jarausch, C. Allemann-Ghionda (eds.), *Children, Families and States. Time Policies of Childcare, Preschool, and Primary Education in Europe*, New York-Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2011, pp. 220-236.

OECD⁴ address both these educations together, as it is also how they are being studied at present: from a comparative approach⁵ and, eventually, from a historical perspective⁶. The European Union is a world authority in this field⁷, so it is important to insist on European history of childhood education, which offers different models, paces, notions and in which common stages or features can also be shared.

The concept of welfare state in Spain, to which education and childcare policies are linked, has developed later than other neighbouring European countries, as it only emerged in the mid-1970s and then underwent a rapid

⁴ See OECD, *Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care, Education and Skills*, Paris, OECD, 2001; OECD, *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*, Paris, OECD, 2006: «<https://www.oecd.org/education/school/startingstrongiiearlychildhoodeducationandcare.htm>» (retrieved on 04/04/2021); OECD, *Starting Strong III: A Quality Toolbox for Early Childhood Education and Care*, Paris, OECD Publishing, 2011: «http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/starting-strong-iii_9789264123564-en» (retrieved on 04/04/2021). See also S.B. Kamerman, *Early childhood education and care: an overview of developments in the OECD countries*, in «International Journal of Educational Research», vol. 33/1 (2000), pp. 7-29; Ead., *A global history of early childhood education and care*, Paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, *Strong foundations: early childhood care and education*, 2006, and J. Bennett, *Starting Strong. The Persistent Division Between Care and Education*, in «Journal of Early Childhood Research», 1 (2003), pp. 21-48. One of the conclusions of these reports is that each country addresses these stages according to their social and financial traditions, the perception of families and children, and the research studies they have conducted about the benefits of providing quality services to children.

⁵ See A. Ancheta Arrabal, *Avances y desafíos de la comparación internacional en educación y atención de la primera infancia*, in «Revista Española de Educación Comparada», 21 (2013), pp. 145-176; Ead., *El desarrollo y seguimiento de las políticas para la educación y atención de la primera infancia en el contexto europeo*, in «Perfiles educativos», vol. 35-140 (2013), pp. 134-148; W.T. Gormley Jr., *Early childhood education and care regulation: a comparative perspective*, in «International Journal of Educational Research», 33 (2000), pp. 55-74; E.C. Melhuish, P. Moss (eds.), *Day Care for Young Children. International Perspectives*, London, Routledge, 1991.

⁶ See K. Scheiwe, H. Willekens, *Introduction: Path-dependencies and Change in Child-care and Preschool Institutions in Europe – Historical and Institutional Perspectives*, in Id., *Child Care and Preschool Development in Europe: Institutional Perspectives*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 1-22; K. Hagemann, K.H. Jarausch, C. Allemann-Ghionda (eds.), *Children, Families and States. Time Policies of Childcare, Preschool, and Primary Education in Europe*, New York-Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2011.

⁷ A. Ancheta Arrabal, *La formación y el desarrollo profesional en la educación y atención de la primera infancia en la Unión Europea*, Madrid, Delta, 2018.

process of modernisation⁸. The history of early childhood education must be explained in relation to variables such as women's access to education and to the labour market, as well as economic, demographic, geographical elements, together with the welfare state model. The Spanish welfare state model follows a Mediterranean approach, in the sense that it combines features from three models: Nordic-social democratic model, continental-corporatist model and liberal-Anglo-Saxon model; with a characteristic familism that involves that the caring of children is basically the family's responsibility and, in many cases, women's responsibility. In Spain, support for families has been conspicuous by its absence, although women's intense integration into the labour market (61% in 2018, when the European average was 66.5%⁹) has led to important changes both in lifestyle values and work-life balance policies, such as the creation and extension of paternity leave and the increase in the offer of early childhood education services¹⁰; all these policies are inevitably connected to the rest of social and economic policies.

The education of Spanish 0–3-year-old children in the last few decades can only be understood from an overview of the Spanish history of early childhood education and in comparison to preschool education, which covers the years prior to compulsory schooling (6). This will also allow us to interpret the legislation, the educational curriculum, the training given to professionals and children's attendance figures. At this point, it is worth clarifying some terms. By "preschool" education or "kindergarten" this chapter will refer to the education of children aged 3 (since 1990), 4 or 5 years old, that is, immediately prior to compulsory schooling. Likewise, we will use the term "early childhood education" to refer to the education of younger children, from birth to 3 years old.

While preschool education has always been considered within the education system, there was a certain legal loophole around early childhood education that took place in nurseries (*guarderías* in Spanish), in terms of their sponsorship, size, hours, management, salaries, methods, quality standards, etc. In sum, nurseries were often unknown to the educational administration. In nursery centres, childcare is often more important than

⁸ A.M. Guillén, M. León, *Introduction*, in Id., *The Spanish Welfare State in European Context*, Surrey and Burlington, Ashgate, 2011, pp. 1-16.

⁹ One-third of employed women were working part time (30%) in the EU in 2018, nearly four times the rate for men (8%). Data are lowest in Spain, 5.4% of employed men and 23.6% of employed women. Eurostat, *Women's employment in the UE*, 2020: <<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20200306-1>>.

¹⁰ I. Campillo, *Políticas de conciliación de la vida laboral, personal y familiar en la Unión Europea*, Madrid, UNAF (Unión de Asociaciones Familiares), 2019, 2ª ed., pp. 114-115.

child education, although it is sometimes difficult to tell these two functions apart. Hence the importance, in 1990, of the Law of General Organisation of the Education System (LOGSE in Spanish)¹¹, which, for the very first time, took early childhood education from birth as education into consideration.

After a brief tour through the history of early childhood education in Spain, this chapter will focus on the education of children from birth to 3 years old since 1990. This period has hardly been studied, as only since 1990 early childhood education has been regarded as part of the education system, thus regulated by the Spanish Ministry of Education. These are especially relevant decades, when governments took an interest in the early stage of childhood education, where childcare and education were so closely linked that it was sometimes difficult to tell them apart.

1. *From Kindergartens to Early Childhood Education (1838–1990)*

In order to understand the current situation and how we got here, we need to go back to the 19th century, when the first institutions emerged for the childcare and education of preschool children before going to school¹². Several stages can be distinguished at this point, ranging from the creation of schools for the children of poor working mothers, to their general spread. All these stages allow for comparison among countries¹³.

In Spain, the beginnings of early childhood education are strongly linked to industrialisation and the birth of the state education system. Women's employment in factories in the cities called for the need to care for young

¹¹ Ley Orgánica 1/1990, de 3 de octubre, de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo. «BOE» núm. 238, de 4 de octubre de 1990, pp. 28927-28942: «<https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/1990/10/03/1>».

¹² D. Caroli, *Day Nurseries in Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: The Challenge of the Transnational Approach*, in E. Fuchs, E. Roldán (eds.), *The Transnational in the History of Education*, Cham, Palgrave, pp. 69-100.

¹³ C. Sanchidrián, *La extensión de la escolaridad temprana como síntoma y resultado del cambio educativo y social*, in R. Berruezo, S. Conejero (eds.), *El largo camino hacia una educación inclusiva: la educación especial y social del siglo XIX a nuestros días*, Pamplona, UPNA, vol. II, 2009, pp. 451-462; Ead., *The Role of the State and the Church in the Development of Early Childhood Education in Spain (1874–1975)*, in H. Willekens, K. Scheiwe, K. Nawrotzki (eds.), *The Development of Early Childhood Education in Europe and North America*, Houndmills, Palgrave MacMillan, 2015, pp. 92-111; H. Willekens, K. Scheiwe, *Looking Back. Kindergarten and Preschool in Europe since the late 18th century. A short comparative study of pioneers and laggards*, Hildesheim, Universitätsverlag, 2020.

children, who had been so far looked after at home, in workshops, in the neighbourhood or even abandoned in institutions.

The first kindergarten school (*párvulos*, in Spanish, which was the name given to all the institutions for preschool children until 1990) was created in Madrid in 1838, promoted by Pablo Montesino, who also inspired the Spanish Law of July 21, 1838 on Primary Education. This law established compulsory education for boys and girls from 6 to 9 years old. Montesino also published *Manual para maestros de escuelas de párvulos* (Manual for Kindergarten School Teachers) in 1840, which served as a guide for teachers in kindergartens and schools for several decades¹⁴. He defined kindergartens as «centres designed to gather and educate poor children of both sexes from 2 to 6 years old»¹⁵. To do so, the proposed method used many mutual teaching elements, imitating the so-called infant schools or *salles d'asile*¹⁶, considered by the philanthropists of the time as a means of reform and social improvement.

Throughout the 19th century, kindergarten schools grew slowly and disorderly, with the private sector taking the leading role. In the second half of the 19th century, an attempt was made to promote preschool education based on Fröbel's theories, first by Carderera¹⁷ and then especially by García Navarro¹⁸. This led to an interesting debate about whether children learned more in traditional kindergarten schools (through memorisation and academic learning), or in Froebelian Kindergartens. In the end, they were very similar to traditional schools¹⁹. However, the idea began to spread that kindergartens were not only for poor children and a solution for working parents, but instead they could be suitable for everyone, for children to learn

¹⁴ C. Sanchidrián, *Funciones de la escolarización de la infancia: Objetivos y creación de las primeras escuelas de párvulos en España*, in «Historia de la Educación», 10 (1991), pp. 63-87.

¹⁵ P. Montesino, *Manual para los maestros de escuelas de párvulos*, Madrid, Imprenta Nacional, 1840, p. 67.

¹⁶ C. Sanchidrián, J. Ruiz Berrio (eds.), *La educación infantil en los sistemas educativos*, Barcelona, Graó, 2011, pp. 47-89.

¹⁷ M. Carderera, *Jardines de la infancia*, in «Anales de Primera enseñanza», 35 (1859), pp. 1029-1034.

¹⁸ P. de A. García Navarro, *Estudios pedagógicos. Fröebel y los jardines de infancia*, Madrid, Imprenta y estereotipia Aribau, 1974; Id., *Manual teórico-práctico de enseñanza de escuelas de párvulos según el método de los jardines de la infancia de F. Froebel*. Madrid, Colegio Nacional de Sordo Mudos y Ciegos, 1879.

¹⁹ A. Viñao, *Una cuestión actual: sobre el academicismo en la enseñanza preescolar en el siglo XIX*, in «Historia de la Educación», 2 (1983), pp. 179-187.

things they could hardly learn at home and also so that they could get used to the next school level.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Spain was one of the poorest countries in Western Europe and education still had major basic problems, despite the general climate favourable to carry out educational reforms (56.07% of the population over 10 years old was illiterate). To this end, important measures were taken, such as the first attempts to implement the new schooling system called “*escuela graduada*” (school with different teaching stages), the creation of the Spanish Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, and the state’s decision to take on the payment of teachers’ salaries. The Spanish Royal Decree of October 26, 1901 established preschool education legally as the first stage of primary school, which was divided into 3 levels: kindergarten, primary and higher education (Art. 2). It also established that each of these stages shall cover all the subjects specified in Article 3, «only distinguishing each level by the extent of the teaching programme, the pedagogical nature and duration of the exercises» (Art. 4).

In 1900, most schoolchildren under 6 who attended schools, did so at primary schools, and there were also school-aged children in kindergartens. Kindergartens were considered as “reduced” primary schools, which led to their tense relationship with primary education, in which kindergartens were considered different and subordinate²⁰. Attendance of children under 6 in primary schools was common ever since primary education was made compulsory; and was motivated by the fact that siblings attended school together: this way the older ones did not have to choose between going to school or staying home looking after the little ones. The administration was tolerant in this regard. However, this situation ended with Spanish Royal Decree of July 17, 1913, which set the age for the attendance of primary schools and kindergartens, trying to put an end to mixed ages in both. Following this regulation, kindergartens would only admit children from 3 to 6 years old²¹.

At the beginning of the 20th century, medicine had begun to take interest in learning about childhood and responding to the debates on what is innate and what is learned, nature vs. nurture. In this context, it is not surprising that some of the best-known authors in the field, such as Montessori and Decroly,

²⁰ A. Viñao, *Escuela para todos. Educación y modernidad en la España del siglo XX*, Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2004, p. 134.

²¹ M.J. Martínez Ruiz-Funes, *La cultura material y la educación Infantil en España. El método Froebel (1850-1939)*, Tesis doctoral, Murcia, Universidad de Murcia, 2013, pp. 102-103.

were doctors²². These debates were relevant to all those who dealt with children, especially educators and psychologists, and parallel to the theoretical and methodological development promoted by the New Education. New educational and psychological theories arrived in Spain in the first decades of the 20th century. Fröbel, Montessori and Decroly unveiled new methods for preschool in their essays and publications. However, these methods did not quite take hold in the daily life of kindergarten schools. Antonio Ballesteros, an inspector of primary education, stated in 1930 that there were not enough kindergarten schools and that the very few that were working

do not allow for anything other than disciplinary and verbal teaching, which is contrary to the restless and playful condition of children, and this was so because of the school installations, outdated furniture, deficient organisation and excessive number of children per teacher²³.

The arrival of the Franco dictatorship (1936–1975) meant a halt in the attempts of educational renewal, ended the progress that the Spanish society was experiencing and marked the beginning of an unfavorable period for educational development, as the Church played a major role over the State²⁴. Spanish Law of July 17, 1945 on Primary Education maintained preschool education as the first level of primary school (Art. 18 A and B). During the Franco regime, the desire to keep women at home in their role as mothers and wives, together with campaigns for childbirth, made preschool education unnecessary. In 1943, it was even stated, that «educational action in children is limited to the sphere of the family and the Church», and that, neglecting those years would be like

handing over the education of children to strangers; as during these years, children belong almost exclusively in their families. Families are the only responsible for children education and their action can save their children²⁵.

²² See B. Jiménez-Alonso, J.C. Loredó-Narciandi, 'To educate children from birth': a genealogical analysis of some practices of subjectivation in Spanish and French scientific childcare (1898–1939), in «History of Education», 45-6 (2016), pp. 719-738.

²³ A. Ballesteros, *Notas preliminares*, in V. Neyrinck, *La educación en las escuelas de párvulos*, Madrid, Librería y Casa Editorial Hernando, 1930, pp. XVI.

²⁴ A. Mayordomo Pérez, *Historia de la educación en España: textos y documentos. V: Nacional-catolicismo y educación en la España de la posguerra*, Madrid, Ministerio de Educación Cultura y Deporte, 1989, 2 vols.

²⁵ Bohigas, cited in J. Monés, *La educación preescolar en España desde el final de la Guerra Civil hasta los años 60*, in «Historia de la Educación», 10, (1991), p. 166.

However, the slow integration of women into the labour market and the increasingly widespread belief that it was “good” for children to start school before 6, favoured the spread of *escuelas de párvulos* or kindergarten schools (for 4–5-year-olds) and *guarderías* or nurseries in the 1950s, especially in the new neighborhoods of the cities that were growing rapidly. However, the shortage of free places in these centers caused a worsening in the conditions offered and a parallel increase in private supply²⁶.

While the State offers of places in kindergartens (4–5 years old) was scarce, it was even more scarce in nurseries, the so-called *escuelas maternas* or maternity schools (2–3 years old). For instance, in Spain, in 1955–1956, there were 287 maternity schools and 4302 kindergartens. 24 cities did not have any state maternity school and 22 cities only had one, whereas there were private ones in every city. Therefore, most maternity schools were private, as well as basically every institution or centre for children under 2. However, it is difficult to know the real number of places for early childhood education for these years, as official data from public primary education included preschool education until the late 1950s, and did not become reliable until the 1960s. Likewise, data about the number of private centres and youngest children are even harder to find, as only official data from the actual institutions are available and even so, should not be fully relied upon. Furthermore, the number of nurseries was unknown, as they were not part of the education system at the time.

The percentage of 2–5-year-old schoolchildren slowly progressed, reaching 25.23% in 1959–1960 and 27.17% in 1965–1966. In the 1966–1967 academic year, 1.8% of 2-year-olds were enrolled in schools and so were 9.4% of 3-year-olds, 40.4% of 4-year-olds and 57.4% of 5-year-olds²⁷. The State was not concerned about compulsory primary education, let alone about early childhood education. This situation began to change with the approval of the Spanish General Education Law (LGE in Spanish)²⁸ in 1970, which involved important changes in the education system and marked the beginning of its modernisation, although preschool education would not be fully addressed until a few years later. Preschool education was established as the first level of the education system (not as part of primary education). It was a non-compulsory level and divided into: nursery (2–3-year-olds) and kindergarten (4–5-year-olds).

²⁶ C.E. Núñez, *La fuente de la riqueza. Educación y desarrollo económico en la España contemporánea*, Madrid, Alianza Universidad, 1992, p. 295.

²⁷ Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, *La educación en España. Bases para una política educativa*, Madrid, Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1969, p. 43.

²⁸ Ley 14/1970, de 4 de agosto, General de Educación y Financiamiento de la Reforma Educativa, in «BOE», 187 (6 de agosto de 1970), pp. 12525–12546.

In addition, this law ended the subsidiarity of the State in the field of education, as it established that education was an essential duty of the State and a fundamental public service. However, the task to be carried out was enormous: it is estimated that, in 1968, there were still 414 000 students (6–14-year-olds) who were not receiving any formal education²⁹, so it was necessary to start with compulsory education.

Women's massive integration into the labour market, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, played an important role in the development of preschool education, as the need for new solutions became evident. The supply and demand of «preschool and extracurricular attention» increased and solutions arose from both the public and private sectors³⁰. The diversification of options became clear when it was a matter of urgency to offer solutions that went beyond school hours in the case of preschool children and attended to and educated 0–3-year-old children. In the case of the latter, the law was heterogeneous and scattered. Therefore, there were socio-economic rather than educational reasons that triggered the demand to which the private sector responded quickly, as the state was meanwhile trying to cover the demand for compulsory education. For the youngest children, thousands of “nurseries” emerged that were perceived as a social rather than an educational service, and did not depend on the Ministry of Education, a situation that changed after 1990.

2. *Education and Childcare for 0–3-Year-Old Children (1990–2020)*

2.1. *Educational Policy*

The Law of General Organisation of the Education System (LOGSE in Spanish) introduced the first significant changes towards the recognition of the educational elements of early childhood education. It recognised the right to early childhood education from 48 months old (in other words, it established that 2 of the 3 years of the second stage had to be free) and promoted the schooling of 3-year-olds, as many families wanted to secure a place for their child in that same school.

²⁹ J. McNair, *Education in Spain, 1970–1980: the years of compulsory schooling*, in «Comparative Education», 17/1 (1981), p. 47.

³⁰ C. Valiente, *Child Care in Spain after 1975: The Educational Rationale, the Catholic Church, and Women in Civil Society*, in K. Scheiwe, H. Willekens (eds.), *Child Care and Preschool Development in Europe: Institutional Perspectives*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 72–87.

After the 1978 Constitution, Spain becomes a highly decentralised country, where the 17 autonomous regions have powers in education and count with their own regional Ministry of Education. The central government defines the framework for the educational policy to be followed, then each region is free to implement their own model and manage their funds. Decentralisation ends at that level, as every educational centre, from nurseries to high schools, has to adjust to what is established by their region, thus having little autonomy. The role played by regional governments, together with their demographic differences and different priorities in the distribution of their funds, created great contrasts among the regions, as we will see in the enrolment rates of 0–3-year-olds (enrolment is 100% in all regions in the second stage).

The decentralisation process was rather slow and ended in 1992 in terms of education. Thus, in the 1990s, the second stage was consolidated, however most children under 3 who were not looked after by their families remained outside the LOGSE.

The Law on the Quality of Education (LOCE)³¹ was approved by *Partido Popular* (right-wing party) in 2002 and planned to divide early childhood education into 2 levels: “educational assistance” for 0–3-year-old children and education for 3–6-year-old children. While the former never happened, the latter was free of charge. Shortly after, the Law on Education (LOE)³², approved by the *Partido Socialista* (socialist party) in 2006, returned to the LOGSE structure and urged the Public Administration to progressively increase the supply of state places in the first stage of early childhood education.

In the 21st century, all governments have agreed to develop policies to support families and facilitate their work-life balance, although the measures taken and their implementation have been different in each region. In fact, these issues have always made their way in every election manifesto. The 2006–2009 Strategic Plan for Children and Adolescents³³ was written for this purpose and opened the gateway to the Educa3 Plan, approved by Spanish regional ministries on August 29, 2008, to improve the education of 0–3-year-olds, promote employment and favour work-life balance poli-

³¹ Ley Orgánica 10/2002, de 23 de diciembre, de Calidad de la Educación. «BOE» núm. 307, de 24 de diciembre de 2002, pp. 45188–45220: <<https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/2002/12/23/10>>.

³² Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación. «BOE» núm. 106, de 4 de mayo de 2006, páginas 17158 a 17207: <<https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/2006/05/03/2>>.

³³ There were another Plan, *II Plan Estratégico Nacional de Infancia y Adolescencia 2013–2016*, approved by the council of ministers on 5 April, 2013, but it just declared its intention to improve the enrolment rates in nurseries in order to support families and provide quality education, but without specifying anything else.

cies. The Spanish Ministry of Education and the regional governments were going to finance this programme at 50%, however, the 2008 Spanish credit crunch³⁴ forced education cuts. Of the 300,000 places planned for 2012, only 71,000 were created in 2011, and the plan had to be cancelled in 2012³⁵.

The last two laws, passed by different political parties, did not introduce great changes in early childhood education: Law 8/2013 of December 9, for the Improvement of Educational Quality (LOMCE)³⁶ and Law 3/2020 of December 29, which amends Law 2/2006 of May 3, on Education (LOMLOE)³⁷. In sum, there have been many laws but the first model designed by the LOGSE still remains. Schooling in early childhood education has increased significantly in the last 30 years, the second stage is finally free of charge and the first stage has experienced important progress, both in the supply of free places as well as in the quality of the service provided.

2.2. *Quantitative Evolution*

The evolution in the number of children enrolled in early childhood education reflects the results of the above-mentioned educational policies. These numbers must also be related to the rest of social policies³⁸, since there are two elements that determine the history of childhood education of 0–3-year-old children in Spain. On the one hand, the family-based culture in Southern Europe; and on the other, the scant support given to families with young children, such as social benefits, very limited maternity and paternity leaves and lack of affordable centres for childcare and education. In the last 30 years, the situation has changed more than ever before, although

³⁴ M. León, E. Pavolini, 'Social Investment' or Back to 'Familism': *The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Family and Care Policies in Italy and Spain*, in «South European Society and Politics», 19-3 (2014), pp. 353-369.

³⁵ Z. Ibáñez, M. León, *Early Childhood Education and Care Provision in Spain*, in M. León (ed.), *The Transformation of Care in European Societies*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 276-300.

³⁶ Ley Orgánica 8/2013, de 9 de diciembre, para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa. «BOE» núm. 295, de 10 de diciembre de 2013.

³⁷ Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación. «BOE» núm. 340, de 30 de diciembre de 2020, 122868-122953: «<https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/2020/12/29/3>».

³⁸ The Spanish social policies are a specific case of the Mediterranean model that combines «universalism, familiarism and the market under a system of central regulation, with shared financing and regional and local management». G. Rodríguez Cabrero, *Políticas sociales de atención a la dependencia en los Regímenes de Bienestar de la Unión Europea*, in «Cuadernos de Relaciones Laborales», 29/1 (2011) p. 18.

inherent features remain, such as limited direct family support in the form of salary allowances. However, progress has been made in periods of paid leave for birth or adoption covering 100% of the salary. From 2021, paid leaves for birth or adoption can either be maternity or paternity leaves – to be used on a non-continuous basis – and an increase has been observed in paternity leave³⁹ applications. In the 1980s, these paid leaves were limited to 16 weeks for mothers and 2 days for fathers. The situation improved with Law 3/2007 of March 22⁴⁰, which established a 15-day paternity leave that has been gradually extended until reaching the current one. In countries where these permits are relatively long and paid, the use of services is reduced, without necessarily involving a supply problem⁴¹.

The integration of women into the labour market has been very rapid since 1990, reaching 61% in 2018⁴²; which has changed family structures and lifestyles, together with work-life balance policies and the expansion of early child education services. All of the above has eroded the Spanish family-based culture⁴³, giving rise to a contradictory scenario of familism and de-familiarisation. The unstable labour market, with high unemployment rates and low salaries, together with the combination of corporatism and familism by omission causes both men and women to increasingly depend on their participation in the labour market to survive and intensifies the inequalities among individuals and families based on the quality and intensity of their jobs⁴⁴.

After the LGE, schooling of 4–5-year-olds increased until reaching 63.5% in 1976–77; then 86% of 4-year-olds and 100% of 5-year-olds in

³⁹ A. Escobedo, K. Wall, *Leave policies in Southern Europe: continuities and changes*, in «Community, Work & Family», 18-2 (2015), pp. 218-235, p. 220.

⁴⁰ Ley Orgánica 3/2007, de 22 de marzo, para la igualdad efectiva de mujeres y hombres. «BOE» núm. 71, de 23/03/2007.

⁴¹ J. Plantenga, Ch. Rémy, (2015) *Provision of Childcare Services: A Comparative Review of EU Member States*, CESifo DICE Report, CESifo Institut - Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung an der Universität München, München, 13-1 (2015), pp. 20-24.

⁴² Eurostats, cit.

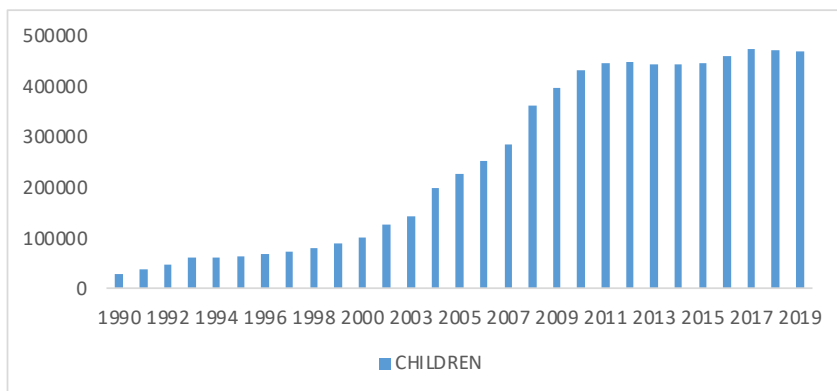
⁴³ See M. León, M. Migliavacca, *Italy and Spain: Still the Case of Familistic Welfare Models?*, in «Population Review», 52/1 (2013), pp. 25-42; M. León, J. Choi, J. Ahn, *When flexibility meets familism: Two tales of gendered labour markets in Spain and South Korea*, in «Journal of European Social Policy», 26/4 (2016), pp. 344-357, and L. Moreno, P. Mari-Klose, *Youth, family change and welfare arrangements. Is the South still so different?*, in «European Societies», 15/4 (2016), pp. 493-513.

⁴⁴ Campillo, *Políticas de conciliación de la vida laboral, personal y familiar en la Unión Europea*, cit., p. 115.

1986–87⁴⁵. Likewise, the preschool education model grew: first by adding classes for 5-year-olds, then for 4-year-olds, and finally creating spaces for 3-year-olds in kindergartens and primary schools in 1990. As a result, activities in preschool classrooms were, and often continue to be, quite similar to primary school practices, with a strong emphasis on individual seatwork rather than play-based activities.

Graph 1 shows that the evolution of student rates was slow in the 1990s: in 1990 there were 28,631 children enrolled, representing 3.3% of the age group (Graph 2), which tripled in the following decade. The evolution of age-specific enrolment rates was also significant, although it is not always possible to complete the series, as data provided by reports are not always broken down by age. Between 1970 and 1990, preschool education was the only option, thus including data from 2–5-year-old children. Table 1 show that 1% of children under 1, less than 5% of 1-year-olds and around 12% of 2-year-olds were in school in 1996. Data from 3-year-old children have been included because they were not included in the second stage (4–5-year-olds) before LOGSE, so their enrolment rates were lower. For instance, in 1976–77, only 10.8% of 2 and 3-year-old children were in school⁴⁶ and there are no data under that age.

Graph 1. Number of Children aged 0–3 in nurseries (1990–2019).

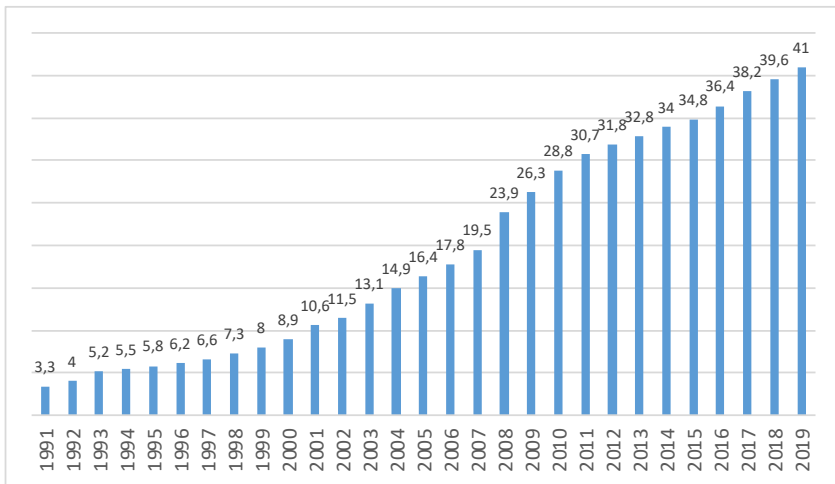


Source: Ministerio de Educación, EpData: «<https://www.epdata.es/datos/alumnos-matriculados-profesores-otros-datos-estadisticas-curso-escolar-1990-2019/437>».

⁴⁵ M. de Puelles Benítez, *Educación e ideología en la España contemporánea*, Barcelona, Labor, 1980, p. 448.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

Graph 2. Enrolment ratio of children aged 0–3 years in nurseries (1991–2019).



Source: Ministerio de Educación, EpData: «<https://www.epdata.es/datos/alumnos-matriculados-profesores-otros-datos-estadisticas-curso-escolar-1990-2019/437>».

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As mentioned earlier, there are 17 autonomous regions in Spain and each of them has their own educational policy. Graph 4 shows enrolment rates at the first stage in 2018. It is striking to see great differences within the same country. There are four regions exceeding the average net rate of 39.6%: Basque Country, Madrid, Galicia and Andalusia. While Catalonia is in the middle, Ceuta, Murcia and the Canary Islands are at the opposite edge. Schooling increases as children's ages increase in all regions (Table 2). It is worth studying the differences, not only among regions, but also between regions and age of schoolchildren, as shown in Table 2; huge contrasts that are not always easy to interpret. For instance, considering two

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

nearby regions like Asturias and Cantabria, Asturias starts with a percentage that almost triples that of Cantabria; but when it comes to 2-year-old children, the Cantabrian rate doubles that of Asturias.

Table 1. Enrolment ratio of children aged 0–3 years in nurseries, by age (1996–2019).

ACADEMIC YEAR	1996–1997	1997–1998	1998–1999	2003–2004	2007–2008	2008–2009	2009–2010	2012–2013	2013–2014	2014–2015	2017–2018	2019–2020
	AGE											
< 1 year	1,1	1,1	1,3	3	5,6	6,7	7,8	9,8	10	9,7	12,3	13,1
1 year	4,6	5,1	6	12,1	19,8	25,4	26,5	32,6	34,1	35,6	40,2	43,9
2 year	12,3	12,6	14,6	24,8	35	41,5	44,3	51,8	52,1	55,4	60	63,1
3 year ⁴⁸	67	72	80,3	95,9	97,5	96,3	95,6	95,6	95,9	94,9	96,5	96,1

Source: Own elaboration based on Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, *Datos y cifras Curso escolar 2019/2020 y 2020/2021*, Madrid, MEFP, 2019 y 2020, p. 18; Id., *Sistema estatal de indicadores de la educación 2000-2020*: «<http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/inee/indicadores/sistema-estatal/mapa-indicadores.html>».

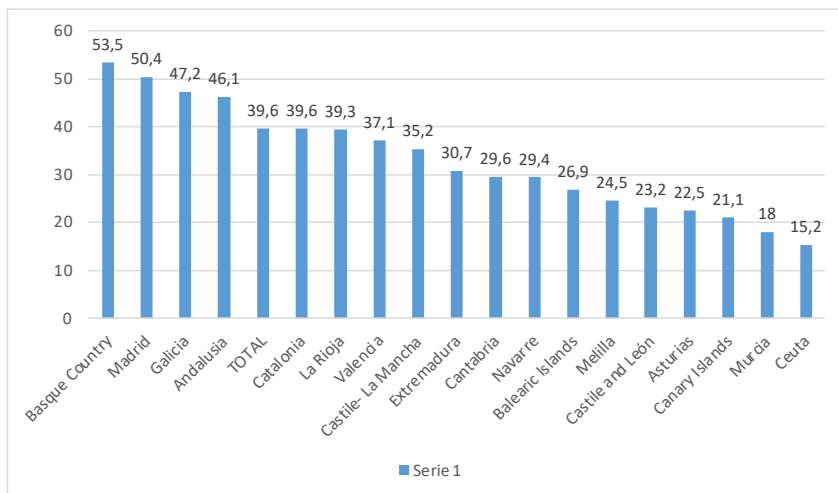
The enrolment rate at the first stage of early childhood education in Spain was 36.4% in 2018, very similar to the OECD average (36.3%) and the EU23 average (35.6%). The Netherlands (59.3%) and Norway (56.3%) are the countries with the highest enrolment rate at the first stage⁴⁹. However, data on enrolled children hide enormous inter and intra-countries differences, depending on the services offered and the number of hours used. In general terms, children's first stage centres are open from 7.30am to 8pm. However, no child is allowed to stay there for more than 8 hours per day, except in exceptional circumstances that must be approved by the administration. They are also open all year, from Monday to Friday, except for one month. Second stage centres open during school hours, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., but many of them offer morning classrooms, school canteen service and extracurricular activities, so that they are open from 7.30 a.m. to 5 or 6

⁴⁸ The rate of 3 years old children enrolled in nurseries was 17% in 1986-87, and 39% in 1991-1992. Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, *Sistema estatal de indicadores de la educación, 2002*, Madrid, MEC, 2002, p. 81.

⁴⁹ Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, *Panorama de la educación. Indicadores de la OCDE 2019. Informe español*, Madrid, MEFP, 2019, p. 15.

p.m. Their opening hours are therefore the same as those of primary school and they have long holidays, so that they do not really adapt to parents' needs.

Graph 3. Enrolment ratio of children aged 0–3 years in nurseries, by Autonomous Communities, 2018–2019.



Source: Ministerio de Educación, EpData: «<https://www.epdata.es/datos/alumnos-matriculados-profesores-otros-datos-estadisticas-curso-escolar-1990-2019/437>».

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⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

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Table 2. School enrolment rates by age and autonomous region, 2017–18 academic year.

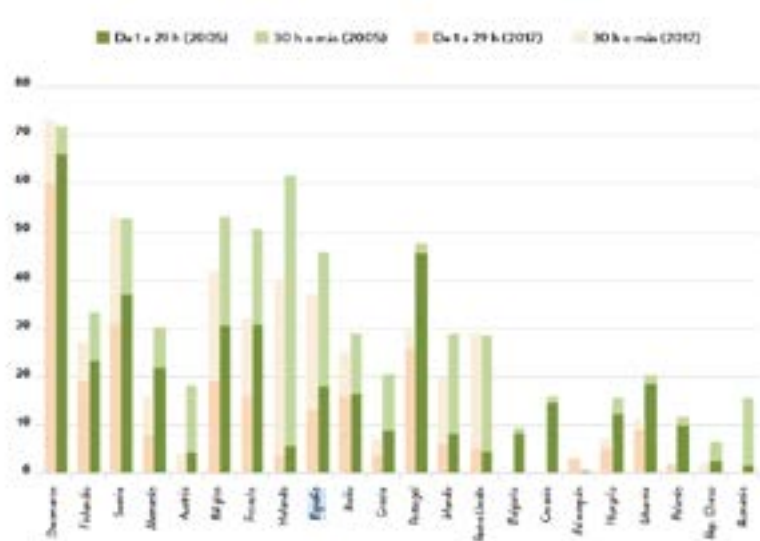
	< 1 YEAR	1 YEAR	2 YEAR	3 YEAR	4 YEAR	5 YEAR
SPAIN	12.3	40.2	60.0	96.5	97.6	98.4
Andalusia	14.0	48.7	67.7	97.4	98.0	98.6
Aragón	11.1	38.2	58.0	97.6	98.0	100.0
Asturias, Principality of	8.9	21.4	33.4	96.9	98.4	98.6
Balearic Islands	7.8	27.8	39.5	94.5	94.5	94.4
Canary Islands	7.7	20.4	32.6	93.3	95.9	97.7
Cantabria	3.0	8.3	71.6	97.3	97.8	97.3
Castile and y León	6.2	23.6	35.5	97.1	98.7	98.4
Castilla-La Mancha	9.1	35.6	55.8	96.9	97.7	97.6
Catalonia	10.4	42	60.9	95.9	97.6	97.9
Valencian Community	10.4	34.7	54.2	95.7	96.3	96.7
Extremadura	8.5	31.5	46.7	98.8	99.8	100.0
Galicia	19.2	47.3	69.4	97.4	98.2	98.1
Madrid, Community of	18.8	52.9	72.5	96.0	97.0	99.2
Murcia, Community of	3.9	19.3	32.2	97.9	99.1	100.0
Navarra, Chartered Community of	6.7	31.7	45.0	97.4	99.1	99.1
Basque Country	18.8	45.5	93.1	98.7	98.9	99.2
Rioja, La	13.7	38.5	59.4	96.7	98.2	98.7
Ceuta	1.6	9.1	28.4	100.0	100.0	100.0
Melilla	5.3	20.1	40.4	80.0	90.5	91.3

Source: Ministerio de Educación y Formación profesional, *Sistema estatal de Indicadores de educación 2020*. Madrid, 2020, p. 14.

Graph 4 shows that, from 2005 to 2017, the number of service hours at the first stage of early childhood education has decreased in most countries. In Spain this can be interpreted as a result of the financial crisis. Most children enrolled in Spain use nursery schools on a full-time basis, unlike countries like Denmark, where, despite having higher coverage, children use these services for less than 29 hours a week. This has to do with the length of the workday, as full-time working days are most common in Spain

and most Spaniards working part-time do not do so by choice, but because it was the job that was on offer.

Graph 4. Coverage of Education and Care services for children aged 0 to 3.



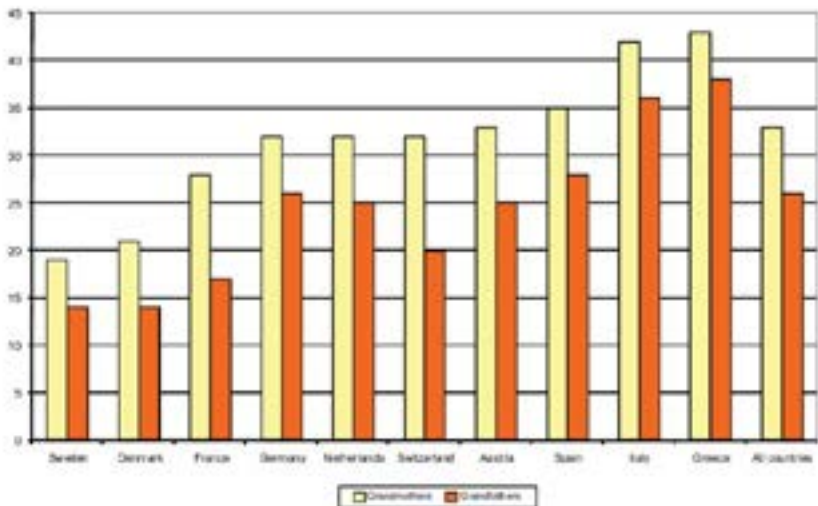
Source: Campillo, *Políticas de conciliación de la vida laboral, personal y familiar en la Unión Europea*, cit., p. 85.

[Translator’s Note: From 1 to 29 h (2005) / 30 h or more / From 1 to 29 h (2017) / 30 h or more / Denmark / Finland / Sweden / Germany / Austria / Belgium / France / The Netherlands / Spain / Italy / Greece / Portugal / Ireland / UK / Bulgaria / Croatia / Slovakia / Hungary / Lithuania / Poland / Czech Republic / Romania].

In addition to asking ourselves about the childcare and education that schoolchildren receive, we should also question why 63.6% of Spanish children do not attend any educational institution before they are 3. It is obvious that most of them are raised and looked after by their parents, who are the ones holding that responsibility. However, an important element in relation to raising children under 3 is the role played by grandparents. Although Spain is considered as a family-oriented country, it is not among the countries with the highest percentage of grandparents looking after their grandchildren: just over 50% of grandmothers and only slightly over 40% of grandfathers look after their grandchildren in Spain, whereas the highest prevalence of care is observed in the Netherlands and Denmark. However, in countries where more than 50% of grandparents took care of their grandchildren in 2004, only 2%

did so on a daily basis; whereas in Spain, 39% of grandparents looked after their grandchildren, but only 17% of them did so on a full-time basis⁵¹. This situation illustrates how, in countries with broad state support, grandparents act as a complementary resort for a few days and a few hours. In Spain, a country with little part-time work, fewer and less accessible nurseries, half of all mothers of young children work, mostly full-time; and this is only possible because of the help they receive from their families⁵².

Graph 5. Grandfathers and Grandmothers Who Provided Child Care Almost Weekly or More Often in the Past 12 Months (in percentages), 2004.



Source: K. Hank, I. Buber, *Grandparents Caring for Their Grandchildren. Findings From the 2004 Survey of Health, Ageing, and Retirement in Europe*, in «Journal of Family Issues» 30/1 (2009), p. 63.

⁵¹ K. Hank, I. Buber, *Grandparents Caring for Their Grandchildren. Findings From the 2004 Survey of Health, Ageing, and Retirement in Europe*, in «Journal of Family Issues» 30/1 (2009), pp. 61-64.

⁵² B. Janta, *Caring for children in Europe. How childcare, parental leave and flexible working arrangements interact in Europe*, RAND Europe, 2014, p. 11: <https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR554.html>.

Ownership of centres also involves some differences between the two stages, as seen in Table 3. The Spanish educational system includes public schools, state-subsidised schools (privately-owned but publicly-funded) and private schools. Most of state-subsidised schools belong to the Catholic Church. The percentage of private education (not publicly-funded) is 3.9% at the second stage and 33.1% at the first stage, so the decision to enroll children under 3 is conditioned by the places that are available and families' work or financial situation, rather than their desire to educate and care for their children. That is to say, the main reason for parents to school 3-year-olds, is not the need for childcare but a desire to give their children socialisation and learning opportunities⁵³. It is worth adding, although they do not always admit it, that also because it is free of charge.

Across Spain, most 0–3-year-old early childhood education institutions are either fully private or public but privately managed. Fully private nursery schools for children under 3 represent more than 50% of total institutions. The cost of a place in a public centre is borne by autonomous regions, local authorities, and families, to different extents. The amount paid by families sometimes depends on their income and some regions offer vouchers or help pay for places in private centres; which generates inequality of opportunities among children of different family backgrounds. In most regions, priority is given to families where both parents are in paid jobs, and rich regions with high female labour force (Madrid, Basque Country, and Catalonia) have higher enrolment rates⁵⁴.

Table 3. Funding of Early Childhood Education (2018–2019). Financiación de la educación infantil. Academic year 2018–2019.

2018–2019	FUNDING / PROVISION		
	Public	Private, publicly subsidised (<i>concerdada</i>)	Private, non-publicly subsidised
Early Childhood Education	63	25,3	11,7
0–3	51	16,0	33,1
3–6	67,4	28,8	3,9

Source: Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, Datos y cifras. Curso escolar 2019/2020, Madrid, MEFP, 2019, p. 4.

⁵³ H. Sandstrom, *The characteristics and quality of pre-school education in Spain*, in «International Journal of Early Years Education» (2012), p. 2.

⁵⁴ L. Ibáñez, *Early Childhood Education and Care Provision in Spain*, in *The Transformation of Care in European Societies*, cit., p. 282.

Another element to consider is the differences between the staff working at the two stages of early childhood education⁵⁵. In centres for 0–3-year-old children, two job profiles coexist (Table 5): teachers in early childhood education and educators. The initial training of teachers consisted of a three-year university course until 2008–2009, when it became a full four-year degree⁵⁶. The training of educators, who are about 75% of the first stage staff, is called Advanced Technician of Pre-Primary Education (0–3 years old, first stage) and consists of a two-year course. Salaries are very different between the two jobs, but the main difference is the type of school (private or state) involved. The highest salaries are offered by state schools and the lowest by private schools or state schools with private management. Differences between state and private schools and among the different types are worsening with time, since public sector employees get higher seniority premium⁵⁷.

Legislation has contributed to the specialisation of these professionals more than lifestyle changes have. The merging of qualifications in nursery schools, many of which were transformed into first stage nurseries (graduates, higher-level technicians, qualified staff), allow for different professional profiles to work in similar positions. Likewise, companies tend to hire higher-level graduates for lower-paid jobs⁵⁸, so it is easy to find teachers working as senior technicians and senior technicians working as assistants or caregivers.

Table 4. Initial Training and tours per week of ECEC workers.

TYPE OF PROVISION	STAFF AND WORKING HOURS PER WEEK	
	0–3	3–6
Public sector with Public management	<i>Teacher</i> (University Bachelor in Early Childhood education) 30 hours per week <i>Educator</i> : (Advanced vocational training). 35 hours per week	<i>Teacher</i> (University Bachelor in Early Childhood education) 30 hours per week

⁵⁵ P. Moss, *Training of early childhood education and care staff*, in «International Journal of Educational Research», 33 (2000), pp. 31-53.

⁵⁶ M.L. Mir Pozo, M. Ferrer Ribot, *Aproximación a la situación actual de la formación del profesorado de educación infantil*, in «Revista Electrónica Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado», 17/2 (2014), pp. 235-255.

⁵⁷ *Ivi*, pp. 288-289.

⁵⁸ C. Diego, M. González, *La especialización del personal de los centros de educación infantil*, in C. Sanchidrián, J. Ruiz Berrio (eds.), *La educación infantil en los sistemas educativos*, Barcelona, Graó, 2011, p. 368.

TYPE OF PROVISION	STAFF AND WORKING HOURS PER WEEK	
	0-3	3-6
Private sector (state controlled and publicly subsidised)	<p><i>Teacher</i> (University Bachelor in Early Childhood education) 32 hours per week</p> <p><i>Educator</i>: (Advanced vocational training) 38 hours per week</p> <p>Other employees (assistants, kitchen and cleaning staff) 39-40 hours per week</p>	<p><i>Teacher</i> (University Bachelor in Early Childhood education) Between 30-35 hours per week</p>
Private sector (without public subsidy) and Public sector with private management	<p><i>Teacher</i> (University Bachelor in Early Childhood education) 32 hours per week</p> <p><i>Educator</i>: (Advanced vocational training) 38 hours per week</p> <p>Close to 75% of teaching staff in ECEC 0-3</p> <p>Other employees (assistants, kitchen and cleaning staff) 39-40 hours per week</p>	<p>(University Bachelor in Early Childhood education) 35 hours per week</p>

Source: L. Ibáñez, *Early Childhood Education and Care Provision in Spain*, in *The Transformation of Care in European Societies*, cit, p. 285.

In sum, schooling rates in Spain are currently similar to the European average rate, although these percentages often hide significant differences in institutional designs (public or private school, access, ratios, costs, service quality, staff training), as well as in the number of hours covered by these services, all of which has consequences for family work-life balance strategies and for childcare and education.

3. *Towards an Early Childhood Pedagogy*

The curriculum for early childhood education in Spain provides a guiding framework, as it is not a compulsory stage in the education system and is organised around three fields with different blocks (Table 6).

Each autonomous region develops their goals, content, and methodological guidelines⁵⁹ and each centre can elaborate their own pedagogical or

⁵⁹ For example, see Consejería de Educación. Orden de 5 de agosto de 2008, por la que se desarrolla el Currículo correspondiente a la Educación Infantil en Andalucía,

educational proposals, taking into account their children's diversity and different learning paces when catering for the development of their autonomy. It is important to insist on the need for early childhood education professionals to start from children's previous knowledge, needs and motivations to promote active participation, encourage contributions, stimulate skill development and facilitate interaction with peers, adults and the environment.

Table 5. Curriculum in Early Childhood Education.

FIELDS	BLOCKS	
	0–3 YEARS OLD	3–6 YEARS OLD
Self-knowledge and personal autonomy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Awareness of personal identity 2. Well-being and everyday life 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Body and self-image 2. Play and movement 3. Activity and everyday life 4. Personal and health care
Knowledge of the environments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interaction with the physical and natural environment 2. Life with others 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical mean: Elements, relationships and measurements 2. Approach to Nature 3. Culture and social life
Languages: communication and representation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Verbal communication 2. Forms of communication: plastic arts, music and body. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Verbal language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Listen, speak, and talk – Approach to written language – Approach to literature 2. Audiovisual language and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) 3. Artistic language 4. Body language

Source: Own elaboration based on ORDEN ECI/3960/2007, de 19 de diciembre, por la que se establece el currículo y se regula la ordenación de la educación infantil. «BOE», 5 enero 2008, <https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2008/BOE-A-2008-222-consolidado.pdf>.

The aim of ECEC, in accordance with the Education Act of 2006, is to contribute to the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of children in close cooperation with families. The two cycles of the stage should progressively pay attention to emotional development, body movement and control, communication and verbal expression, basic guidelines of coexistence and social relations, as well as discovery of the physical and

social characteristics of the environment. The development of a positive and balanced image of themselves and the acquisition of personal autonomy should also be encouraged.

The general objectives of this stage (art. 13) are the following:

- know their own and others' bodies, its capacities, and learn to respect differences
- observe and explore their family, natural and social environment
- acquire progressive autonomy in their regular activities
- develop their emotional abilities
- socialise with others and progressively acquire the basic guidelines of coexistence and social relations, as well as practise the peaceful resolution of conflicts
- develop communicative skills in different languages and types of expression
- begin developing logical-mathematical abilities, reading and writing, as well as movement, gesture and rhythm.
- promote, apply and develop social norms that promote equality.

The two cycles of the stage should progressively pay attention to emotional development, body movement and control, communication and verbal expression, basic guidelines of coexistence and social relations, as well as discovery of the physical and social characteristics of the environment. The development of a positive and balanced image of themselves and the acquisition of personal autonomy should also be encouraged⁶⁰.

Many models can be implemented in childhood education, thanks to which educators now have many options to be used with each child. However, not all of these models count with an explicit theoretical framework, many are based on repeated practice that has been barely assessed. This makes it impossible to explain and justify their practice, which is something essential for educators to be able to do. No educational model can ever bring together the pedagogical proposals derived from the progress achieved in pedagogy, learning theories and psychological theories since the beginning of the 20th century. Daily practice is gradually moving away from traditional passive methods (such as coloring templates and following instructions) and the teaching proposals of each centre reflect some of this progress.

The mainstream models of early childhood education in 0–3-year-old children reflect features of the 20th century psychological theories, although many are scarcely mentioned, such as psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis changed the way to approach children's education, although it arrived rather late in Spain through the translations of the main works of authors, most of

⁶⁰ Ley Orgánica 2/2006, cit., art. 14.3, p. 22.

which were done in Argentina. The ideas about children's upbringing were changing, based on the importance of bonding in child development, introduced by psychoanalysts such as Spitz⁶¹ (1887–1974) or Gesell⁶² (1880–1961), along with Bowlby's⁶³ attachment theory (1907–1990) and Pikler's⁶⁴ theories (1902–1984), who defended children's free movement and the importance of respect and attachment in childcare. These are common theories in psychology, but not so common in education, despite having contrib-

⁶¹ R.A. Spitz, *El primer año de vida del niño*, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1969 (ed. or., *The first Year of Life*, New York, International Universities Press, 1965); Id., *No y sí: sobre la génesis de la comunicación humana*, Barcelona, Paidós, 2001 (ed. or., *No And Yes: On the Genesis Of Human Communication*, New York, International Universities Press, M.D. Inc., 1957); Id., *Una teoría genética de campo sobre la formación del yo: sus implicaciones en la patología*, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1985 (ed. or., *A Genetic Field Theory of Ego Formation. Its Implications for Pathology*, Editorial The New York Psychoanalytic Institute, New York, 1959).

⁶² A. Gesell, *El niño de uno a cuatro años*, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1982 (ed. or., *The First Five Years of Live. A Guide to the Study of the Preschool Child*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1940); A. Gesell, C. Amatruda, *Diagnóstico del desarrollo normal y anormal del niño. Métodos clínicos y aplicaciones prácticas*, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1966 (ed. or., *Developmental Diagnosis: Normal and Abnormal Child Development, Clinical methods and Pediatric Applications*, New York and London, Paul B. Hoeber, 1947, 2nd ed.); A. Gesell, F. Ilg, L. Ames, J. Rodell, *La educación del niño en la cultura moderna: conducta y personalidad en las diversas etapas de su desarrollo: técnica y guía para su cuidado físico y psicológico en el hogar y en la escuela recreativa*, Buenos Aires, Nova, 1948 (ed. or., *Infant and Child in the Culture of Today: The Guidance of Development in Home and Nursery School*, New York, Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1943).

⁶³ J. Bowlby, *Los cuidados maternos y la salud mental*, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1953 (ed. or., *Maternal care and mental health*, Ginebra, World Health Organization, 1951); Id., *Cuidado maternal y amor*, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1979 (reimpresión edición) (ed. or., *Maternal care and mental health. A report prepared on behalf of the World Health Organization as a contribution to the United Nations programme for the welfare of homeless children*, Ginebra, World Health Organization Monograph Series, 1951); Id., *El apego (El apego y la pérdida I)*, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1976 (ed. or., *Attachment and Loss. Volume 1: Attachment*, Londres, Hogarth Press, 1969); Id., *La separación (El apego y la pérdida II)*, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1976 (ed. or., *Attachment and Loss. Volume 2: Separation: Anxiety and Anger*, London, Hogarth Press, 1973); Id., *La pérdida (El apego y la pérdida III)*, Barcelona, Paidós Ibérica, 1983 (ed. or., *Attachment and Loss. Volume 3: Loss: Sadness and Depression*, London, Hogarth Press, 1980).

⁶⁴ E. Pikler, *Moverse en libertad: desarrollo de la motricidad global*, Madrid, Ed. Narcea, 1984 (ed. or., *Se mouvoir en liberté dès le premier âge*, Paris, PUF, 1979).

uted to change educational practices. In the field of childhood education in the family, in the second half of the 20th century, «The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care» by American pediatrician Benjamin Spock (1903–1998) had an enormous impact, with more than 50 million copies sold worldwide in 1998. His book defends common sense and the non-authoritarian upbringing of children⁶⁵.

The learning theories of Piaget⁶⁶ (1896–1980), Vygotsky⁶⁷ (1896–1934) and Bruner⁶⁸ (1915–2016) also had a great boom in the 1970s and continue to be the foundation of many of the most widely used models in early childhood education. Although in the 70s and 80s the focus remained on individualism, one of the main features of 21st century children education is acknowledging that childhood is socially constructed, which leads to raising awareness of the social context in which psychological-educational processes take place. In the last decades, some nurseries claim to follow Montessori, Waldorf or Reggio Emilia's theories⁶⁹, which are considered “alternative” and “progressive” theories, despite some of them being more than a hundred years old. However, a detailed study would be needed to find out to what extent these educational theories are followed in each centre. They seem to be rather eclectic centres in some cases, mixing external aspects of the method with elements that are well-accepted by families, such as bilingualism. Also since the 1990s, the Donan or High Scope method has been used as the basis for early childhood education programs in some schools.

⁶⁵ B. Spock, *Tu hijo*, Madrid, Daimon, 1963 (ed. or., *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946).

⁶⁶ Jean Piaget is known for his work on child development and his “genetic epistemologie”. See J. Piaget, *Introducción a la epistemología genética*, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 3 vols., 1970 (ed. or., *Introduction à l'épistémologie génétique*, 3 vols., Paris, PUF, 1950); Id., *La psicología de la inteligencia*, Barcelona, Crítica, 1983 (ed. or., *La psychologie de l'intelligence*, Paris, A. Colin, 1947).

⁶⁷ L.S. Vygotsky, *Mind and society: the development of higher mental processes*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1978; L.E. Berk, A. Winsler, *Scaffolding children's learning: Vygotsky and early childhood education*, Washington, DC, National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1995.

⁶⁸ J.S. Bruner, *Hacia una teoría de la instrucción*, Barcelona, Unión Tipográfica Editorial Hispano Americana, 1972 (ed. or., *Toward a Theory of Instruction*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1966); Id., *La importancia de la educación*, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1987 (ed. or., *The relevance of Education*, W.W. Norton & Company, 1971).

⁶⁹ See L. Malaguzzi, *La educación infantil en Reggio Emilia*, Barcelona, Octaedro, 2015, 3^a ed.; A. Hoyuelos Planillo, *Loris Malaguzzi. Una biografía pedagógica*, Madrid, Morata, 2020.

But there is not one model of early childhood education to follow. Educational centres for 0–3-year-old children differ in the services they provide, although, in general terms, they tend to link education with school and provide a comprehensive service for families and children⁷⁰. We have gathered more knowledge about them in recent years, although the information about the quality of the services they provide and their educational programmes is still scarce⁷¹.

4. Conclusions

A recent OECD report describes two trends in early childhood educational policies for children under 3⁷². Firstly, the Nordic trend, based on a socio-educational approach: centres often called nurseries or crèches, offered by social services on a part-time basis. Secondly, the trend supported by France, the UK⁷³, and Spain, among other countries, with centres dependent on the Ministry of Education and based on a school-oriented approach. In recent decades, Spain has been focusing on developing early childhood education centres in line with supranational policies, which were committed to improve these centres as a global objective.

While there are obvious advantages in the model where children are in the same educational centre until they are 6, Spain has not traditionally supported this model, so there are very few centres that offer the two stages of early childhood education. The fact that these stages are almost always taught in different centres, by professionals with different qualifications and

⁷⁰ A. Ancheta Arrabal, *La educación y Atención de la primera Infancia en la Unión Europea. Un estudio comparado entre los sistemas de Suecia, Inglaterra y España*, València, Universitat de València, 2012, p. 148.

⁷¹ OECD, *Starting Strong III*, cit.; C. Dalli, E.J. White, J. Rockel, I. Duhn, *Quality early childhood education for under-two-year-olds: What should it look like? A literature review*, Wellington, Ministry of Education, 2011; J. Paz-Albo Prieto, *Enhancing the quality of early childhood education and care: ECEC tutors' perspectives of family engagement in Spain*, in «Early Child Development and Care», 188/5 (2018), pp. 613-623; S. Rivas, Á. Sobrino, *Determining quality of early childhood education programmes in Spain: a case study*, in «Revista de Educación», 355 (2011), pp. 257-283.

⁷² OECD, *How can the comparability of early childhood education and care statistics be improved?*, in «Education Indicators in Focus», 70 (2019), p. 2.

⁷³ D. Boyd, N. Hirst, *Understanding Early Years Education across the UK: Comparing practice in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales*, London, Routledge, 2015; B. Cohen, P. Moss, P. Petrie, J. Wallace, *A New Deal for Children?: Re-forming Education and Care in England, Scotland and Sweden*, Bristol, Bristol University Press, 2007.

different pay and recognition, does not help to perceive early childhood education as a united educational level, either. While the second stage for 3–5-year-old children is usually part of primary education schools (where every child from 3 to 12 years old is enrolled), the first stage for 0–3-year-old children is taught in very diverse centres dependent on different administrations (public, private, local, working or state-subsidised centres).

In Spain, the increase in childcare and education services has been strongly aimed at facilitating women's labour integration and, only recently, promote child welfare and equal opportunities. By comparing the first stage of early childhood education to the second stage it is possible to assess the attention that has been given to both. Spain is currently one of the leading countries in preschool education with 100% schooling in the second stage and a percentage above the European average in the first stage of early childhood education.

However, pending goals should include, on the one hand, quantitative goals: access to the first stage should not depend on parents' working or financial situation. It should be an option for families since they are responsible for the childcare and education of their children. On the other hand, qualitative goals: the programmes on offer should be evaluated and a debate opened in Spain on how early childhood education should be in order to promote children's physical, emotional, social and intellectual development. The improvement of the quality of services provided should be now the top priority. In sum, the difference between educating children – a recognised right – and schooling children should be more evident than it seems, to both families and public authorities.

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Childhood and Pre-School Education in Portugal. Between *Estado novo*, Democracy, and Future Challenges (1945–today)

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Abstract – The history of Portuguese education, in particular early childhood education, has generally been neglected from the main historiographical trends. Nonetheless, the history of early childhood (up to three years old), and of the institutions responsible for the care of young children, reflects all the social, political and cultural entanglements related to the conception of childhood in a specific context. In this sense, Portugal represents an interesting case study. After World War II, when Europe was taking the road of social progress, the authoritarian regime of Salazar, *Estado Novo*, proclaimed the values of “God, Homeland and Family” as a bulwark against modernity. In the same period, the country was heading towards the traumatic loss of the oldest surviving European colonial empire. These two elements say a lot about the role of early childhood in the country. Even today, a good portion of the adult population in Portugal spent its early years in a colonial milieu. In addition to this, the Carnation Revolution of 1974, marking the end of Portuguese colonialism and the fall of Salazar’s regime, represented a real leap into the future for the country, with important consequences for the role of the state in the care of young children. No research holding these elements together has yet been conducted regarding Portugal. Therefore, this chapter aims to pave the way for a social and political history of early childhood and the institutions responsible for the care of young children since 1945.

Introduction

The general history of Portugal, in past and recent times, just like the history of early years education, has generally been put at the margins of educational and political historiographies¹. Nonetheless, the very periph-

¹ Although the international scholarly production has not paid much attention to the history of Portuguese early childhood education, an important exception is represented

erality of these two topics makes them potentially rich in terms of new insights for historical research. The history of early childhood (from zero to three years old), and of the institutions responsible for its care and education reflect all the social, political and cultural entanglements related to the conception of the child in a specific context. From this point of view, Portugal presents interesting questions and knots to unravel.

In the aftermath of World War II, when the rest of Europe was about to embark on the road to social progress, the authoritarian and conservative Salazarian regime of the *Estado Novo*, still in power in the country, strongly proclaimed the values of “God, Homeland and Family” as a bulwark against modernity. Even in foreign politics, the country was heading toward the traumatic loss of the oldest surviving European colonial empire. These two elements alone say a lot about the role of early childhood in the country. Even today, a good portion of the adult population residing in Portugal spent its early years in a colonial and authoritarian milieu. In addition to this, the Carnation Revolution of 1974, marking the end of Portuguese colonialism and the fall of the Salazar regime, represented a real leap into the future for the country, with important consequences for the role of the State in the care of early childhood. The persistence of sharply contrasting values and political tendencies had strong repercussions in this area, whose outcomes have not always been positive, though prompting a stimulating public debate on the importance of childcare institutions. A study holding all these elements together has not yet been done for Portugal. This essay

by the national Lusitanian scholarly production. Among these researches, some recent and significant ones are in the bibliography used for this essay. I want to mention in particular E. Baptista, *An historical and social approach to nurseries in Portugal. The Vila Nova de Gaia case (1883-1971): between the nation and the region*, in «Cadernos de História da Educação», 18/2 (2019), pp. 503-525; Id., *A creche: espaço de modernidade educativa: estudo de caso da Associação das creches de Santa Marinha de Vila Nova de Gaia*, in *Roteiros da Inovação Pedagógica. Escolas e experiências de referência em Portugal no século XX*, edited by J. Pintassilgo and L.A.M. Alves, Lisboa, Instituto de Educação da Universidade, 2019; Id. *Associação das Creches de Santa Marinha: Espaço de Modernidade Educativa*, Porto, CITCEM, 2018. See also M.J. Cardona, *Para a história da educação da infância em Portugal: o discurso oficial (1834-1990)*, Porto, Porto Editora, 1997. For the colonial environment see: A.I. Madeira, *Comparing Colonial Education Discourses in the French and Portuguese African Empires: an essay on hybridization*, in «Revista Española de Educación Comparada», 31 (2018), pp. 130-146. On the current Portuguese situation concerning early childhood education see: L. Serrano, J. Pinto, *A creche em Portugal: entre uma perspectiva assistencialista e educacional*, in «Mediações – Revista OnLine da Escola Superior de Educação do Instituto Politécnico de Setúbal», 3/2 (2005), pp. 63-70.

aims at paving the way for a social and political history of early childhood and the institutions responsible for its care in the years between the advent of the Salazar regime and the present times.

For a history of nurseries in Portugal in the second half of the 20th century, in fact, it would be misleading to begin a narrative from the end of World War II, which for the Lusitanian country did not correspond to a real turning point as it did for the rest of Europe. The authoritarian regime that lasted until 1974, in fact, originated between the 1928 *coup d'état* and Salazar's full takeover between 1932 and 1934. To start with a brief comparison of early childhood policies adopted by the Salazarian regime in the period between 1934 and 1974 with the previous monarchic and republican period will help create a better understanding of the policies for kindergartens of the last decades of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century.

1. *The Roots of Pre-School Education in Portugal (19th-early 20th centuries)*

The echoes of the profound changes taking place in Europe during the 1960s, culminating in the movements of the two-year period 1968–69, were softened in Portugal by the censorship of the Salazarian dictatorship. In fact, the so-called “Golden Age of the Welfare State”, which lasted approximately for the three decades between 1945 and 1975, leading to important social reforms in Western European countries, did not produce the same modernizing effects in Portugal, despite social tensions and underground movements. After all, even the fall of the stubborn fascist regime in 1974 needs to be linked to the disastrous decade of war that ended with the loss of the colonies in Africa, rather than to social movements within the country. It is true that the Carnation Revolution made it possible to overthrow the regime that strongly opposed any modernization of the country, and yet up until that moment the way in which daycare centers were managed reflected both the backwardness of Portugal if compared to countries like France and Italy, and the timid signs of attention to the new psychological, educational and social theories that were renewing many areas of society in those countries².

From an historical perspective, however, the fact that precisely in 1974 Portugal underwent a constitutional change, makes it possible to observe a turning point concerning its educational cultures and policies in distinct

² D. Caroli, *Le riforme dei nidi d'infanzia in Italia e Francia fra il '68 e gli anni Settanta alla luce di studi recenti*, in T. Pironi (ed.), *Autorità in crisi: Scuola, famiglia, società prima e dopo il '68*, Roma, Aracne, 2020, pp. 349-358.

political contexts, thus allowing us to compare it more clearly with other European realities. One of the most evident aspects of the period between the end of the Second World War and the fall of the regime is the total absence of works translated into Portuguese authored by those psychologists, pediatricians and pedagogues, who in the same years were animating the renewal of the role of nursery schools in other countries. For example, during the 1960s in Italy and France the theories of psychoanalysts such as René Spitz or Arnold Gesell were translated into the national languages, fuelling a debate that would contribute to changing the role of nurseries from welfare institutions to educational places. At the same time, between 1945 and 1974, the same works only arrived in Portugal in English, French and sometimes Spanish (see appendix)³.

Nonetheless, in order to fully understand the policies of pre-school education in Portugal in the aftermath of World War Two and after the Carnation Revolution, we need to take a small step back to look for a moment at the origin of kindergartens in the Lusitanian country. The historical path of pre-school institution in Portugal had not always been a history of backwardness. In Portugal the first institutions specifically meant for children up to the age of 6 date to 1834, during the Monarchy. These institutions, however, had a charitable purpose. Rather than reflecting the needs of a country on the path to industrialization, such as France or England, they reflected pre-modern institutions of general child care. They were called Shelters for Underprivileged Children (*Casas de Asilo da Infância Desvalida*), and depended on private initiative but with public concerns. The aspect that does not allow these institutions to be considered as kindergartens in the modern sense is essentially the age of the children taken into care. This could reach seven years of age for boys and nine years of age for girls, in spite of the fact that the educational as well as charitable purpose of these institutions can be considered a symptom of modernity⁴.

With the advance of a real process of industrialization and modernization, however, even in Portugal a debate was triggered about the usefulness of an educational institution for early childhood aged zero to three. The theories of Pestalozzi and Fröebel, introduced primarily by the Porto Education Society (*Sociedade de Instrução do Porto*), were debated in the major cities across the country. The reflections by distinguished public personalities on the theories of these educational philosophers is a sign that the Portuguese national sensibility during the second half of the nineteenth

³ *Ivi*, pp. 353-357. It is interesting to note that even the Spanish translations of these books were printed in and arrived from Buenos Aires in Argentina, instead of coming from Spain, in that period under the similar authoritarian regime of Francisco Franco.

⁴ Baptista, *An historical and social approach to nurseries in Portugal*, cit., p. 505.

century emphasized the educational function of kindergartens, rather than their social and welfare function.

As Eva Baptista points out, a proof of such interest comes from the Legal Charter of May 2nd, 1878 and the Legal Charter of June 11th, 1880, both promoted by the minister António Rodrigues Sampaio. These laws emphasized the need to give children a basic education before admitting them to compulsory school. Such need required then the establishment of education facilities and nursery schools, calling for the help of private institutions to help set them up⁵. However, faced with such a lively intellectual interest there was no concrete commitment on the part of the state to translate this fervor into institutional terms. The kindergartens opened in the wake of this interest, in fact, were few. Among these a Fröebel nursery was established in 1882 at *Jardim da Estrela* in Lisbon, while two João de Deus kindergartens were opened in Porto by José Augusto Coelho⁶. According to this author, pre-primary education would have to be a pleasant experience for the child, providing him comfort and security, providing him the basis for his social development and preparing him for the tasks of elementary school. Among other nurseries that were established in Portugal, the majority saw the light in the Porto urban area, namely Bom Pastor (1877), Aula Infantil do Torne (1883), Santa Marinha (1888), followed by the creches of Cedofeita (1891) and Afurada (1893), while in 1906 a nursery managed by a German teacher following Fröebel's methods was created at Colégio da Boavista⁷.

From a legislative point of view, the beginning of public policies concerning childhood education as a component of the national school system emerged in the last decades of the monarchy, corresponding to the first legislation on early childhood with law no. 141 promulgated on June 27th, 1896. This law set all the conditions for the operation of early childhood

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ José Augusto Coelho was among the first modern pedagogists in Portugal. He was Professor of Primary Education at the Normal Schools of Porto and Lisbon and a member of the Superior Council of Public Instruction, and was the pioneer of the modern Portuguese school system. Coelho was the author of a series of policy writings, such as a plan for the General Education Organization (*Organização Geral do Ensino*), a Primary Education Reform (*A Reforma do Ensino Primário*), the Elements and Practical Pedagogy Manual (*Elementos e Manual Prático de Pedagogia*), and other scientific essays such as the the Evolution of Iberian Societies (*Evolução das Sociedades Ibéricas*), and the Theory of History (*Teoria da História*). He was also the author of a bibliography on teaching and education, even mentioning a curriculum for the “kindergarten”, oriented to children from 3 to 8 years old.

⁷ J. Ferreira Gomes, *A educação Infantil em Portugal*, Coimbra, Livraria Almedina, 1977, p. 50.

schools, and also set the requirement to prepare qualified teachers to work in them. This first measure was followed by others. In 1911, one year after the fall of the monarchy, during the First Republic, two pre-school laws established the foundations regarding pedagogical objectives, educational programs and teachers' qualifications, but very little was achieved in this direction due to the country's chaotic economic situation. Again, in 1914 law no. 233 decreed the creation of new Normal Schools in the principal Portuguese cities for the preparation of teachers in kindergartens. At this time, the dominant sensibility in the training of qualified personnel followed Fröebelian theories. In total, between 1910 and 1926, 11 kindergartens, 7 official and 4 private João de Deus kindergartens were created. This attention corresponded, in part, to the desire to spread republican values in a society deeply attached to the monarchical institution.

2. *Between Estado Novo and Social Changes (1945–1974)*

What has been said so far demonstrates that at a particular moment in Portuguese history, the foundations were laid for considering the question of early childhood from the perspective of education rather than of welfare. Things changed radically after the 1928 military *coup d'état* that led to the fall of the First Republic, especially after António de Oliveira Salazar's takeover between 1932 and 1934. The idea of society promoted by the Salazarian state was based on the traditionalist and authoritarian vision of God, Fatherland and Family, in which the education of early childhood until the age of seven was the responsibility of the family and not of the state. The new culture brought by the *Estado Novo* looked to pedagogical theories and to children's co-education as potential threats to the survival of the traditional family, and feared its subversive effects on customs and mores. When António Carneiro Pacheco was appointed minister of education in 1936, early childhood education was entrusted to the *Obra das Mães para a Educação Nacional*. The *Obra da Mães* was an association of wealthy women faithful to the regime, aimed at helping Portuguese mothers to accomplish their role as children's educators. The next step after the establishment of the *Obra das Mães* was the elimination of nursery education with law no. 28081 issued in 1937. The justification for such a decision was the lack of financial resources⁸.

In the first decades of the *Estado Novo*, therefore, the kindergartens previously established during both the monarchic period and the liberal state were abolished, and political measures were instead oriented toward stimu-

⁸ Baptista, *An historical and social approach to nurseries in Portugal*, cit., p. 507.

lating the educational function of the family while supporting private institutions. The ministry of education was no longer responsible for pre-school education, while other ministries developed services for children before they entered compulsory education. The main objective of these services was to reduce infant mortality. As stated by Maria João Cardona, Portugal made “a considerable step backwards in the history of childhood education, when it was considered that its mission was mostly of an assistance type, and its educational role was underestimated”, while Eva Baptista added that during the Salazarian regime “childhood education gradually became restricted to private institutions, without clearly defined educational objectives and no specific qualifications required”⁹.

The problem of women workers in industries was solved in 1945 with the so called Social Relief Fund (*Fundo de Assistência Social*), a measure that required industries to pay to the state six dollars for each woman employed. Companies that adhered to this measure were exempted from the obligation to set up in-house nurseries. This caused the number of children in kindergartens in the most industrialized areas to plummet. In a city like Vila Nova de Gaia, for example, in 1969, only 385 children out of 25,974 were enrolled in childcare institutions for children between zero and six years of age¹⁰.

Things, however, started to gradually change between the mid-1950s and the early 1960s. A first signal was given by the first two schools for the training of privately started kindergartens, which were established in 1954 in Lisbon. These school for the preparation of childhood educators were still integrated in a religious and traditional context, namely the Institute of Early Childhood Education (*Instituto de Educação Infantil*) and the School of Early Childhood Educators (*Escola de Educadores da Primeira Infância*). However this was the sign that something was changing in the utterly conservative Portuguese context. In 1958 the *João de Deus* School also began to form educators. In 1960 other private institutions were founded for the professional formation of educators, mostly belonging to religious institutions. Nonetheless, the main step toward the modernization of education in Portugal, including early childhood education, arrived in 1961 with the adherence to the OECD Mediterranean Regional Project (MRP)¹¹. This

⁹ Cardona, *Para a história da educação da infância em Portugal*, cit., p. 50; Baptista, *An historical and social approach to nurseries in Portugal*, cit., p. 509.

¹⁰ Baptista, *An historical and social approach to nurseries in Portugal*, cit., p. 509.

¹¹ The Mediterranean Regional Project, started in 1961, was “the quintessence of educational planning in the 1960s. It was a cooperative program to plan the long-term development of education in the six Mediterranean member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) - Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain,

program provided Portugal the fundings needed to create new institutions in the wake of the deep changes that were affecting Portuguese society during the 1960s. More and more women, in fact, were given access to the labor market, and the process of migration from rural to urban and industrialized areas grew stronger each year. As has been noted, in those years the increase of people's longevity, thanks to the general improvement in living conditions, contributed to the decrease in the number of children between the ages of zero and three year old in proportion to the total population. This phenomenon contributed to an increased focus on the conditions of early childhood, including its education. Another result of the improvement of people's lives was a reevaluation of the role of education, at all levels, as an instrument of social promotion, making education for children more desirable in the eyes of families, also in the wake of innovations in the fields of psychology and sociology¹².

This process of modernization was not unrelated to the colonial wars undertaken by Portugal between 1961 and 1974. These long conflicts aimed at keeping the colonies of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau during their struggle for independence required enormous material, financial and human resources. Among the various consequences triggered by these events was the need to employ women on the home front in the productive effort while men were engaged on the front. This led to the strengthening of the nursery system to accommodate young children while their mothers were working in the factories¹³. As we can see, the changes occurring in the wake of both the national and international context led the Portuguese *Estado Novo* to a strengthening, if not a true rebirth, of the early childhood care system, although far removed from the cultural and pedagogical assumptions with which it had been developed until the advent of the Salazarian regime. In spite of this, the new context of child care, although conceived with a welfare role and not an educational one, was a step away from the centrality given to the family alone for the care and education of the child.

In 1971, with Veiga Simão (1929–2014) in the Ministry of Education, pre-school education was reintegrated into the official education system as part of a complete overhaul of the Portuguese education system. Early in 1974 the enhancement of 50 kindergartens was planned along with the establishment of 25 other structures. At the very moment when the regime

Turkey, and Yugoslavia". G. Williams, *The OECD'S Mediterranean Regional Project*, in G. Psacharopoulos (ed.), *Economics of Education*, Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1987, pp. 335-336.

¹² Baptista, *An historical and social approach to nurseries in Portugal*, cit., p. 509.

¹³ Cf. Madeira, *Comparing Colonial Education Discourses in the French and Portuguese African Empires*, cit., pp.130-146.

seemed to be moving in the direction of modernizing the educational system, this process was interrupted by the Revolution that occurred on April 25th, 1974.

3. *The Carnation Revolution of 1974 and the Challenge of Democracy*

The democratic revolution did not stop this process. After 1974 there was a significant increase in the number of kindergartens, day-care centers and schools for the training of early childhood teachers, and also in the number of special education centers. With the advent of democracy, early childhood education services became dependent on two ministries, the Ministry of Education (*Ministerio da Educação*, ME) and the Ministry of Labor and Welfare (*Ministerio do Trabalho, Solidariedade e Segurança Social*, MTSS). According to the philosophy of the new post-revolution system, extending pre-schooling to the entire population had become a national objective, promoting social welfare, and developing the potential of children (DR. N^o 542/79). In 1977, the Superior Schools of Education were created, being an important step in the formation of educators. Several training courses for auxiliary staff were also promoted throughout the country¹⁴.

In 1978 and 1979 new kindergartens belonging to the official network of the Ministry of Education were established, giving priority to creating these new facilities in the areas with few or no kindergartens at all, with an increase of these institutions of up to 65%¹⁵. The Ministry of Labor decided to put under its patronage several institutions, which were all linked to educational and assistance functions. Among these there were babysitting services, social action utilities linked to the local municipalities, official establishments linked directly to the Regional Center of Social Security (*Centro Regional de Segurança Social*, CRSS) of each district, cooperatives, private companies with lucrative purposes, popular housing and other services.

However, the changes associated with the new Portuguese political course were not only about strengthening a process already initiated by the previous regime; the change was also a cultural one. In this way, a path that began in the second half of the 19th century was reopened to social debate after decades of censorship. In the area of early childhood care, alongside the already strong welfare and social security dimension, a true educational

¹⁴ M.J. Granger, *Guia para a montagem e o funcionamento de uma creche*, Lisboa, Moraes, 1976.

¹⁵ M. Baião Pinto da Rocha, M.E. Couceiro, M.I. Reis Madeira, *Creche: Condições de implantação, localização, instalação e funcionamento*, Lisboa, Direção-Geral da Acção Social, 1996.

and pedagogical reflection was reintroduced. These two dimensions would remain over the following decades, creating an unresolved dichotomy in which the public debate and its institutional translations concerning the educational and social nature of early childhood are still oscillating.

The tangible sign of this new situation is given by the translations into Portuguese of those authors (psychologists, pedagogists, pediatricians) who had animated the debate on early childhood education in other Western countries during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Their works had circulated in Portugal only in foreign languages, mainly French, English and Spanish (see appendix). Since 1974 we find Portuguese translations of Arnold Gesell's *A criança dos 0 aos 5 anos: o bebê e a criança na cultura dos nossos dias*, published in 1977, 1979, 1987, 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2002; René Spitz's *O não e o sim: a gênese da comunicação humana*, published in 1978, *A formação do ego: uma teoria genética e de campo: suas implicações para a patologia*, published in 1979, and *O primeiro ano de vida: um estudo psicanalítico do desenvolvimento normal e anômalo das relações objectais*, published in 1979, 1980, 1983 and 1987. Another author whose works are found in Portuguese translation after 1974 is the English psychologist John Bowlby, in particular his *Cuidados maternos e saúde mental* (1981), *Formação e rompimento dos laços afectivos* (1982, 1989), *Apego e perda* (1984, 1990, 1993) and *Uma base segura: aplicações clínicas da teoria do apego* (1989). Quite surprisingly, an author whose works are not to be found in Portuguese translation nor in other languages is the Italian pedagogist Loris Malaguzzi.

As we can observe, after 1974 Portugal was trying its best to bridge the gap that had arisen in the field of early childhood education with respect to other European countries. Despite the dichotomy that was created between the authority of reference, divided between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor and Welfare, it is possible to verify that in 1986/'87 the number of kindergartens belonging to the former were 3.303, much higher than those depending on the latter, which were 1.148. In 1978/'79 new kindergartens belonging to the official network of the Ministry of Education were created, with priority given to locating the new facilities in areas where these were fewer.

In the late 1980s, with the publication of the Basic Law of the Educational System and the beginning of a deep reform of the educational system, it was established that one of the duties of the Ministry of Labor is to protect and ensure free access to public and private nurseries for children up to the age of three. In addition to this, without solving the dichotomy between the authorities in charge, the Ministries of Education and Labor were entrusted with the responsibility of granting pre-school education from three to six years of age.

Since 1997, the Ministry of Education has implemented the Expansion Program of the Pre-School Educational Network, using the motto “A Good Beginning is Worth a Lifetime” (*Um Bom Começo Vale para toda a Vida*). However, during the 1990s, a new evolution in early childhood education was observed in Portugal, with the creation of a large number of kindergartens throughout the country, thanks to the enactment of the law on pre-school education (*Lei quadro da Educação Pré-Escolar: EPE*)¹⁶. This Law defines the participatory role of families, as well as the strategic role of the State, the Municipalities, and the private, cooperative and social initiatives. In this framework, the Ministry of Education assumes the pedagogical tutelage of all institutions; the concepts of public network and private network are clarified, and the State is in charge of promoting the expansion of the public network’s kindergartens, while gradually ensuring the free educational component of pre-school education. In addition to valuing the educational component of kindergartens, the families are supported, and their partnership with municipalities is implemented.

Among the main objectives defined by the *Lei Quadro* on pre-school education we find the need for promoting personal and social development of the child based on experiences of democratic life from the perspective of education in citizenship. Following the rapid changes of contemporary societies, Portuguese pre-schools are asked to foster the insertion of children in diverse social groups, respecting the plurality of cultures while favoring a progressive awareness of their role as members of society. In the same spirit, these institutions need to stimulate the global development of each child, respecting their individual characteristics, encouraging behaviors that favor meaningful and diversified learning. In addition to this, kindergartens in Portugal are intended to develop individual expression and communication through the use of multiple languages as means of relationship, information, aesthetic awareness and understanding of the world, while awakening curiosity and critical thinking.

Beyond this already thick set of goals, the EPE law aims at contributing to equal opportunities in access to school and to successful learning, while providing each child with conditions of well-being and safety, particularly in the context of individual and collective health. Last but not least, the law wants to serve as a screen for maladjustments, deficiencies and precociousness, promoting the best orientation and routing of the child, and encourages the participation of families in the educational process in order to establish effective collaboration with the community.

¹⁶ Cf. Diário da República, I Série-A No. 34, 10/02/1997: <https://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/EInfancia/documentos/lei-quadro_educacao_pre-escolar.pdf> (retrieved on 03/05/2021).

4. *Pre-School Education in Portugal Today*

So far we have seen the historical effort made by Portugal to build an educational and welfare system for early childhood. This process did not lack contradictions and dramatic problems, but it can be stated that Portugal approached the 21st century with a strong awareness of the importance of this type of institution. To conclude this essay, let's look at the situation of pre-school education in Portugal today. On the basis of the EPE laws, Portuguese kindergartens are now overseen by the Social Private Institutes of Social Solidarity (also known as IPSS: *Instituições Particular de Solidariedade Social*), which is in charge of the management of services for children three to five years of age, and by non-profit organizations managed by the Ministry of Labor and Solidarity. However, public services provided by the IPSS cover only a minority of the overall requests, while the majority of them are managed by the Ministry of Education with regard to pedagogical issues, curriculum guidelines and evaluation. On the other hand, the Ministry of Labor and Welfare is in charge of family support, assistance with extended time and management of meals¹⁷.

Even the cost sharing associated with the pre-school education system is not spared from the dichotomy of authority observed so far. This system involves a clear division between education and care: five hours per day of education are funded by the Ministry of Education, while the extra four hours of care per day are funded by the Ministry of Labor and Welfare. In addition to this, the state pays an amount to the IPSS for each child based on the service provided. Within this system families are also asked to give their contribution. Indeed, while the five daily hours of education are free, the extra hours which are considered custody are paid by families according to their income. This system has been conceived to favor families that have fewer resources and are more at risk of social marginalization, and children from poorer family backgrounds who have priority of admission.

Nevertheless, despite the social purpose for which it was conceived in coherence with the socialist orientation of recent Portuguese governments, this mechanism risks creating reverse discrimination. In fact, children coming from wealthier environments often remain outside the services, with the risk of creating social fragmentation. The Ministry of Labor in charge of the administration of kindergartens tends to give a welfare imprint to

¹⁷ For the following see E. Nottoli, *Lo 0-6 in Europa, un viaggio nell'infanzia*, Bergamo, Zeroseiup, 2016; Id., *Il sistema Portogallo*, Bergamo, Zeroseiup: <<https://www.zeroseiup.eu/il-sistema-portogallo/>> and Pinto, Serrano, *A creche em Portugal*, cit., pp. 63-70.

the service, putting the social aspects before the pedagogical ones. If from one point of view this is positive, since it meets the needs of many disadvantaged families, from the pedagogical point of view it is highly limiting, because it creates disparity instead of equality. Imperfections such as these underlie the flaws of a system that still suffers, in some respects, from the approach adopted during the Salazarian regime, in which the division between the role of the family and the role of the state in pre-school education was exacerbated.

This division, in spite of its strong cultural heritage, did not go unnoticed by the legislators, who in order to overcome it has put at the heart of the pre-school education debate the issues concerning the role and training of staff and their relations with children's families. Emphasis has been placed on the continuity of the role of educators as children transition from the zero-to-three year old educational level and the three-to-five year old one. From the Legislators' perspective, continuity is provided precisely by the educator, who is expected to engage with the child's family before the beginning of the course. In addition to this, a member of the family is allowed to remain in the classroom for a certain period of time, or the child may bring his/her own personal items from home.

The same continuity, according to the guidelines, should also be pursued in the transition to elementary school, where an active collaboration with parents, professionals and children is expected. However, real conditions can vary greatly. In general, in fact, more importance is given to educational programs for elementary school at the expense of pre-school pedagogical planning. The tendency of the curriculum toward personalization has been practically disregarded, thus arriving at standardization and the definitive break in the process of continuity. Situations range from a free and autonomous activity to one that is particularly rigid and not very inclusive. Teachers structure their curriculum according to the textbooks they have as a reference, and not according to their students.

The Manual of Quality for Day Care Centers, issued by the Institute of Social Solidarity, is a model for educational institutions designed for children under the age of 3. While on the one hand its dry and highly formalized structure has certainly helped many services to improve in institutional quality, on the other hand this text is lacking in any pedagogical point of reference. The objectives to be achieved in the pre-school educational system are several. The first is to stimulate children's abilities and to facilitate their development. Moreover, the system should contribute to strengthen children's emotional stability and encourage them to observe the natural world and human society. Another important goal is to help the development of children's self awareness and encourage their integration. Eventually pre-school education should aim at developing communication skills, healthy

habits and good hygiene, and at detecting early signs of pathologies and handicaps, as well as natural gifts¹⁸.

In more recent years, however, the debate on early childhood education was not only influenced by a technical and dirigiste state approach inherited from the previous dictatorship. A lively debate on the psychological, social and philosophical issues of education between 0 and 3 has been animated by new realities such as the APEI, i.e. the Association of Childhood Education Professionals (*Associação de Profissionais de Educação de Infância*). The journal attached with the association, *Cadernos de Educação de Infância*, has been a point of reference for innovations and debate in the world of early childhood education for the last 30 years. In its pages, the most avant-garde topics, sometimes controversial, related to early childhood education have found their place: from sexual to environmental education, from staff training to the institutional dimension of kindergartens, from the challenges of cultural integration in the global world to the latest issues on health emergencies¹⁹.

In conclusion, achieving all the aforementioned tasks is not easy, and without adequate preparation of the pre-school workforce, the goal will be even more difficult to attain. As noted in these pages, the pre-school system of care and education in the Iberian country still suffers from structural problems inherited from its recent Salazarian past, in which a profound dichotomy was created between the educational role of the family and the education provided by the state. Today, this difficult legacy is reflected in particular in the dual sphere of competence to which institutions for children aged zero to three and three to six are entrusted, namely the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor and Welfare. In order to meet the challenges of a global world, particularly as a result of the waves of immigration that little Portugal has had to absorb in recent years, especially from Brazil and from former African colonies as well as from Eastern European countries, it is necessary to overcome these contradictions and problems. Perhaps a pragmatic approach to the pre-school education system, less concerned with meeting the demands of outdated political ideologies, would also be useful. In a sense, it would be appropriate to reconnect the thread with the pedagogical path taken before the advent of the authoritarian re-

¹⁸ Nottoli, *Il sistema Portogallo*, cit. and S. Barros, J. Cadima, D.M. Bryant *et al.*, *Infant child care quality in Portugal: Associations with structural characteristics*, in «Early Childhood Research Quarterly», 37 (2016), pp. 118-130.

¹⁹ See for example V. Beliz, *A Educação Sexual na Educação de Infância*, in «Cadernos de Educação de Infância», 16, 2 (2019): <<http://apei.pt/edicoes/cei/?ide=2161&sort=2019>> (retrieved on 03/05/2021).

gime. Once again, the rediscovery of the past, even in the educational field, becomes useful for the planning of the present and the future.

Annex

Editions of pedagogical books circulating in Portugal before and after the Carnation Revolution (listed by authors).

Bowlby, John (1907–1990)

Soins maternels et santé mentale: contribution de l'OMS au programme des Nations Unies pour la protection des enfants sans foyer, Genève, OMS, 1951.

Child care and the growth of love, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Pelican Books, 1953.

Soins maternels et santé mentale, 2^a ed. Genève, Organisation Mondiale de la Santé, 1954.

Attachment and loss: Attachment, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1971.

Attachment and loss, London, Hogarth, 1973.

Attachment and loss: separation: anxiety and anger, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1975.

Attachment and loss, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1978.

Attachment and loss: loss, sadness and depression, London, The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1980.

Cuidados maternos e saúde mental, trad. Vera Lúcia Baptista de Souza, Irene Rizzini, São Paulo, Livraria Martins Fontes, 1981.

Formação e rompimento dos laços afetivos, trad. Alvaro Cabral, São Paulo, Martins Fontes, 1982.

Apego e perda, São Paulo, Martins Fontes, 1984.

Uma base segura: aplicações clínicas da teoria do apego, Porto Alegre, Artes Médicas, 1989.

Formação e rompimento dos laços afetivos, 2^a ed. São Paulo, Martins Fontes, 1990.

Apego e perda: apego, 2^a ed. São Paulo, Martins Fontes, 1990.

Apego e perda: separação: angústia e raiva, 2^a ed. São Paulo, Martins Fontes, 1993.

Gesell, Arnold (1880–1961)

Wolf child and human child: the life history of Kamala, the wolf girl based on the diary account of a child who was reared by a wolf and who then lived for nine years in the Orphanage of Midnapore in the province of Bengal, London, Methuen, 1941.

The child from five to ten, by Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, in collab. with Louise Ames and Glenna E. Bullis, New York-London, Harper & Brothers, 1946.

Developmental diagnosis: normal and abnormal child development, clinical methods and pediatric applications, by Arnold Gesell, Catherine S. Amatrudda. 2nd ed, rev. and enlarged, New York, Medical Department, 1947.

- La educacion del niño en la cultura moderna: conducta y personalidad del niño en las diversas etapas de su desarrollo: técnica y guía para su cuidado físico e psicológico en el hogar y en la escuela recreativa*, by Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, 4^a ed. Buenos Aires, Nova, 1948.
- Studies in child development*, New York-London, Harper & Brothers, 1948.
- L'enfant de 5 a 10 ans*, by Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, trad. Irène Lézine, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1949.
- Le jeune enfant dans la civilisation moderne: l'orientation du développement de l'enfant à l'école des tout-petits à la maison*, by Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, trad. Irène Lézine, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1949.
- L'embryologie du comportement: les débuts de la pensée humaine*, trad. Paul Chauchard, Paris, PUF, 1953.
- Child behavior*, New York, Dell Publishing, 1955.
- Le jeune enfant dans la civilisation moderne*, 3^{ème} ed. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1957.
- Psicología evolutiva: de 1 a 16 años*, supervisión e presentación de la edición castellana Telma Reca, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1958.
- L'enfant de 5 a 10 ans*, 3^{ème} ed. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1959.
- L'adolescent de dix a seize ans*, by Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, Louise Bates-Ames; trad. Irène Lézime. 1^{ère} ed. Paris, PUF, 1959.
- El niño de 5 a 10 años*, by Arnold Gesell... [et al.]; trad. Luis Fabricant. 4 ed. Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1963.
- El niño 11 y 12 años*, by Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, Louise Bates Ames; Telma Reca, Jaime Bernstein, Eduardo Loedel. 3^a ed. Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1963.
- El niño de 13 y 14 años*, Arnold Gesell; Frances L. Ilg, Louise Bates Ames, Telma Reca, Jaime Bernstein, Eduardo Loedel. 3^a ed., Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1963.
- El niño de 15 y 16 años*, Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, Louise Bates Ames, Telma Reca, Jaime Bernstein, Jaime Loedel. 3^a ed., Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1963.
- El niño de 1 a 4 años*, by Arnold Gesell, Telma Reca, Jaime Bernstein, Eduardo Loedel, Luis Fabricant. 5^a ed., Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1966.
- El niño de 1 a 5 años: guía para el estudio del niño preescolar*, by Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, 5^a ed., Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1966.
- El niño de 5 y 6 años*, by Arnold Gesell ...[et al.], Telma Reca, Jaime Bernstein. 4^a ed. revista, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1967.
- El niño de 7 y 8 años*, by Arnold Gesell ...[et al.], Telma Reca, Jaime Bernstein. 4^a ed. revista, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1967.
- El niño de 9 y 10 años*, by Arnold Gesell ...[et al.], Telma Reca, Jaime Bernstein. 4^a ed. revista, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1967.
- El niño de 13 y 14 años*, ed. lit. Jaime Bernstein, trad. Eduardo Loedel, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1967.
- L'enfant de 5 a 10 ans*, by Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1967.

- L'Adolescent: De dix a seize ans*, by Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, Louise Bates-Ames. 1^{ère} ed., Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1970.
- El niño de 7 y 8 años*, ed. lit. Jaime Bernstein, trad. Luis Fabricant, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1971.
- El niño de 9 y 10 años*, ed. lit. Jaime Bernstein, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1971.
- El niño de 1 a 4 años*, ed. lit. Jaime Bernstein, trad. Eduardo Loedel, Luis Fabricant, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1972.
- L'enfant de 5 à 10 ans*, by Arnold Gessel, Frances L. Ilg, trad. Nadine Granjon, Irene Lézine, 6^{ème} éd., Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1972.
- La personalidad del niño de 5 a 16 años*, by Arnold Gesell... [et al.], Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1972.
- El niño de 5 y 6 años*, ed. lit. Jaime Bernstein, trad. Luis Frabricant, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 1973.
- Le jeune enfant dans la civilisation moderne: l'orientation du développement de l'enfant à l'école des tout-petits et à la maison*, par Arnold Gesell et Frances L. Ilg. 8^{ème} éd., Paris, PUF, 1973.
- L'enfant de 5 à 10 ans*, 7^e ed, Paris, PUF, 1975.
- A criança dos 5 aos 10 anos*, trad. Cardigos dos Reis. Ed. rev., Lisboa, Dom Quixote, 1977.
- A criança dos 0 aos 5 anos: o bebé e a criança na cultura dos nossos dias*, Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, Louise Bates Ames, trad. Cardigos dos Reis, Lisboa, D. Quixote, 1979.
- Le jeune enfant dans la civilisation moderne : l'orientation du développement de l'enfant à l'école des tout-petits et à la maison*, par Arnold Gesell et Frances L. Ilg. 20^{ème} ed., Paris, PUF, 1985.
- A criança dos 5 aos 10 anos*, Arnold Gesell, [colab.] Frances L. Ilg, Louise Bates Ames, Glenna E. Bullis, trad. Cardigos dos Reis, Lisboa, D. Quixote, 1987.
- A criança dos 5 aos 10 anos / Arnold Gesell...* [et al.], trad. Cardigos dos Reis, Lisboa, Dom Quixote, 1996.
- A criança dos 0 aos 5 anos: o bebé e a criança na cultura dos nossos dias*, Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, Louise Bates Ames, trad. Cardigos dos Reis. 3a ed., Lisboa, Dom Quixote, 1998.
- A criança dos 0 aos 5 anos: o bebé e a criança na cultura dos nossos dias / Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, Louise Bates Ames*, trad. Cardigos dos Reis. 4^a ed., Lisboa, Dom Quixote, 2000.
- A criança dos 0 aos 5 anos: o bebé e a criança na cultura dos nossos dias*, Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, Louise Bates Ames, trad. Cardigos dos Reis, Lisboa, Dom Quixote, 2002.

Pikler, Emmi (1902–1984)

Se mouvoir en liberté dès le premier âge, Paris, PUF, 1979.

Spitz, A. René (1887–1974)

The first year of life: a psychoanalytic study of normal and deviant development of object relations, by Rene A. Spitz, Colab. W. Godfrey Cobliner, New York, International Universities Press, 1965.

No y si: sobre la génesis de la comunicación humana, 2ª ed. Buenos Aires, Hormé, 1966.

De la naissance à la parole: la première année de la vie, by René A. Spitz; colab. W. Godfrey Cobliner; trad. Liliane Flournoy, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1968.

Le non et le oui: la genèse de la communication humaine, Paris, PUF, 1976.

De la naissance à la parole : la première année de la vie, by René A. Spitz, avec la collaboration de W. Godfrey Cobliner, Préf. de Anna Freud, 5^{ème} ed., Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1976.

O não e o sim: a gênese da comunicação humana, by René A. Spitz, trad. Urias Corrêa Arantes, rev. Luiz Lorenzo Rivera, São Paulo, Martins Fontes, 1978.

No and yes: on the genesis of human communication, by René A. Spitz, New York, International Universities Press, Inc., 1979.

A formação do ego: uma teoria genética e de campo, suas implicações para a patologia, by René A. Spitz, trad. Vera Lúcia Baptista de Souza, São Paulo, Livraria Martins Fontes, 1979.

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O primeiro ano de vida: um estudo psicanalítico do desenvolvimento normal e anômalo das relações objectais, São Paulo, Mem Martins, 1979.

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O primeiro ano de vida: um estudo psicanalítico do desenvolvimento normal e anômalo das relações objetais, by René A. Spitz. 3ª ed., São Paulo, Martins Fontes, 1983.

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The Emergence of Nursery Schools in Bologna (1969–1975)

Tiziana Pironi

Abstract – This chapter analyses the underlying reasons for and, broadly speaking, the changes leading to the emergence of day nurseries in Bologna in 1969, thanks in particular to the role played by Adriana Lodi, Bologna’s Health Commissioner at the time. The first part highlights several pilot projects that were already ongoing in Italy, such as the Olivetti daycare services in Ivrea and the Montessori Birth Center in Rome. The latter was founded in 1949 by one of Maria Montessori’s former pupils, Adele Costa Gnocchi (1883–1967). These projects may be considered starting points and models for the development of the new approach, centred on the educational value of the new services for children. It is shown how, in the case of Bologna, there was a need to rethink the role of the educator, no longer seen solely as a childcare worker. The second part specifically focuses on the two-years experiment with the new day nursery model, highlighting the contribution on the theoretical level by the neuropsychiatrist Nino (Eustachio) Loperfido (1932–2008), one of the protagonists of the movement for the promotion of daycare services.

1. *Origins of the project*

The roots of the first municipal nursery schools in Bologna in 1969 must be sought within the dynamics and changes – in particular the social and economic ones – that characterized the capital of the Emilia Romagna region in the 1950s and ’60s, when it started to become necessary to meet the increasingly pressing needs of working women. Moreover, the situation in Italy in 1951–61 was characterized by an intense economic and social development, which helped drive its process of modernization, resulting in an increasingly massive use of female labor. It was precisely to deal with this new emergency that women’s movements became the representatives of the needs of thousands of working women, demanding a new welfare model based on the full recognition of two basic rights for women: the right

to work, and the freedom to choose maternity¹. It was mainly the *Unione Donne Italiane* (UDI: Union of Italian Women), an association of progressive women, who worked toward this goal, holding various national conventions (in 1949, 1954, and 1962) focusing on the reconciliation between work and maternity, and promoting a bill in Parliament, in 1960 and 1965, for the transfer of the functions of the “ONMI” to the municipal governments².

It is well known that in Italy, with the establishment of the *Opera Nazionale Maternità Infanzia* (ONMI: National Organization for Maternity and Childhood) in 1925, the first aim of the Fascist government was to increase the birth rate and fight infant mortality³. The nurseries created by the ONMI thus proliferated as places where children from 0 to 3 years of age were substantially looked after and cared for, from the standpoint of their health and hygiene needs. Since the nurseries were intended for the weaker, poorer social categories, they were characterized by evident discrimination and social exclusion tendencies⁴. During the post-WWII period, the ONMI nurseries still stood out for these characteristics, with a total lack of attention paid to the children’s mental wellbeing. In fact, the little “guests” spent 9 to 10 hours a day in a depersonalizing, alienating environment, where the walls of the play space were padded up to a height of 1 meter from the floor to absorb blows against them, and toys were totally standardized. It also wasn’t infrequent for children to be tied to their cots, for safety reasons, during their afternoon naps.

As a result, the birth of municipally-managed nurseries, as an alternative to those run by the ONMI, represented a real conquest that had been demanded by the women’s movements. The battle employed tactics ranging from studies to petitions, to the proposal of bills, to study conferences; it led

¹ For more information: E. Betti, *Tra lavoro e welfare: il contributo femminile alla costruzione del modello emiliano*, in C. De Maria (ed.), *Il modello emiliano nella storia d’Italia. Tra culture politiche e pratiche amministrative*, Bologna, BraDyPus, 2014, pp. 11-29.

² This is Bill No. 1043, presented by the UDI to the Senate on February 26, 1965, entitled *Istituzione del servizio sociale degli asili-nido per il bambino fino a tre anni*.

³ See, for more information: D. Caroli, *Per una storia dell’asilo nido in Europa tra Otto e Novecento*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2014, pp. 279-292; Ead., *Day nurseries and childcare in Europe, 1800–1939*, London, Palgrave, 2017, pp. 132-144.

⁴ The nurseries of the ONMI were only for mothers who were unwed, widowed, abandoned, or lacking any means of support because their husbands were unable to provide for their families, see M. Minesso (ed.), *Stato e infanzia nell’Italia contemporanea. Origini, sviluppo e fine dell’ONMI 1925-1975*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2007, p. 75.

to a growth of conscience that soon involved, at least for Emilia Romagna, the labor unions and progressive political forces⁵.

In the case of the city of Bologna, during the early 1960s it had been the stage of a wide-ranging debate involving educationalists, psychologists, administrators, and representatives of the world of work and women's associations. A number of different initiatives were launched in the city; among these there was the conference organized in 1963 by the *Comitato per l'affermazione dei diritti della donna* (Committee for the Assertion of Women's Rights) on the topic *Asili-nido e scuole materne. Esigenze improprorogabili della società italiana* (Nursery schools and kindergartens. Critical needs of Italian society), in which it was argued that it was necessary for child-centered services to have a specific educational connotation, particularly with regard to the environments and the training of educators. Preference was also given to the residential, rather than company, model, in order to promote a continuity between the home environment and the nursery, avoiding the inconvenience and stress of shuttling the child back and forth⁶.

The following year, the third educational February, an important initiative organized by Bologna's then-Education Commissioner, Ettore Tarozzi, centered on the topic: *Il primo anno di vita del bambino* (A child's first year of life), focusing the scholars' attention on the role nursery schools could take on to support that of parents. The scope of this event was extremely significant because it was the first interdisciplinary meeting organized in Italy on this topic, and one which involved the participation of educationalists, psychologists, and pediatricians⁷.

We must not forget that the profound changes taking place in 1970s' Italian society had had an impact on the organization of the traditional family which, caught up in rapid migratory processes, became increasingly mononuclear. The nursery thus became an emerging social need which, in addition to meeting the increasingly pressing needs of working women, was considered the main focus of an educational, political, and cultural project.

As a result, the first municipal nursery schools in Emilia Romagna's capital city opened during a period fraught with social change, as well as in

⁵ See: L. Campioni, F. Marchesi (eds.), *Una partenza forte. 1969: i primi asili nido comunali in Emilia-Romagna*, Parma, Zeroseiup, 2019.

⁶ Comitato per l'affermazione dei diritti della donna (Committee for the Assertion of Women's Rights), affiliated with the Congresso nazionale delle donne italiane (National Congress of Italian Women), *Asili-nido e scuole materne. Esigenza improrogabile della società italiana. Atti del Convegno di studi (Bologna, 18-19 maggio)*, Bologna, STEB, 1963.

⁷ Comune di Bologna (ed.), *Educazione alla maternità e alla paternità. I primi anni di vita del bambino* (Atti del Febbraio pedagogico Bolognese), Bologna, Alfa, 1967.

a climate of great cultural renaissance, which had exploded with the events of 1968⁸. Indeed, the year 1969 marked an epochal change in Italian society, the result of the protests of a long 1968. It was precisely the battles of feminist movements that made the difference, with their demand for nursery schools of quality from the educational standpoint, ideally the primary place on which the fulfillment of future social policies would be based.

The urgings from the world of work and civil society found in Bologna fertile ground, leading to the creation of the first municipally-run nursery schools, thanks to the initiative of Adriana Lodi, the Social Policies and Health Commissioner of the city of Bologna from 1964 to 1969, first with the Dozza government, and then under Mayor Fantì⁹.

Thus began the dawn of the experimentation of the first neighborhood daycare centers in Bologna, with the creation of a model that would become the pioneer for other similar initiatives at the national level, from the standpoint of spatial organization, furnishings, and staff training. This was two years before the passing of Law No. 1044 of 1971, the drafting of which Adriana Lodi contributed to as a member of Parliament. This law introduced the concept of municipally-run nursery schools in Italy, envisaging the start of a five-year plan for the establishment in Italy of 3,800 municipal nursery schools during the 1972–76 period. However, the term “*asilo-nido*” still betrayed a welfare connotation in Italian, as the resulting law had been the product of difficult political negotiations. Instead, in her speech at the opening of the “Patini” nursery school on November 9, 1969¹⁰, Adriana Lodi emphasized the use of a new term, “*nido di infanzia*”, highlighting its innovative scope compared to the previous vision of mere caretaking:

From a demand for a welfare service for the poorer population, it is becoming more and more a demand for an actual social service available to the whole community; and it falls within a broader conception of social security and a modern vision of the relationships between citizens and the organized community. A modern network of daycare centers must aim to assure the family that children will receive the appropriate care for a more harmonious and healthier

⁸ On the changes impacting Italian society in that particular historic moment, see, in particular: T. Pironi, (a cura di), *Autorità in crisi: scuola, famiglia, società, prima e dopo il '68*, Rome, Aracne, 2020.

⁹ For her contribution to the creation of the first nursery schools, on December 3, 2019 Adriana Lodi received an honorary degree in Pedagogy from the University of Bologna.

¹⁰ The first nursery school, opened on November 9, 1969, was built in the working-class neighborhood of Bolognina, thanks to a donation made by a private citizen, Aldo Patini. The same year, two other nurseries were opened in the Lame neighborhood.

mental and physical development and to facilitate women's access to jobs [...] The problem of daycare centers, precisely because it is so vast, precisely because it involves thousands, millions of Italian families, cannot be entrusted to the single families, because it is a social problem, and as such, it must be dealt with by society, by the local and national communities¹¹.

Adriana Lodi was thus a pioneer in the modernization of education policies, making a decisive contribution to the dissemination of the childhood culture that would become a characteristic trait of the city of Bologna, and a leader in the national panorama.

The battle for daycare centers of quality from the educational standpoint, entrusted to the management of local institutions, represented a goal that had its roots in the past, both political and personal, of this woman who, as a working mother, had had a dramatic experience with the nursery run by the ONMI.

In the first place, by becoming the interpreter of the cultural upheaval and needs for modernization of those years, Adriana Lodi immediately pursued the project of a new nursery school that was to become a service for all children, thus creating an educational environment that would foster a process of growth with the full development of children's personalities.

In addition to the creation of child-friendly furnishings and materials, for which Adriana Lodi took inspiration from a visit to day nurseries in Stockholm in 1967, an emerging matter to be solved was the training of the future educators: this was provided for urgently through the organization of special courses at the Elisabetta Sirani vocational school, there being no specific schools for that field. Thus, an intensive annual training program was set up and held in the evenings, immediately followed, in 1970, by the start-up of a 3-year vocational course for childcare assistants. The pupils would receive their diploma from the only childcare assistants' school existing at the time, founded in Rome in 1947 by Adele Costa Gnocchi, a pupil of Maria Montessori.

It should be remembered that, well prior to the research on the neonatal period, since the 1930s Maria Montessori had been concentrating her studies on the period from 0 to 3 years of age, considering it a phase of huge formative significance, which would never be repeated later¹². In 1939 it

¹¹ A. Lodi, *La nascita del primo asilo-nido comunale: il "Patini"*, in L. Campioni, F. Marchesi (eds.), *Sui nostri passi. Tracce di storia dei servizi educativi nei Comuni capoluogo dell'Emilia-Romagna*, Parma, Edizioni Junior-Spaggiari Edizioni Srl, 2014, pp. 113-114.

¹² See her works on early childhood: *Il bambino in famiglia*, Todi, Tipografia Tuder-te, 1936 (1st German edition: *Das Kind in der Familie*, 1923); *Il segreto dell'infanzia*,

was Adele Costa Gnocchi, a pupil of Maria Montessori, who experimented for the first time – at a “Children’s House” opened in secret at the Palazzo Taverna in Rome – Montessori’s theories on early childhood, going against the trend of the ONMI’s sterile, conforming nurseries¹³. A constant observation of children from 0 to 3 years of age, in an environment designed to be child-friendly with the use of development materials constructed ad hoc, laid the foundations for the preparation of Montessorian educators for nursery schools. Thus, Adele Costa Gnocchi founded the *Scuola Assistenti d’Infanzia Montessori* (AIM: Montessori Childcare Assistants’ School) in Rome for that purpose, a novelty of its kind compared to the past focus on the exclusively health- and hygiene-related skills required of childcare workers¹⁴.

Adriana Lodi felt the pressing need to document herself on the few pioneering daycare projects that existed in Italy then, which were created and run privately, on the basis of a precise concept, and with the aim of moving away from the welfare model of the ONMI. In addition to the *Centro Nascita Montessori* (Montessori Birth Center), she also visited the *Villaggio della madre e del fanciullo* (Village of Mothers and Children), founded by Elda Scarzella, in Milan in 1945, and the “Olivetti” daycare center, opened in Ivrea in 1941.

The first, unlike the forms of welfare offered at the time to unwed mothers, intended to offer women a warm, welcoming place, rich with emotional and cultural stimuli, where they could bring their pregnancy to term, and be helped in rearing their babies¹⁵. This second aim led Scarzella to create

Bellinzona, Istituto Editoriale Ticinese, 1938 (1st French edition: *L’enfant*, 1936); *La scoperta del bambino*, Milano, Garzanti, 1950 (1st English edition: *The Discovery of the Child*, 1948); *La mente del bambino. Mente assorbente*, Milano, Garzanti, 1952 (1st English edition: *The Absorbent Mind*, 1949).

¹³ On Adele Costa Gnocchi, see G. Honegger Fresco, *Radici nel futuro. La vita di Adele Costa Gnocchi (1883-1967)*, Molfetta, La Meridiana, 2001 (2021); B. De Serio, *Educare dalla nascita: il Progetto di Adele Costa Gnocchi*, Roma, Anicia, 2014; S. Rossi Barillozzi, *Adele Costa Gnocchi: un’antesignana dell’educazione dalla vita prenatale al bambino di tre anni*, Perugia, Era Nuova, 2013.

¹⁴ G. Honegger Fresco, *La scuola assistenti all’infanzia*, in E. Gianini Belotti, G. Honegger Fresco (eds.), *Educazione alla nascita. L’esperienza del centro Nascita Montessori*, Milano, Emme Edizioni, 1983, pp. 9-10; G. De Serio, *The profile of the Montessori assistant: historical paths and new educational projects*, in «Studi sulla formazione», 1 (2016), pp. 171-185.

¹⁵ D. Pallotta, *The Village of Mothers and Children in Milan: a review of a successful community model*, in P. Cunningham, N. Fretwell (ed.), *Creating Communities: Local, National and Global*, Ci.Ce, London, Thematic Network Project, 2012, pp. 35-42; C.

a nursery, independent from the ONMI, availing herself of the expertise of Elinor Sinnott Goldschmied, to create an environment based on educational criteria, with the use of a rich body of natural materials that would aid in the children's creative development¹⁶. In this case, also, the focus was on the qualities of an educator who, indirectly, would constantly take care of the child entrusted to her, becoming a point of reference for him without interfering invasively in the process of personal growth¹⁷.

The daycare center set up by Adriano Olivetti in the industrial complex of Ivrea was also a source of inspiration for Adriana Lodi: while referring to itself as a company nursery, its inspiration was cultural and political, focusing on the idea of a *small community*, the expression of a participatory involvement that stood out for its practices of self-governance and community democracy. It was a model in its architectural plan and esthetic details of the furnishings, designed in 1939 by architects Luigi Figini and Gino Pollini, while the internal fittings had been designed by Olivetti's in-house Technical Office, managed at the time by architect Gian Antonio Bernasconi. The building was innovatively characterized by a space full of stimuli, set into a natural environment, which offered the children free access to outdoor areas. Aiming for an educational project that would be conducive to a harmonious physical, intellectual, and emotional development, the Olivetti company organized its own training and updating courses for the nursery educators, within the framework of a training system organized in its own social services network, which had been progressively added to on the basis of the community concepts envisaged by its founder¹⁸.

2. *Start-up and experimentation of the new Bolognese nursery school*

The experimentation of the first nursery schools in Bologna was accompanied by a phase of reflection, creating the conditions for it to become the space in which a continuing education of the personnel would be experimented in a highly participatory climate: those first educators were fully

Gualdi, *Elda Mazzocchi Scarzella (1904-2005): una vita al servizio di madri e bambini*, in «RSE. Rivista di storia dell'educazione», 2 (2017), pp. 245-257.

¹⁶ L. Pazzaglia, *Elda Scarzella e la costituzione del fondo documentario a lei intitolato (1904-2005)*, in C. Sindoni (ed.), *Itaca. In viaggio tra Storia, scuola ed Educazione. Studi in onore di Salvatore Agresta*, Lecce, Pensa Multimedia, 2018, p. 219.

¹⁷ E. Goldschmied, *Il bambino nell'asilo-nido. Guida per le educatrici e i genitori*, Milano, Fabbri Editori, 1979.

¹⁸ On Adriano Olivetti, see the recent book by A. Quinti, *Adriano Olivetti – Il valore del Capitale umano* (online edition), 2020.

aware that they were taking part in a “choral” project, referring not only to the contingent problems to be solved immediately, but above all to educational perspective and approach¹⁹.

The nursery-community model was aided by the particular political situation of Bologna, which had implemented a decentralization of the city’s neighborhoods, perfectly coinciding, moreover, with the educational season organized by Bruno Ciari, together with the Education Commissioner, Ettore Tarozzi²⁰.

This led to significant problems from the cultural and social standpoint, in the intended creation of a totally new educational institution as an alternative to the model represented by the ONMI. An attempt was thus made to create a political-cultural project that would be a point of reference for the educational staff and which would then involve the parents also. Thus, a “collective” formula was adopted, made up of the staff (educational and auxiliary) and a group of parents, motivated by the necessity to study the issues that emerged during the nursery’s first year of activity.

The problems immediately appeared fairly complex, since the nursery was supposed to be considered

an initial educational and socializing period, capable of forming individuals who will know tomorrow how to view society with a critical eye and therefore improve it²¹.

A pressing question concerned the involvement of the parents, since the “new nursery”, no longer presenting itself in welfare terms, was supposed to encourage cooperation with the families, while in reality their work rhythms and hours made this difficult²².

A significant opportunity for assessing the then-ongoing 2-year experimentation period was provided by the conference organized in Bologna in

¹⁹ F. Tugnoli, *Un’esperienza di gestione sociale*, in Comune di Bologna, *Un asilo di tipo nuovo. Analisi di un’esperienza. Atti del Convegno tenuto a Bologna a Palazzo Montanari nei giorni 3 e 4 dicembre 1971*, Bologna, Comune di Bologna, 1972, pp. 39-40.

²⁰ See G. Bonomi, O. Righi, *Una stagione pedagogica con Bruno Ciari*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1982.

²¹ Relazione del Collettivo del nido Patini, presentata al sindaco in occasione del suo incontro con i cittadini del quartiere Bolognina, avvenuto il 12 novembre 1970, p. 1 (document kindly provided by Adriana Lodi).

²² See T. Pironi, *Infanzia e famiglie al nido: alle origini di un’alleanza complessa*, in M.G. Contini (ed.), *Dis-alleanze nei contesti educativi*, Roma, Carocci, 2012, pp. 162-175.

1971 by the UDI, immediately after the passage in the Senate of Law No. 1044 of December 6, 1971, mentioned earlier²³.

A theoretical point of reference for the “new nursery” was Eustachio Loperfido, a child neuropsychiatrist and Health Commissioner from 1970 to 1980, during Mayor Renato Zangheri’s term of office²⁴. During those years, he took part in the movement that fought against the institutionalization of the most fragile individuals, and in particular of poor children. Even the ONMI nurseries were considered, from various standpoints, depersonalizing places of institutionalization for children, also because they were closed to the participation of parents.

In his report presented during the conference, Loperfido posed the question of whether the nursery should reproduce the scheme of intra-family relationships, going so far as to assert that «the nursery isn’t the family, but it’s not a total alternative to the family, either»²⁵, where children could experience relationships totally different from those lived at home.

Loperfido asserted firmly that the main issue was the proposal of a new nursery, no longer considered a place of discrimination, a welfare service solely for a needy population, but rather conceived as the result and at the same time principle of a cultural turning point²⁶. He thus believed that it represented a social challenge to be met at a participatory level «in order to rear generations that would know how to fight against competitiveness and selection, replacing them with cooperation and solidarity»²⁷.

But for the nursery-community model to be able to function effectively, observed Loperfido, it had to find a corresponding community dimension among the adults. In this sense, he created a model of a participatory municipal nursery, which would involve parents directly at the management level.

²³ In addition to this law, a measure (No. 1204 of December 30, 1971) was approved which provided mothers with a total period of absence from work (2 months before the due date and 3 months after the birth) with 80% pay, in addition to a period of six months leave with the guarantee their job would be held for them and the possibility for days of paid leave for.

²⁴ Eustachio Loperfido (Matera, 1932, Bologna, 2008), responsabile del Servizio Materno Infantile della USL di Bologna, fino a luglio 2007, è stato Presidente dell’Istituzione Gian Franco Minguzzi della Provincia di Bologna, Centro di studi e documentazione sulla storia della psichiatria e dell’emarginazione sociale.

²⁵ E. Loperfido, *I contenuti medico-psico-pedagogici dell’asilo-nido*, in Comune di Bologna (ed.), *Un asilo nido di tipo nuovo. Analisi di un’esperienza. Atti del Convegno tenuto a Bologna, Palazzo Montanari, nei giorni 3 e 4 dicembre 1971*, Bologna, Comune di Bologna, 1972, pp. 15-16.

²⁶ *Ivi*, p. 14.

²⁷ *Ivi*, p. 21.

The intention was to make the nursery an educating place for parents as well, so they could discover how to share the problems connected with their relationship with their children «in sharing with others what is traditionally private; thus, for the child, the community had to represent the reassuring fabric in which different and coexisting experiences of identificatory currents – with their peers, with adults – are allowed»²⁸.

In the 1971 Convention, another important topic dealt with was that of environments and furnishings, considered to be the fundamental “mediators” in the new educational project. The spaces had to be organized as a group of plastic, flexible environments, providing for «niches and secondary play areas, which could be changed by the children themselves», in order to permit «a freer life richer with relationships», and to allow, at the same time, relationships among the sections:

the relationships among the various groups of children must take place not by taking one group to play with the other, but by opening the environments, in which the activities take place, to one another²⁹.

It was thus decided to create a child-friendly (0–3 years), comfortable, and protective environment, characterized by warm colors and concave spaces, but opening onto large gardens, in order to stimulate exploration and the relationship with the external environment, in particular with the kindergarten group, by means of shared play areas.

The experience of educators, who were strongly motivated, also found ample possibilities for sharing their reflections in the 1971 Conference. The awareness of the repressive role of previous hierarchical structures, as Flora Tugnoli stressed, facilitated the group work among the staff, with the participation of several parents, thus offering the child «a new model of sociality»³⁰.

The observations in the field were transcribed into the *Giornale di bordo* (Logbook), in which interpretative criteria and manners of intervention were described; in short, the conditions were created for the nursery to become the actual site of the continuing education of the staff. What is still evident today, in light of the memories emerging in interviews with the first educators, is their awareness of experimenting something extremely inno-

²⁸ *Ivi*, p. 18.

²⁹ R. Merlo, *Tipologia urbanistica degli asili-nido*, *ivi*, pp. 24-25.

³⁰ F. Tugnoli, *Un'esperienza di gestione sociale*, cit., p. 40.

vative, of being the active part of a project that involved the social and labor union world in a climate of strong political tension³¹.

The matter of the management of the first Bolognese nursery schools sprang from a specific expression of political will:

an embryo of social management, in which to discuss not only contingent problems to be solved immediately, but also the problems of a more general nature that affect both the aspect of the quantitative request of the nurseries, and the educational aspect³².

In this dawning phase, characterized by great enthusiasm and high hopes, one must wonder who the first parents to make use of the first municipal nursery schools in Bologna were. Using two types of sources (interviews with some of the parents of that time and a study conducted during the period), two very different categories emerge.

On the one hand, there was a small circle of parents, motivated by a precise alternative cultural choice, who contested the traditional parental model:

During that period, the certainties we'd received from our parents collapsed, and this generated anxiety and uncertainty. For our children, we imagined educational structures that would help both us and them to grow in suitable environments, environments capable of offering educational experiences to all, regardless of their economic status³³.

What is more, in this climate of passions and strong cooperation, some interesting "family group" experiences developed: for example, that of a widowed mother who, having participated actively in the launch of the first Bolognese nursery school, used this basis to set up a nursery school of her own in her apartment, educating, together with her three children, «a black boy, a Japanese girl, and a spastic girl»³⁴.

³¹ I would like to thank Gabriella Calzolari and Flora Tugnoli, the first educators of the Patini nursery school, for the interviews they granted me.

³² F. Tugnoli, *Un'esperienza di gestione sociale*, cit., p. 42.

³³ First-person account by Alfeo and Maddalena Grandi, then young parents of twin daughters who went to the Patini nursery school from 1970 to 1973. I would like to thank them, together with Silvia Torralta, who was the mother of a little boy who went to the same nursery during that period.

³⁴ Testimonianza di Emilia Fiorini, in Comune di Bologna (ed.), *Un asilo di tipo nuovo*, cit., p. 59.

On the other hand, alongside these strongly motivated parents, we find a category of users who, however, were in the majority, and whose choice of the nursery school was motivated by pressing needs. These were, in general, immigrants whose family unit was made up of working parents with young children, who were unable to guarantee an active participation in the life of the nursery school because of their rigid working hours. This was the result of the study conducted from 1972 to 1973, by sociologist Tullio Aymone, together with psychologist Maria Giovanna Caccialupi. In this case, it was a study that offered an initial evaluation of the results of the experience at the two existing nursery schools up to then; in addition to the first, already mentioned, the “Tasso” nursery school had been opened in February 1972³⁵.

At that time, there were thirty children enrolled in the first, with a staff consisting of seven child assistants and three helpers/cooks; at the second, there were forty-five children, with ten child assistants and five helpers/cooks³⁶. The two nurseries received children from the age of three months, broken down into groups: unweaned, semi-weaned, and weaned. The opening hours went from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., also guaranteeing extended hours, in cases of necessity, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. The work contract for the personnel envisaged thirty-six hours a week: thirty-three with the children, and three in work meetings, preparation of the educational materials, and meetings with the parents.

The study by the two Bolognese researchers came about after a visit to the two nurseries in April 1972 by three French psychologists (Irene Lezine, Mira Stambak, Renè Diatkine), who were struck by the fact that they were received in an extremely natural manner by the children, even though they were strangers who, moreover, spoke a foreign language³⁷. Motivated by the experience of the three child psychology specialists, the study conducted by Aymone and Caccialupi aimed to understand whether the nursery-community model developed by Loperfido had succeeded somehow in influencing the parents’ usual inclinations (privatistic, authoritarian, or other approach); they sought, therefore, «to dig into this common mentality and into this custom to highlight what perhaps remains hidden or latent: the problems, doubts, fears, and difficulties»³⁸.

³⁵ T. Aymone, M.G. Caccialupi, *Asilo-nido e partecipazione. Ricerche su alcuni nidi comunali di Bologna*, Bologna, Comune di Bologna, 1975.

³⁶ In addition to the staff, the nursery also provided for the involvement of a health-care assistant, a school doctor, and a psychologist.

³⁷ Aymone, Caccialupi, *Asilo-nido*, cit., p. 9.

³⁸ E. Loperfido, *Presentazione*, in Aymone, Caccialupi, *Asilo-nido e partecipazione*, cit., p. 7.

The study covered the following aspects: 1. Verification of a level of greater ability for expression and socialization reached by the child who went to the municipal nursery school; 2. Verification of the process of political and cultural maturation by the collective, to achieve a totally new role; 3. Verification of the educational tools used in order to be able to disseminate them on a large scale; 4. Verification of how a new way of connecting with the child and parents may constitute an instance of political involvement for the participation of the parents in the matters of the nursery school. The last point proved the most difficult to verify³⁹. It was found, in fact, that the weekly meetings of the parents with the collective were characterized by an average attendance of ten parents, half of whom varied time by time, while the second half were always the same ones⁴⁰.

Because of the scant participation of the families, the collective of the Tasso nursery school decided to conduct some interviews at the families' homes in order to get a grasp on their expectations with regard to the nursery. The service was given a very positive evaluation, especially because of the scarcity of adequate space in the homes for the children's needs. It was found that while the choice of the nursery had initially been motivated by caretaking needs, using it soon made the families aware that it offered an important opportunity for the socialization and growth of their children.

Some mothers expressed their appreciation of the attention with which the assistants devoted themselves to receiving the child into the nursery, a process that was carried out gradually, and in a manner very much unlike that of the previous, traumatizing experience of the ONMI nursery, as described by some mothers, whose children were "deposited" and "picked up" through a special "window"⁴¹. The judgment of the workers was therefore substantially positive, stating that they provided for a good relational climate and important learning opportunities⁴².

The conclusion reached by the study was that

the families [*had*] shown interest and [*had*] spoken willingly because the conversation among a few persons was more conducive to an exchange of in-depth opinions than assembly-type meetings⁴³.

During this start-up phase of the new services for early childhood, it was thus found necessary to establish a relationship of reciprocity between

³⁹ Aymone, Caccialupi, *Asilo-nido*, cit., pp. 16-17.

⁴⁰ *Ivi*, p. 23.

⁴¹ *Ivi*, p. 40.

⁴² *Ivi*, p. 22.

⁴³ *Ivi*, p. 44.

the families and the educational staff, which would not be based solely on an exchange of “technical” information. This aspect also continued to be an extremely delicate and complex issue in the following years, with the attempt to find strategies that would encourage an increasingly wider participation of the parents in the life of the nursery school in order to avoid the risk of falling into a routine managed solely by “informed minorities”, and instead become an opportunity for growth for the majority of the users.

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The *Mondine* and Childcare Nurseries. A Century of Struggles for the Protection of Women's Agricultural Labour in Italy

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Abstract – The essay retraces the key stages in the creation of childcare nurseries in Italy in the agricultural sector with particular attention to the *mondine* (seasonal female workers who plant and harvest rice), whose specific working conditions make them one of the most notable precariat groups.

After an initial explanation of the working conditions in the rice fields between the 19th and 20th centuries, the first part analyses the *mondine*'s difficulties in finding solutions for childcare to cover their long working hours. A picture of poverty emerges within which female workers turned to family and community solidarity networks or, in the worst cases, were forced to neglect or abandon their children.

The second part analyses the role of the *Opera nazionale maternità e infanzia* (ONMI), the National Body for Maternity and Childhood, which was created by the fascist regime in 1925. The ONMI's purpose was to provide protection and assistance to pregnant women and mothers in need, abandoned, or alone, and to children up to the age of five, with particular attention to poor families. The twofold aim of control (typical of a totalitarian regime) and improvement of the race – from an imperialist perspective, in accordance with the regime's guidelines – led the ONMI to prioritise care for young children, compared to other assistance-related problems, by opening a network of childcare nurseries throughout the country. This network was gradually extended to include *mondine* in order to exert control over this category of workers, considered socially dangerous by the regime.

The third part focuses on the battles that began after the Second World War when social demands returned to the fore, espoused by political parties, trade unions and organisations such as the *Unione donne italiane* (the UDI, or Italian Women's Union). This period was characterised by the difficult economic situation and by ideological opposition. For the left-wing parties, and especially the Italian Communist Party and organisations linked to it, the creation of facilities to support women working in agriculture became the way to offer working

women an alternative to the *Opere Pie* (a religious charity) of the Catholic Church, breaking the monopoly of care of these bodies.

Due to the failure to reform the ONMI, a law was passed in 1950 to protect working women. This was a first step towards a concept of childcare services that ‘reconciled’ women’s work and childcare, leading to the opening of facilities dedicated to nursing mothers and toddlers directly in the workplace. It was only later that nursery schools were created, thanks to the role of municipalities in the creation of education and childcare services, and in particular to the promulgation of Law No. 1044 of 1971, which provided for direct State intervention for the first time, a few years before the definitive dissolution of the ONMI.

The *mondine* (female rice-field workers) are part of Italy’s history. Songs telling of the fatigue of rice-field work have made this category of workers very well known. Few people, however, are aware of the fatigue experienced by the *mondine* not only in their work, but also in their fight for the recognition of the fundamental rights associated with being female workers between the 19th and 20th centuries. The study on childcare nurseries and how the situation evolved, from the precarious management of maternity and childhood to the 1971 law establishing municipal childcare nurseries in Italy, gives us the opportunity to delve into the history of the *mondine* and the battles they fought as workers, women and mothers.

Introduction: A history of work, struggles and rights

In 1949, a very young Silvana Mangano made her mark on the national and international scene for her performance in *Riso Amaro*, a film that soon became one of the best known examples of Italian Neorealism. Set in post-World War II Italy, it tells the story of a *mondina* who becomes involved in an intrigue of love and money against the backdrop of a country scarred by poverty and social inequality¹. However, the general public is spared the reality of suffering and fatigue associated with a job that still involved 200,000 women in the wake of the war².

The world of the *mondine* (the term comes from the Italian verb *mondare*, meaning to clean, referring to the process of weeding the rice) is a small one, typical of northern Italy where women rice-field workers worked from the end of April to the beginning of June when the fields are flooded to allow the rice to grow without suffering the sudden changes in temperature

¹ G.P. Brunetta, *Storia del cinema italiano. Dal neorealismo al miracolo economico (1945-1969)*, vol. III, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 2001 (ed. or. 1982), pp. 480-481.

² E. Gualdi, *Mondine tra cronaca, storia e testimonianze*, Roma, Ediesse, 1984, p. 5.

between night and day. In some cases, work began as early as March when the rice is transplanted, and workers returned to the rice fields in September-October for harvesting. The *mondine's* job involved clearing the rice of weeds, working eight hours a day with water up to their knees, barefoot and bent forward under the scorching sun. It was a very tiring job and basically carried out by women of low social standing who were forced into seasonal emigration, especially from the second half of the 19th century when production became concentrated in the plains between Novara, Pavia and Vercelli while it declined in Veneto and Emilia-Romagna.

The evolution of this work is a consequence of the capitalist management of agriculture, which caused an increase in chronic unemployment and, between the late-19th and mid-20th century, bound most agricultural labourers to seasonal work. When the possibility of alternating between agricultural work and other casual jobs such as land reclamation and land settlement diminished, the farm labourers' leagues, which had sprung up in the early 20th century, tried to intervene to reorganise this form of work. At the same time, the first cooperative enterprises were also created to influence production, in order to counter the growing emigration of farm labourers³.

Because of the harsh working conditions to which they were subjected, the *mondine* were among the protagonists of the first struggles of the Italian agricultural proletariat; when in 1901 the workers who polished the rice – a dangerous and extremely demanding activity carried out for up to 18 hours a day – demanded a reduction in working hours in compliance with the Cantelli regulations of 1869 in force in Pavia and Novara⁴, and were met with a flat refusal from the owners, the rice-field workers went on strike. More than 620 strikes in one year led to the desired outcome – an eight-hour working day – but these events also highlight the weakness of the labour world and the fragmentation of its protests which still did not address any

³ There are many books on this subject, see: G. Crainz, *Padania, Il mondo dei braccianti dall'Ottocento alla fuga delle campagne*, Roma, Donzelli, 1994, and for Emilia-Romagna: F. Cazzola, *La formazione del bracciantato agricolo di massa in Emilia Romagna*, in Id. (ed.), *Il proletariato agricolo in Emilia Romagna nella fase di formazione*, Annale 1, Istituto regionale per la storia della resistenza e della guerra di liberazione in Emilia Romagna, Bologna, Clueb, 1980. For a local point of view: M. Minardi, *La fatica delle donne. Storie di mondine*, Parma, Spi-Cgil, 2003.

⁴ «The Cantelli regulation, from the name of the signatory, provides that, starting work at 5.30 or 6 in the morning, and ending at 15 in the afternoon, with breaks for breakfast and lunch, it is not possible to work more than 8 hours»: I. Sassone, *Le lotte storiche delle mondine e dei braccianti vercellesi. La conquista delle 8 ore nel 1906*, in «L'impegno», 1 (1982): <<https://impegno.istorbive.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Sassone-n.-1-1982.pdf>> (retrieved on 05/06/2022).

specific demands related to women. It was Law No. 337 of 1907 regarding rice fields that changed the living conditions of the labourers working in rice planting and harvesting. The law stipulated the obligation to respect working hours, attempted to limit the phenomenon of *caporalato* (illegal intermediation and labour exploitation by proxies) and, above all, introduced health and hygiene regulations. In addition to these changes was the guarantee of a half-hour break for breastfeeding, a very brief break that did not allow women with children enough time to go home; this meant that they had to have a relative who could bring the baby to the rice field, with all the associated health risks which that entailed for the babies⁵. It was only after the First World War that the employment offices were recognised, set up thanks to the work of the *Società umanitaria* (Humanitarian Society) and *Federterra* (National Federation of Land Labourers), and the law on compulsory insurance for accidents and for invalidity and old age was approved⁶.

These changes only marginally improved the working conditions of the *mondine* and, it must be said, failed to solve one of the main problems of this female workforce: that of childcare during periods of seasonal work in the rice fields. Moreover, as Dorena Caroli has pointed out in her key work on the history of childcare nurseries, Italy's post-unification backwardness with regard to childcare reflected the ruling class's initial inability to draw up a unified national state plan that would go beyond the traditional model of charity largely controlled by religious institutions⁷.

Women's relationships with motherhood and childhood in the peasant farming world at the beginning of the 20th century were similar to those of the poor urban classes, poverty being the common element that drove mothers to leave work only for the time strictly necessary to breastfeed and change their newborn babies, as many testimonies recall:

Those who were nursing mothers would be given the half-hour, they would run home... they had half an hour on the road, just imagine, they would give those

⁵ M.A. Arrigoni, *Mondine di Lomellina. Riti, cultura, condizione femminile in risaia*, in R. Leydi, B. Pianta, A. Stella (eds.), *Mondo Popolare in Lombardia*, vol. 14, *Pavia e il suo territorio*, Milano, Silvana editoriale, 1990, p. 566.

⁶ S. Soave, *Socialismo e socialisti nelle campagne dal '90 alla grande guerra*, in A. Agosti, G.M. Bravo (eds.), *Storia del movimento operaio e delle lotte sociali in Piemonte*, Bari, De Donato, 1980, vol. II, p. 173 and L. Preti, *Le lotte agrarie nella Val Padana*, Torino, Einaudi, 1955, p. 373.

⁷ D. Caroli, *Per una storia dell'asilo nido in Europa tra Otto e Novecento*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2014, chapters 5, 6; Ead., *Day nurseries and Childcare in Europe, 1800–1939*, London, Palgrave, 2017, chapters 2 and 3.

poor babies curds to eat, running down that road on foot [...]. There were the old women, those old women who no longer went to work in the rice fields, they had three or four children, whereas in my time there were the nuns and at four o'clock the mothers would bundle up those children, take them to the nuns and put them in baskets there⁸.

It should not be forgotten that the choice of maternal care in rural areas was dictated by the women's living conditions, from which the *mondine* cannot escape, as Ada Negri recalls in her bitter poem *Le Dolorose*. The poet and teacher portrays motherhood as the fruit of women, a fruit grown «in the attics where the air is stifling, in the malaria-infected rice fields, in the fields where, awful Goddess, pellagra goes by with mad eyes, in the places of poverty and servitude». It is such a dreadful situation that they ask «the Lord God for strength and courage; praying, when virtue faded: – Take the child to yourself, O God, before he lives»⁹.

An undoubtedly extreme attitude, also influenced by Negri's personal vicissitudes¹⁰, but one that clearly highlights the difficulties of the most vulnerable social classes, deprived of any help and forced to find provisional solutions. In rural areas, in the luckiest cases, the presence of a grandmother helped in looking after the little ones, or else reliance on elderly relatives or neighbours who took care of them after a fashion. Supervision was very often almost totally absent, and necessity forced mothers to «keep the babies in bed all the time until they are seven or eight months old [...] wrapped in many pieces of cloth and tightly swaddled». If there was no possibility of receiving help, around the age of two, the mother, who would continue to breastfeed until the next pregnancy, would be forced to take them to work, where the children grew up fast, so much so that by the age of three they could «take care of themselves»¹¹.

⁸ *Testimonianza di Ida Vandone, nata a Cozzo nel 1921, piccola affittuaria a Valle*, in <<http://www.sannazzaro.com/mondinericordi.htm#8>> (retrieved on 05/06/2022).

⁹ *'Ne le soffitte dove manca l'aria, ne le risaie infette di risaria, ne' campi dove passa, orrida Iddia, la pellagra con occhi di pazzia, ne' luoghi di miseria e di servaggio' ... 'Dio Signor forza e coraggio; pregando, allor che la virtù svaniva: – Prenditi il figlio, o Dio, prima ch'ei viva'*: A. Negri, *Maternità*, Milano, Fratelli Treves, 1920.

¹⁰ Ada Negri, a long-time elementary teacher in the province of Pavia, was the only woman admitted in Accademia d'Italia for her recognized skills as a poet and writer. Her writing was marked by the untimely death of her daughter Vittoria. For a biography: M. Fumagalli, *Ada Negri*, in: <<http://www.enciclopediadelledonne.it/biografie/ada-negri/>> (retrieved on 05/06/2022).

¹¹ A. Oppo, *Concezioni e pratiche della maternità tra le due guerre del Novecento*, in M D'Amelia (ed.), *Storia della maternità*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1997, pp. 231-232.

Onto this wretchedness Fascism is grafted, having no real interest in remedying the situation and never going so far as to employ sufficient money to create a network of adequate nurseries yet making motherhood one of its battle horses because of its political and social implications in the formation of the new Italian race. The fascist woman represents an ideal, first imposed by the Catholic religion and then by society, and reinforced by the regime that wants her to be the wife and prolific mother of the new fascist man¹².

1. *Fascism and childhood in the countryside*

When the fascist regime set up the ONMI in 1925, one of its main purposes was to:

provide for the protection and assistance of needy or abandoned pregnant women and mothers, of nursing and weaned infants up to the age of five belonging to needy families who cannot provide them with all the necessary care for a proper upbringing, of physically or mentally abnormal children and of materially or morally abandoned minors¹³.

Although early childhood is equated with mental and/or physical illness and juvenile criminality – the care of delinquents or the wayward up to the age of 18 is mentioned – the establishment of the ONMI marked an important step forward in support that, from the regime's perspective, aimed to replace the charitable welfare typical of the 19th century with a more secular form, with the specific objective of optimising, coordinating and, above all, fully controlling welfare services. The series of regulations introduced from 1926 under the management of the ONMI were designed to favour demographic growth through public intervention aimed at protecting maternity and childhood from situations of risk widely present in Italy at the time, and thus improving both the condition of mothers and their children, as well

¹² The reference text on the fascist woman is V. De Grazia, *Le donne nel regime fascista*, Marsilio, Venezia, 1993 (ed. or. 1992).

¹³ Law 10 December 1925 No. 2277, *Protezione e assistenza della maternità e dell'infanzia*, art. 4; amendments to the law can be found in the Royal Decree 21 October 1926 No. 1904. The norms are unified on 24 December 1934 by the Royal Decree No. 2316, *Approvazione del testo unico delle leggi sulla protezione ed assistenza della maternità e dell'infanzia*.

as improving the behaviours and housing practices ensuing from poor and precarious economic conditions¹⁴.

Protection was therefore extended to pregnant women and new mothers who were struggling, in order to encourage maternal responsibility and reward ‘deserving’ mothers whose behaviour then gave them access to services that also included nurseries, which were mainly governed by two articles in the regulation: article 136, which established full-time nursery care for nursing infants and weaned children, and article 137, which introduced the establishment of childcare nurseries for infants and young children up to three years old, in every workplace where at least 50 women over the age of 15 worked¹⁵.

In order to manage all the care facilities, the ONMI provided for the training of professionals (paediatricians, midwives, nurses, and health and social workers). However, in 1933, due to the scarcity of funds and the progressive centralisation of the organisation, this training was reformed and a direct link with the National Fascist Party was imposed; it was only subsequently regulated in the 1950s. Interaction between the various professional figures proved difficult, due to the rigid hierarchy established by the ONMI, which favoured an approach that persisted even after the Second World War. As a result it was unable to free itself from the hospital vision on which fascist nurseries were based where interaction between families and children was not envisaged – art. 23 states: «during the children’s stay, access to the nursery’s premises is forbidden to anyone who is not involved in its operation»¹⁶ – and the care, both of infants and young children, was carried out in collective halls with no particular regard for individual needs¹⁷.

Fascist propaganda emphasised the work of the ONMI for mothers and young children and the *mondine* were also used in promotion by the re-

¹⁴ M. Minesso (ed.), *Stato e infanzia nell’Italia contemporanea. Origini, sviluppo e fine dell’Onmi 1925-1975*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2007 and A. Grimaldi, *Donne madri e figli in Italia. Dalle Opere Pie alle origini, avvento e sviluppo dell’Opera Nazionale Maternità e Infanzia (1860-1945)*, Roma, Aracne, 2019.

¹⁵ Royal Decree 15 April 1926 No. 718, *Approvazione del regolamento per l’esecuzione della legge 10 dicembre 1925, n. 2277 sulla protezione e l’assistenza della maternità e dell’infanzia*.

¹⁶ *Norme sul funzionamento delle istituzioni dell’ONMI (1941)*, in A. Savelli, *L’assistenza alla prima infanzia in Italia dalle origini (metà del secolo XIX) alla legge n. 1044/1971*, in A.M. Marcuccini, A. Savelli, E. Pianesi, A. Massarelli (eds.), *L’educatore nell’asilo nido. Manuale per la preparazione ai concorsi e all’aggiornamento professionale*, Rimini, Maggioli Editore, 2000, p. 57.

¹⁷ I. Bartoli, *La mela sbucciata. Quando la politica è fatta anche con il cuore*, Reggio Emilia, Nero su Bianco, 2013, p. 133 ss.

gime. A 1932 article in the ONMI's magazine *Maternità e Infanzia* (Maternity and Childhood) boasted of the results achieved with regard to the *mondine* during the rice-field working season: 11 provinces were involved with 125 nurseries and 3,650 children accepted, 46 of whom were taken into permanent care because they were in a state of absolute neglect. In addition to these, 900 children were cared for in their own homes or in those of strangers' homes, thanks to the collaboration of the Party and the local authorities, with the result of «full satisfaction of those cared for and [proof of] the utmost practical and moral effectiveness». The childcare nurseries, set up by the Milan Federation and visited by the ONMI delegates, were positively assessed as being excellently run in accordance with the dictates of the regime: teaching the principles of health and hygiene aimed at the improvement of the race¹⁸. The positive effects of the results achieved obviously impacted the following years. In 1934, the statistics underlined the regime's continued commitment to supporting the *mondine*, reaching 6,365 children and creating 80 temporary nurseries¹⁹; meanwhile, in 1936, the magazine also published a photograph depicting a childcare facility for the *mondine*'s children in which the typical features of a simple nursery can be glimpsed: cots, cages and spaces dedicated to the youngest children assisted by staff dressed in white in large dormitories reminiscent of hospital wards²⁰. The children of the *mondine* were also the focus of a 1941 edition of the newsreel, *Giornale Luce*, in which the regime highlighted the activities carried out for «the physical, moral and family protection of these workers», a protection of which the nurseries were an integral part²¹. They were again under the spotlight in 1944, at the height of the war, when in early September, just under two minutes were filmed showing *L'Assistenza dell'Opera maternità ed Infanzia ai figli delle mondariso* (care for the *mondine*'s children by the ONMI), probably part of a larger project that remained unfinished²². The nurseries, while not reserving special treatment for the *mondine*'s children, still became the clearest example in

¹⁸ *L'O.N.M.I. per l'assistenza alle Mondariso*, in «Maternità e infanzia bollettino mensile illustrato dell'Opera nazionale per la protezione della maternità e dell'infanzia», a. VII, 7 (1932), pp. 671-672.

¹⁹ *L'assistenza ai figli delle mondariso*, *ivi*, a. IX, 10 (1934), p. 233.

²⁰ *L'interno di un nido per i figli delle mondariso organizzato dall'Opera Nazionale*, *ivi*, a. XI, 7 (1936), p. 101.

²¹ *Provvidenze del Regime a favore delle mondariso*, in *Giornale Luce C/C0162*, 17 July 1941: «<https://www.archivioluca.com>» (retrieved 05/06/2022).

²² *Parte del girato per l'avvenimento (incompleto): «Italia settentrionale – L'assistenza dell'Opera Maternità ed infanzia ai figli delle mondariso»*, in *Repertorio Luce Venezia*, 1 September 1944: «<https://www.archivioluca.com>» (retrieved 05/06/2022).

fascist propaganda of the social provisions introduced by the regime which, through collective contracts, new social security laws and support services, had been specifically interested in the control of the *mondine* since 1929²³. They were considered a dangerous social category, as demonstrated by the strikes of 1927 and 1931, and therefore, when the demands became more 'practical' during the 1930s (besides wage increases and the reduction of the working day to seven hours, they demanded the abolition of the foreman and the creation of supervisory commissions on the farms, as well as the establishment of nurseries and refreshment facilities), fascism introduced some concessions that led to the inclusion of the *mondine* in the activities of the ONMI²⁴.

The propaganda should not, however, mislead us. The data for Italy during the twenty years of fascism are very clear and confirm the limited achievements of the regime in the welfare sector for infants and young children²⁵. Even as far as the *mondine* are concerned, fascism's role in the support services for these workers, aimed at the social control of the category, exemplifies an activity that is based neither on a specific law nor on the idea of incorporating protection within a collective contract²⁶.

2. *Town and country: so near yet so far*

The issue of nurseries becomes central to the debate in the immediate post-war period with the unprecedented political upheaval marked by the split between Christian Democrats, Communists and Socialists. The proposals in the 1950s drawn up by Christian Democrat parliamentarians went some way towards supporting a reform of the ONMI to make already existing bodies more effective in the relationship between centralised and localised services; meanwhile Communist and Socialist politicians pushed for a renewal which would not only set up services for children and women to reconcile women's dual role but should have reorganised the entire welfare

²³ B. Imbergamo, «*Si parte cantando Giovinezza*»: *le mondine durante il fascismo (1925-1939)*, in «Passato e Presente», 61 (2004), pp. 65-89.

²⁴ In 1938 it is estimated that in 150,000 *mondine*, pregnant women were between 1,200 and 1,500 (between 7 and 9 percent) and that the only real solution was to exclude pregnant women from work for the entire period of pregnancy: F. Pezza, *Gravidanze e lavori di monda in risaia*, XI Congresso nazionale di medicina del lavoro, 1938.

²⁵ Numerical data in: E.D. Whitaker, *Measuring Mamma's milk: fascism and the medicalization of maternity in Italy*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2000, pp. 199-200.

²⁶ Imbergamo, «*Si parte cantando Giovinezza*», cit., p. 85.

sector. Marisa Rodano, partisan and member of parliament in the first legislature of the Republic, recalls which issues were at the centre of discussion in 1945. In the first congress of the Italian Women's Union (UDI)²⁷ held in Florence, among the objectives was the demand for: the «establishment of childcare nurseries, nursery schools, and canteens, which would allow working women to reconcile their duties as mothers and as citizens»²⁸.

These demands were coupled with the commitment of the national trade union CGIL (*Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro*, Italian General Confederation of Labour) to the approval of the maternity law, especially after the 1948 elections when the defeat of the left-wing pushed the trade union to promote mass politics to maintain its consensus. The bill was presented to the Ministry of Labour on the proposal of the Women's Commission, with Teresa Noce as its primary signatory²⁹. The partisan and secretary of the *Federazione nazionale degli impiegati e operai tessili* (National Federation of Textile Workers and Clerks) of the CGIL fought the battle for the approval of the law starting from the local Trade Union Centres where not everyone was in favour – as there was a fear that the economic burden, falling entirely on the employer, could have the opposite effect by disincentivising women's employment – and she pushed for the inclusion of female agricultural workers³⁰.

After much discussion, Law No. 860 of 1950 was passed. Already from the title, *Physical and economic protection of working mothers* it is clear that the central issue focuses on the dual role of working women and mothers, mainly to protect women who have the right to keep their jobs while on maternity leave and to safeguard their health during pregnancy by avoiding excessive workloads. Articles 11, 12 and 13 of the law obliged employers to

²⁷ The UDI was born in liberated Rome in September 1944 to collect the experience of *Gruppi di difesa della donna* created during the period of the Resistance to bring together anti-fascists women from different political backgrounds engaged in the liberation struggle. P. Gabrielli, *La pace e la mimosa. L'Unione donne italiane e la costruzione politica della memoria (1944-1955)*, Roma, Donzelli, 2005.

²⁸ L. Campioni, *Dall'Opera Nazionale Maternità Infanzia... ai nidi comunali*, in L. Campioni, F. Marchesi (eds.), *Una partenza forte. 1969: i primi asili nido comunali in Emilia-Romagna*, Bergamo, Zeroseiup, 2019, p. 30.

²⁹ On this figure, fighter in the Spanish civil war and then a deputy in the Constituent Assembly, see: P. Gabrielli, *Il primo voto. Elettrici ed elette*, Roma, Castelvecchi, 2016 and G. Falconi (ed.), *Teresa Noce (Estella). Ma domani farà giorno*, Roma, Harpo, 2019.

³⁰ M.L. Righi, *L'azione delle donne nella CGIL: 1944-1962*, in S. Lunadei, L. Motti, M.L. Righi (eds.), *È brava, ma... Donne nella CGIL 1944-1962*, Roma, Ediesse, 1999, pp. 72-75.

create rooms adjacent to work premises – nursing rooms – dedicated exclusively to infants, where mothers could go twice a day to feed their babies; in the absence of nursing rooms, the creation of childcare nurseries was envisaged, rooms adjacent to work premises where children up to three years of age were cared for; rooms intended not only for meals, but also for simple play activities³¹. It is clear that the creation of these spaces was intended essentially to save care time for working mothers, and only secondarily to improve the living conditions of the infants and young children. The law therefore highlights how in the early years of republican Italy a change of pace was still needed, not least because – as Adriana Lodi, the creator of modern-day nurseries in Italy, recalls – Law No. 860 pushed employers to introduce into their contractual forms the condition of singleness, i.e. the obligation for working women to resign if they decided to marry. This was an unconstitutional clause that remained in force until 1963 and was only abolished after a long period of political struggles during which attempts were made to put women's rights back at the centre of debate³².

The 1950 law also did not resolve the great inequalities in services between North and South, and between cities and suburbs, besides the problem of rural areas whose nature required targeted interventions. In the specific case of the *mondine*, the issue of the lack of support services for mothers forced to be away for long periods of work remained central. The problem extended to those women who, while living near the rice fields, needed to provide care for their offspring for long hours each day. Even though the activities of nuns and clergy in charitable institutions complemented the first childcare services and the experience of open-air schools, the continuity of the rice-field work, which lasted uninterruptedly for more than a month, meant that it was not possible to meet all the needs and prevent the children from being put at constant risk due to being left unsupervised.

Trade union demands and the call for autonomous forms of organisation therefore served mainly to obtain more public services. As early as 1945 the trade unions were already creating a network of bodies in order to regulate rice-field work in agreement with landowner organisations, and a central point in the national directives was childcare for the *mondine*'s children. The commitment of the national *Confederterra*, as revealed in the documents signed by the Bolognese leader Novella Pondrelli³³, was to obtain the funds allocated for support of the *mondine* and to head up the

³¹ Law 26 August 1950 No. 860, *Tutela fisica ed economica delle lavoratrici madri*.

³² A. Lodi, L. Branca, *Raccontatemi una favola nera. Adriana Lodi: biografia di una politica*, Imola, Bacchilega, 2021, pp. 137-138.

³³ S. Salustri, E. Betti, *Novella Pondrelli*, in «http://www.fondazionealtobelli.it/?post_type=biografia&p=1499» (retrieved on 05/06/2022).

new local committees comprising the main bodies already operating in the area, in agreement with the ONMI but also with the local municipalities, without excluding the *Ente Nazionale Risi* (National Rice Body). Preventing the rice management body created by the fascist regime in 1931 from overseeing public funding had twofold political significance: socialists and communists did not want financial assistance to remain exclusively in the hands of a centralised administration and therefore of the Christian Democrat governments; they also wanted the impact on areas to be managed locally by political parties and associations that would be beyond the control/influence of the landowners. It was also difficult at this stage to exclude the ONMI, but it is important to point out in the words of the socialist senator Giuseppina Palumbo that:

the (National) Body for Maternity and Childhood (ONMI) spent more than 60 million in 1950. In addition, there are welfare organisations sensitive to this social problem that voluntarily contributed to this support. Despite this praiseworthy contribution [...] thousands of the *mondine's* children have not been cared for. [The] disparities are showing that for this much needed, sensitive service all the welfare organisations need to be reviewed, first and foremost that of the (National) Body for Maternity and Childhood³⁴.

The criticism levelled at the ONMI therefore essentially concerned the lack of funding and its management, problems that were reflected in the quality of the care provided and that still caused considerable difficulties in the mid-1950s in areas such as Novara, Pavia and Vercelli, where the Prefects were called in to resolve the disputes between the ONMI and the associated facilities – including the Catholic-based *Centro italiano femminile* (CIF, Italian Women's Centre) – to which the care of children up to the age of three was entrusted³⁵.

The experience of small towns and villages gives the clearest example of a long season of struggles that certainly did not end with the 1950 law. On 15 November 1948, the *Federbraccianti* of Bologna received a letter from the Trade Union Centre of Budrio, a small municipality in the province, complaining about the shortcomings of the Menarini nursery school, which lacked cots for their charges aged between three and five. The nursery school was frowned upon by the landowners and the Christian Democrats, but it remained indispensable for female workers who could rely on just a handful of facilities in the area. The women in many cases were

³⁴ G. Palumbo, *Riso amaro*, Roma, Tipografia del Senato, 1951, pp. 16-19.

³⁵ M. Minesso, *L'ONMI nella storia dell'Italia contemporanea (1925-1975)*, in Ead. (ed.), *Stato e infanzia nell'Italia contemporanea*, cit., p. 160.

forced to make their own arrangements and organise places of care on their own, relying solely on personal relationships that enabled them to look after their infants thanks to shifts set by small groups of *mondine*. In the context of the agricultural work struggles in 1946, for example, in Medicina, another municipality in the Bologna area, the Sant'Antonio nursery school was set up, strongly supported by the *mondine* who, thanks to the social fabric of the surrounding areas, were able to take charge of running this small experiment, which was initially self-managed.

In post-war peasant society, the hamlets managed to be more active than the town centres and solidarity made it possible to build alternative care facilities to those run by religious organisations, which often could not be reached due to distance, lack of transport and inadequate roads. Obviously, it was difficult for everyone to have safe and hygienically satisfactory furnished premises and, above all, a paid teacher able to fully cover the hours needed for the labourers to be able to work without worrying about their children. Even where nurseries existed and were close enough, places could be limited because as these were on farm property, it was the landowners who decided on the funds to be used and the numbers to be accommodated. This is why the nurseries became part of the trade union struggles which, in the province of Bologna as in other areas, led to the signing of agreements as early as 1954 between the farmers' association and the local Trade Union Centre in order to obtain additional contributions to maintain the nurseries already supported by the ONMI³⁶.

The issue of management and funding therefore remained central, highlighting the significant difficulties caused by the need to maintain the ONMI, first included in the public welfare sector and later in that of health-care. This was the result of the political clash that led the Senate in 1955 to reject the proposal for a complete reform of the ONMI's management structure and to put the onus on the government to respond to the demands from trade unions and associations. It also created a stalemate that made the ONMI's delays even more obvious, burdened as it was by management costs for an inadequate number of premises and poorly trained staff, and by the top-down structure reflecting an organisational backwardness which would only be exacerbated as modern pedagogical theories redesigned the idea of childhood, finding new and more attentive interlocutors in the municipalities³⁷.

³⁶ For these examples see the testimonies collected in: A. Verzelli, P. Zappaterra, *La vita, il lavoro, le lotte. Le mondine di Medicina negli anni Cinquanta*, Bologna, Edizioni Aspasia, 2001, pp. 77-91.

³⁷ N.S. Barbieri, *Asili nido e servizi educativi per la prima infanzia in Italia. Lineamenti storici, fondamenti pedagogici, modalità operative*, con la collaborazione di R.

It was these municipal councils that soon became the driving force for new legislative proposals. Indeed, in 1960, the Italian Women's Union (UDI) put forward a bill calling for the abolition of the ONMI and for the administration of childcare nurseries to be placed in the hands of the municipalities, pending the implementation of the constitutional dictate with the creation of ordinary statute Regions. A further step forward was taken in 1962 when a new proposal emphasised the central role of the municipalities, making them responsible for the construction and management of the nurseries; the articles envisaged a long-term national plan, also indicating the importance of training staff in care and supervision, signifying the innovative way nurseries were viewed for their role in health and prevention but also for their social role³⁸.

These proposals, although driven by the joint work of the UDI, the CIF and the trade unions, did not become law. However, it is worth remembering that all the work carried out for the creation of nurseries during the 1960s with no less than seven legislative proposals³⁹, leading up to the Law No. 1044 of 6 December 1971, was the result of a decade-long debate that placed the working mother and her needs at the centre, making the nursery a place where the collaboration between specialised personnel and families was indispensable.

In the specific case of the *mondine*, whose employment numbers began to decline in the 1960s when progress in the chemical industry made it possible to replace manual rice-field work, nurseries were by then an essential part of women's demands. The issue of child protection was inextricably linked to the defence of women's work⁴⁰, so that the creation of nurseries was not only a social and pedagogical achievement, but essentially a political victory, the result of struggles that had begun a century earlier⁴¹.

Campagnolo, Padova, Cluep, 2015, pp. 24-25.

³⁸ Bill 1960 No. 2.236 and Bill 1962 No. 3.682.

³⁹ In 1964 the president of the ONMI, deputy Angela Gotelli, during a meeting in Reggio Emilia declared that it was impossible for the OMNI to provide for the construction and management of new childcare nurseries. The way to the municipal childcare nurseries was thus open. See: *Unità ed emancipazione delle donne per il progresso della società*, Atti del VII congresso nazionale dell'Unione Donne Italiane 4-7 giugno 1964, Arti grafiche Roma, Jasillo, 1964, p. 143.

⁴⁰ There are numerous references in the documents contained in: *Paura non abbiamo... L'Unione donne italiane di Reggio Emilia nei documenti, nelle immagini, nella memoria. 1945-1982*, con scritti di A. Appari, L. Artioli, N. Caiti, D. Gagliani, L. Spinabelli, Bologna, Il Nove, 1993.

⁴¹ E. Catarsi, *L'asilo e la scuola dell'infanzia. Storia della scuola "materna" e dei suoi programmi dall'Ottocento ai giorni nostri*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1994, pp. 301-305.

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Changing the Paradigm in Early Childhood Institutions in Greece 1950–2020

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Abstract – This chapter’s analysis of ECEC institutions for children up to four years of age in Greece since 1950 looks at the ideological/political and social conditions that caused the development of nurseries, the education and role of the professionals working closely with children, and the pedagogical work provided in them. The period following World War II and the Greek civil war found Greece financially destroyed and ideologically split. The economic reconstruction of the country meant that new working conditions and new needs emerged for families. Childhood was used as a space for the projection of opposing political ideologies, as well as a means of strengthening citizens’ national identities. Most of the nurseries established during this period were in rural areas, especially in northern Greece. The medical paradigm dominated the education of preschool pedagogues from 1950 to 1983. The picture revealed by these studies changed over time, with medicine-oriented subjects decreasing and pedagogical ones increasing in the curriculum content, and with the inclusion of ECEC pedagogical studies in universities. The role of ECEC institutions has been transformed over this seventy-year period. Instead of addressing biological needs, health protection and provision of care, they gradually adopt a holistic perspective on children, primarily addressing their interests and learning competencies. This can be seen both in the curriculum framework and the pedagogical praxis.

Introduction

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is an issue of crucial importance both from a political and an academic point of view. The development of ECEC institutions in the era of modernity took place due to political, social and economic reasons. The constitution of modern states and their economic development gradually led to the political management of the family and childhood. Industrialization increased the demand for labor, resulting

in the woman/mother participating in the labor market. The need for a safe place for children to spend the day resulted in the development of ECEC institutions by the public sector, private businesses and charities.

Childhood as a particular age has not always been understood in the way it is today. Until the 17th century, no clear distinction was made between children and adults. Children were seen as small adults and followed the lifestyle, dress code, diet and general attitude of adults¹. In school too, different ages were not regarded as distinct. It was not until the 17th century that childhood was given prominence and different age groups were recognized in the school context. «The medieval school gathered all ages in one audience»². The criterion for attending some kind of “school” was not age, but the possession of a body of knowledge or practices. Only in the 19th and the 20th centuries did age become a concern. The development of different forms of social work, the progress of medicine and psychoanalysis all contributed to this end³.

In the post-industrial era, mothers coming out of the household led to a rise in demand for social care services for young children. The first to respond to this demand were the private sector and the Church. From the mid-1900s, particularly after World War II, with the expansion of the welfare state, the state started to respond too by establishing social service institutions. Interestingly, «the treatment of the family and motherhood is one of the most critical barometers of the state’s attitude towards women, also seen as workforce»⁴.

At the same time, modern scientific views on the importance of childhood for the individual’s development contributed to the promotion of pre-school institutions and a growing demand that these institutions become accessible to all children, not just the children of working mothers. Throughout Europe, renowned pedagogues developed and promoted their views. Fröbel, Montessori, Decroly, Bayer, Kergomard, all established early childhood education institutions⁵.

Research findings have shown the benefits of early childhood education for children, families, and society. Heckman and Masterov (2007) argue that

¹ Ph. Aries, *Αιώνες παιδικής ηλικίας*, Αθήνα, Γλάρος, 1990.

² *Ivi*, p. 220.

³ J. Dondzelot, *La police des familles*, Paris, Les éditions de minuit, 1977.

⁴ Ο. Στασινοπούλου, *Κράτος πρόνοιας*, Αθήνα, Gutenberg, 1992.

⁵ Ε. Ζαμπέτα, *Αγωγή και εκπαίδευση της πρώιμης παιδικής ηλικίας στην Ευρώπη*, Αθήνα, Θεμέλιο, 1998.

Early interventions that partially remediate the effects of adverse environments can reverse some of the harm of disadvantage and have a high economic return. They benefit not only the children themselves, but also their children, as well as society at large⁶.

A reading of the 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study in the light of the connection between the educational outcomes of 15-year-old adolescents and whether they had attended pre-school education and care institutions in their early childhood shows a close relation between the number of years they had spent in early childhood education and their scores on the PISA science assessment, and suggests that two years of early childhood education is the minimum prerequisite to obtaining better outcomes at age 15. Furthermore, the PISA data reveal that students who had attended early childhood education for at least two years performed better than other 15-year-olds, even when their socio-economic status was considered. Research shows that disadvantaged children can benefit the most from attending high-quality early childhood education. The PISA data, however, reveal that 15-year-old students from a lower socio-economic background or enrolled in socio-economically disadvantaged schools were less likely to have participated in early childhood education for a minimum of 2 years⁷. Considering the research findings, it can be said that participation in early childhood education for at least one year is also beneficial for children with an immigrant background, and that the number of years spent in early childhood education is a strong predictor of performance at later stages.

In today's world, the nuclear family and emerging types of family are predominant, especially in cities, where the workplace is separate from the household and parents are faced with the problem of childcare while they are out working. This has led to the state establishing institutions that initially focused on the provision of care, but which later on started to provide education as well. This means that the importance of the social mission of early childhood services was gradually recognized, along with their significance for overall child development – in addition to their childminding function – and their contribution to school readiness. Establishing the key role of early childhood education and care is the reason behind the initiative

⁶ J. Heckman, D.V. Masterov, *The productivity argument for investing in young children*, in «Review of Agricultural Economics», 29 (2007), pp. 444-493 (page 447).

⁷ OECD, *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, Paris, 2016.

of the Greek Economic and Social Committee to discuss the early childhood education issue⁸.

Access to early childhood institutions has been a constant demand in the past few decades both for international organizations and for individual states. While access for children 4–6 is satisfactory in most European countries, it is still poor when it comes to infants and young children up to the age of 4. The Greek proportion for these ages is 20%, a figure a long way from the European Commission's goal of 33% for 2020 (European Commission, 2019)⁹. This means that Greek mothers are still experiencing difficulties in performing their professional duties. It also indicates that there is considerable scope for further development of early childhood services for infants and very young children.

This chapter discusses the transformations of early childhood institutions in Greece from World War II to the present day. During this period, early childhood institutions have developed and changed because of a number of political, social and scientific factors. In Part I, we discuss the issue from a historical perspective, dividing this period into three very important, politically and ideologically, subperiods. The first is that of post-war and post-civil-war Greece (1950–1967); the second is the dictatorship era (1967–1974); and the third is the post-dictatorship era, also known as *Metapolitefsi* (1974–today). We focus on the socio-political characteristics of each of these subperiods, along with the policies on infancy and early childhood. In Part II, the focus shifts to the ECEC workforce, especially pedagogues who work closely with children on a daily basis. We discuss how the profession has developed in terms of the pedagogues' academic level and their role, and how this work has moved from the medical to the pedagogical paradigm. Furthermore, we look at male inclusion in a female-dominated field over the past few years. In Part III, we consider the work done in early childhood institutions, in light of the child's image/representation. We also discuss the methodology and the curriculum framework implemented in early childhood institutions.

⁸ Οικονομική και Κοινωνική Επιτροπή (ΟΚΕ) (2007). *Προσχολική Αγωγή και Πρωτοβάθμια Εκπαίδευση*, Αθήνα, Γνώμη, 2007.

⁹ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition*, Eurydice Report, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2019.

1. Policies and Institutionalization of ECEC in Greece

Institutionalization is about the existence of socially and legally structured ways of organizing human life. Institutions are products of human action that have been shaped over time. Their main features are the aims they pursue, their operating rules, the length of services and the stakeholders. As an institutionalized framework of rules, an institution inspires security in citizens. Therefore, as far as early childhood institutions are concerned, it is understandable how a parent may entrust their offspring's care and rearing to an institution that operates based on rules, and safety and quality standards, as opposed to a random individual. Furthermore, institutions go on with their work, irrespective of the personal choices of individuals (e.g. resignation or retirement). Early childhood institutions are living organisms that develop while producing history and culture.

In Greece, early childhood education and care was first developed as a form of childminding and care for infants and toddlers, a fact that has had an impact on its relation to the formal education system. The mission of early childhood education and care has developed substantially, and several studies and research projects have established the significance of children's attendance at preschool settings. The significance of early childhood education for the full development of children is reflected in the fact that attendance at pre-school institutions is one of the 16 quality indicators for school education¹⁰.

Early childhood education and care services in Greece are provided by a split system made up of distinct structures, namely *nurseries* and *kindergartens*. Both these institutions are required to establish their rules of operation in compliance with related legislation as well as regulations specified in ministerial decisions, i.e., central-level steering documents. Nurseries fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction and the Ministry of Health and Social Security. Their objectives are outlined as follows: to provide care in a safe environment, help children develop physically, mentally, emotionally and socially, and contribute to compensating for differences resulting from the cultural, economic and educational backgrounds of parents. Nurseries are also responsible for communicating with parents, as well as sensitizing them to issues of modern pedagogy and psychology. They are also responsible for facilitating preschool children's transition from the family to the school environment, providing them with food and care, and meeting hygiene and security standards.

¹⁰ European Commission/Directorate General for education and Culture, *European report on Quality of school Education – Sixteen Quality Indicators*, 2000.

Depending on local authority, access to public nurseries may be free or paid. In the latter case, reduced fees apply to children from low-income families. Where the supply of places cannot cope with demand, a subsidized European program for nursery services comes in order to «harmonize family and professional life». With the financial support of this program, demand is met by private nurseries who are paid “tuition fees”. Nurseries are attended by children aged from 6 months – or 2 months where applicable – to 4 years of age. They are aimed at the overall development of children -intellectual, emotional and social. The curriculum framework is child-centered and it focuses primarily on play. Preschool pedagogues are graduates of the pedagogy university departments.

From age four children can attend kindergarten. Kindergartens, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, implement a centrally defined educational curriculum. Attendance is compulsory for children 5–6, whilst for younger ages it is possible only when extra places exist. Attendance at public kindergartens is free of charge and children living in remote parts of the kindergarten’s catchment area have their commuting subsidized.

The development of early childhood institutions in Greece during the period discussed addressed national, social and economic needs. A high percentage of these institutions were established in northern Greece for national reasons, while in Athens they were mostly established to meet social and economic needs arising from the development of craft industry and urbanization. The historical development of nursery schools took place in stages closely linked to the socio-economic context of each of the periods. The development of nursery schools had accompanied the formation of the new Greek state (1829–1896) with the financial support of national benefactors and charities. The first child protection centers opened during this period, the first one being the Orphanage of Aigina established by Kapodistrias in 1829. The first half of the 20th century (1896–1950) was a significant period for the territorial integration of the Greek state as new territories were incorporated following World War I and the Great Fire (Catastrophe) of Smyrna in 1922)¹¹. The need to integrate this new population and to teach them the Greek language led to the establishment of nursery schools in northern Greece. «The 109 out of the 141 kindergartens operating in the country in 1920, are located in Northern Greece»¹². This policy was aimed at constructing the Greek political identity from

¹¹ Α. Ρήγος, *Η Β' Ελληνική Δημοκρατία 1924-1935, Κοινωνικές διαστάσεις της πολιτικής σκηνής*, Αθήνα, Θεμέλιο, 1992.

¹² Χ. Χαρίτος, *Το Ελληνικό Νηπιαγωγείο και οι ρίζες του*, Αθήνα, Gutenberg, 1996.

early childhood¹³. The establishment of private kindergartens was legislated in 1895, and the state kindergartens in 1914¹⁴. Nursery schools were officially recognized in 1935.

The period discussed in this chapter, from the beginning of the second half of the 20th century to the present day, is the most important stage in the history of early childhood institutions in Greece. Throughout this period, the issue of early childhood institutions has been high on the political agenda, leading to an expansion of nursery schools and kindergartens alike. However, this has not been a homogeneous period. Rather, it has been a turbulent time of political and social reconstruction with far-reaching consequences for childhood. It is worth noting that the historical study of preschool institutions contributes greatly to the understanding of their functions and transformations. According to Dorena Caroli, the early childhood institutions had the two-fold goal of combatting the two phenomena that had for centuries characterized the history of infancy – infant mortality and the abandonment of babies¹⁵.

In Greece, during the period of post-war and post-civil-war (1950–1967), the country was faced with the exhaustion of the economy and society; the war was marked by a high death toll, including children, and an enormous psychological cost as well. Those who had experienced the civil war had suffered a political trauma, which seems to have influenced the next generation too. It was at that time that child care institutions started to develop. During the civil war, the ideological differences between nationalists and communists had led to an appropriation of childhood by these two groups in a different way and with a different aim. What is interesting is that each side wished to ‘protect’ young children for its own good¹⁶. On the one hand, the communists recruited children and sent them to eastern bloc countries, while, on the other, Queen Frederick established child care institutions as a counter-measure. Initially, these first institutions were assisted financially through fund-raising and grants received from charities and benefactors. Following the end of the civil war, the state ensured the establishment of childhood institutions throughout the

¹³ E. Mousena, *Pluribus vs Unum as Values in Citizenship Education*, in M. Ruby, M. Angelo-Rocha, M. Hickey, M., V. Agosto (eds.), *Making A Spectacle: Examining Curriculum/Pedagogy as Recovery from Political Trauma*, Charlotte, NC, Information Age Publishing, 2021, pp. 49-64.

¹⁴ LAW, BTMØ, 1985.

¹⁵ D. Caroli, *Day nurseries and childcare in Europe, 1800–1939*, London, Palgrave, 2017, pp. xiii-xxvii.

¹⁶ L.M. Danforth, V.R. Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War. Refugees and the Politics of Memory*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2012.

country, which were funded with tax money like, for example, from a rise in the tax on tobacco products. By 1960, 113 nursery schools and national rural nurseries had been established. During the dictatorship era (1967–1974), child protection institutions became spaces for the promotion of a nationalist ideology. The Social Welfare Organization was characterized as *National*, while there was no significant increase in the number of institutions.

Since the beginning of the Metapolitefsi era (1974–today), there has been a dramatic rise in the number of nursery schools that indicates the growing political interest in children's needs. The changing role of mothers, who started to work outside the home, meant that more child care and education institutions were needed. Nursery schools were now run by the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity. The new regulations published in 1977 stated that the aim of nurseries was «the accommodation, education and entertainment of infants and young children, on the grounds of their mothers working or other social reasons». Certain regulations addressed quality standards applying to nurseries and the ratio of children to pedagogues. In the same year, the Ministry of Social Services formulated its proposals on two categories of nursery schools, a larger one, with up to 70 pupils, and a smaller one, with up to 40 pupils, respectively. In this period there was a dramatic increase in the number of nursery schools. Their number increased from 48, in 1940, to 508, in 1980. In 2004 there were 3500 nurseries in total, 1850 of which were state-run and the rest private. The new standards established in 1983 determined, among other things, the space provided for each child both in and out of the classroom.

This increase was accompanied by a shift concerning the aim and objectives of these institutions. While in the beginning their main aim was to cater for children's biological needs and protection, from 1960 onward their purpose acquired a more pedagogical nature. It seems that the spread of scientific views on the critical importance of early childhood for the development of individuals led to an understanding that it is not enough for young children to be in a safe environment with specialized professionals but that they should also be supported by a pedagogical perspective that suits their development. This new approach led to a change in the way the role of professionals working with children was understood, from that of health and care professionals to that of specialized pedagogues of early childhood education.

Recently, the increasing need for early childhood education and care led to a state initiative to develop a program called “neighborhood nannies”. Sharing many attributes with similar programs from other countries, “neighborhood nannies” was based on the idea of self-directed education and care. Its development by the state differentiates it from the choice of a

nanny made by parents themselves. Its ambition is to provide the security of formal social services agencies in a more flexible way. The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that, with nurseries being closed for long periods and parents working from home, the need for childminding and child education taking place at home is greater than ever. Providers of these new services will be formally qualified as opposed to the unqualified childminders often employed by parents.

It seems that the field of early childhood education and care keeps changing to satisfy social and educational needs. The need for carrying out research into the issues arising from enforced home-schooling and care is growing. The academic community needs to discuss the benefits both of institutionalized early childhood education and care and other flexible forms of education and care addressing the needs of young children. It should be noted, however, that these new forms of ECEC are not meant to replace early childhood institutions; their role is to contribute to the field in a constructive and creative way. Scientific dialogue can show the advantages of formal early childhood education and care in institutions and those of various, more decentralized, alternatives.

2. *Changing the Paradigm in Preschool Pedagogues Education*

Early Childhood Education and Care workforce plays a key role in ensuring sound child development and learning. There is a general consensus, supported by research, that well-educated and well-trained professionals are the key factor in providing high-quality ECEC with the most favorable cognitive and social outcomes for children. Research suggests that the behavior of those who work in ECEC matters and that this behavior is related to their education and training. The qualifications, education and training of ECEC workforce is, therefore, an important policy issue¹⁷. Areas for reform include qualifications, initial education, professional development and working conditions. Higher qualifications have been found to be strongly associated with better child outcomes and working conditions can improve the quality of ECEC services (OECD, 2011)¹⁸. Specific knowledge, skills and competencies are expected of ECEC pedagogues.

A variety of professional work at Greek nurseries, including preschool pedagogues, assistant pedagogues, welfare workers, pediatricians, psy-

¹⁷ OECD, *Starting Strong II. Early Childhood Education and Care*, Paris, OECD, 2006.

¹⁸ OECD, *Starting Strong III. Early Childhood Education and Care*, Paris, OECD, 2011.

chologists, cooks, cleaners and drivers. This section discusses the case of pedagogues, how their university education has developed and how their role has changed in the 70-year period examined. As mentioned above, the first nurseries were opened by the state with the aim to cater for poor, unprotected children and orphans. In 1926, the ratio of children to nursery pedagogues was 100:2, with one director entrusted with administrative issues. Today, there are two pedagogues and one assistant-pedagogue for every 12 children. In addition, visiting doctors from the Ministry of Health were responsible for the children's health. The emphasis placed on health is reflected by the fact that National Nurseries fell under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Awareness. The nature of these nurseries was closely linked to social and welfare functions, with education being of secondary importance.

In 1942, Nursery Teachers' Schools were established to cover the needs of nurseries. Students were elementary school graduates, as well as "healthy and able-bodied" females who had grown up in orphanages. The subjects taught were Greek, Religion, Arts, Hygiene, and Infant Care and Hygiene, while there were no subjects related to pedagogical practices whatsoever¹⁹.

In 1955, a School of Nursery Education by the name "Princess Sophia" was established at the *Mother* Infant Center. Its aim was to provide young females with professional training in the education and care of infants and young children until they entered elementary school. The result was the emergence of a new female profession that «could provide many opportunities to the young females who had an aptitude for this job» (School Regulations, 1964, art. 1)²⁰. The subjects taught were: Anatomy-Physiology, Microbiology, Infant Development-Nutrition, Infant Pathology, Infant Nursing, Hygiene, Nursing, Dietology, Cooking, Obstetrics, First Aid, Psychology, Pedagogy, Social Welfare, Social Legislation, Citizenship Education, Practical Training (3 months at a kindergarten and 3 months at nurseries), General Education, Music, Rhythmic Gymnastics and English. It can be seen that medical subjects increased compared to the previous period, and that some pedagogical subjects were also introduced. This was the beginning of the new educational orientation of nurseries, which was to develop and become the norm half a century later. In 1978, 21 higher education infant and child care schools were opened by the Ministry of Social Services to meet the demand for professional nursery staff due to an increase

¹⁹ Legislative Decree 1316/1942 (Government Gazette 115/11-5-1942, Vol.) «On National Rural Nurseries and amending the provisions on National Children's Centres and Rural Transitional Housing Schools».

²⁰ Baby Centre "The Mother", under the high protection of the Queen, "Princess Sophia" Nursery School, School Regulations, Athens, 1964.

in the number of nurseries throughout the country. These schools provided 3-year education that mainly focused on Medicine-related subjects²¹.

An important milestone in the education of nursery professionals was the year 1983, when the curriculum of the Higher School of Infant and Child Care at *Mother Infant Center* was reviewed to include more pedagogical subjects, along with subjects related to Psychology, Sociology and Administration (with no changes made to the subjects related to medicine and pediatrics). As well as this, a research project was introduced in the form of a thesis as a prerequisite for graduation. The theses had to be on psycho-pedagogical topics. This change, more than anything else, marked the shift of the paradigm from medicine- to pedagogy-oriented²².

Another important step was the academic development of pedagogues. The two higher schools of infant and child care became departments of the Technological Educational Institutes (TEI) and one more such department was established in Thessaloniki. In 2000, the Technological Educational Institutes were subsumed under Higher Education²³. In 2006, the Infant and Child Care department of the Athens TEI was renamed Department of Early Childhood Education, a strong indication of the adoption of a more pedagogical orientation. The final step towards changing the paradigm for the studies of nursery pedagogues was the upgrading of Technological Educational Institutes to Universities in 2018²⁴. Nursery educators had long asked for their schools becoming university departments. In a 2006 convention they had demanded that their vocation be characterized as *educational* as opposed to *medical*. Following this change, the three relevant departments were renamed Departments of Early Childhood Education and Care, while new, updated, pedagogical curricula were introduced in line with the latest scientific developments.

Today, early childhood pedagogues working in nurseries are university graduates, who stand at International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level 6, many of whom go on to do postgraduate and PhD courses. The university ECEC curricula include subjects aiming to sensitize future pedagogues to the needs of children coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, or children with special difficulties, emphasizing respect for multicultural societies and multicultural school settings, children's

²¹ Law No 817/1978.

²² Presidential Decree No 507/1983 (Government Gazette 194/28-12-1983, Vol. A), «Organisation and operation of the Higher School of Infant and Toddler Care of the Infant Centre “The Mother”».

²³ Law No 2916/2001, «Structure of Higher Education and regulation of issues of the technological sector».

²⁴ Law No 4521/2018.

rights and citizenship, and adopting a differentiated teaching perspective. In addition to their initial education and training, pedagogues also attend in-service training programs run by the municipalities, as well as lifelong learning programs provided by private organizations. According to the job description, the early childhood pedagogue is a specially educated person who cares for and educates preschool children and supports their families, designs and implements appropriate activities considering children's developmental and cultural singularity, and works in complex and constantly changing environments.

The challenges that pedagogues are faced with are social diversity and multiculturalism, role model changes, stereotypes, new family models (same-sex marriage, sole parents, etc.), the financial crisis, limited resources, and inequalities at work regarding payment and hierarchy. Above all, a great challenge in the current economic climate is the gender balance of the ECEC workforce and the promotion of their qualifications. Such challenges can be dealt with by means of efficient early childhood education systems. Technical/instrumental training suppresses change and innovation²⁵. The model of the *expert technician* does not seem to suffice for dealing with the complex problems facing today's world. By contrast, the model of the *reflective practitioner* seems more able to transform knowledge into effective action, regarding the social context and the impact of action. This is a professional who can always reflect on practice and find new solutions to the complexities of his job; a professional who keeps looking for new possibilities. As Cameron (2008) suggests, developing a profession requires the existence of skills that can support the worker's ability to take part in public discourse, to listen, communicate, and work in a democratic way.

The presence of men in ECEC

The ECEC workforce in Europe is currently homogeneous in terms of gender and ethnicity²⁶. According to Moss (2003), gendering is related to children's age: the younger the child, the higher the gendering. Cameron (2001) notes that female workforce reproduces its own patterns in recruitment and training. A primary reason for the limited number of men

²⁵ M. Vandenbroeck, M. Urban, J. Peeters, *Pathways towards professionalism in ECEC*, New York, London, Routledge, 2016.

²⁶ OECD, *Starting Strong II, Early Childhood Education and Care*, Paris, OECD, 2006.

in ECEC is that it is based on the concept of mother care²⁷. Peeters (2003) suggests that it is difficult to encourage young men to consider a job in ECEC, which they regard as female at a time when they are developing their self-identity. A second-chance career suggests that some men may waste years in jobs they dislike, because they did not know they liked working with children²⁸.

Many studies argue that not only must men embrace their roles as caregivers and educators of young children, but that women should also consider their own beliefs and attitudes toward men in ECEC. The number of male staff should increase to a point where the culture of ECEC is free of the biases, scrutiny and commonly held assumptions about men²⁹. Sarah Farquhar, Lance Cablk, Adam Buckingham, David Butler, Russell Ballantyne underline the reasons why ECEC is female-dominated³⁰. They argue that ECEC work is commonly viewed as an extension of the role of women as mothers. Women are perceived to be doing a perfectly good job, and men who enter ECEC are often thought of as men who are not “real” men. Finally, ECEC teaching work is a low-pay and low-status occupation.

Mousena and Sidiropoulou underline that, there has been an increase in the number of men working in ECEC in Greece over the last few years (Graph 1)³¹. This change is in line with the European Commission’s demand that more men be employed in early childhood institutions³². Given the fact that nurseries are a bridge between the family and society, and a microcosm of society, they should be enabled to present a more realistic image of society in terms of gender.

²⁷ C. Cameron, P. Moss, C. Owen, *Men in the nursery: Gender and caring work*, London, Paul Chapman Ltd., 1999.

²⁸ J. Peeters, *Men in childcare: An action-research*, in «Flanders International Journal of Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood», 1/1 (2003), pp. 72-83.

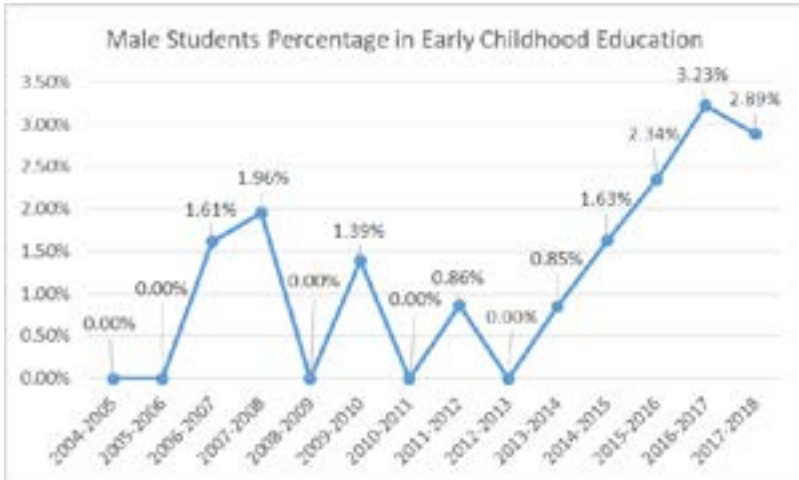
²⁹ D.E. Piburn, *Gender equality for a new generation: Expect male involvement in ECE*, in «Exchange», 168/ 18 (2006), pp. 18-21.

³⁰ S. Farquhar, L. Cablk, A. Buckingham, D. Butler, R. Ballantyne, *Men at work: Sexism in early childhood*, Porirua City, Childforum Research Network, 2006: «https://oecd.org/wp-content/uploads/men_at_work_book.pdf» (retrieved on 04/05/2021).

³¹ E. Mousena, T. Sidiropoulou, *Contemporary challenges and the rise of men in early childhood education and care in Greece*. Paper presented on the 28th European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) Annual Conference, 30.8.2018, Budapest, Hungary, 2018.

³² European Commission, *Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care*, 2014.

Graph 1



However, the induction of men in the profession of preschool pedagogues does not seem to be a simple issue or an issue that could be achieved through regulations. Research has shown that women resist the inclusion of men in the profession. According to male students-educators, female pedagogues prevented them during the internship period from having all the duties women had³³.

3. *The Image of the Child and the Curriculum Framework*

In today's world, the value of education from an early age is being promoted in various ways. In the previous section, we followed the transformation of the Greek nursery educators' paradigm from a medical into a pedagogical one. This shift is also reflected in the content of the work that nurseries provide today, as well as in curriculum design.

Different pedagogical approaches are based on different perceptions of children. The perception of the child as an adult possession, or a *tabula rasa* upon which adults inscribe their intentions, has long been considered outdated. From as early as birth, the child is now seen as a political subject with rights, and with his own views that adults are urged to listen to³⁴. The

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ P. Moss, *Bringing politics into the nursery: Early childhood education as a democratic practice*, in «European Early Childhood Education Research Journal», 15/1 (2007), pp. 5-20.

child has a voice expressed in different ways and adults need advanced listening skills in order to understand what this voice says³⁵. The ‘poor’, innocent, passive child, with no abilities, individual will or interests, is a child of the past.

The shift toward the perception of children as political subjects began during the Enlightenment and has exerted considerable influence on modern pedagogical thought, which advocates child activation during the learning process and promotes autonomy³⁶. It also acknowledges child curiosity, and its implications for learning, as an inherent quality of human nature. However, conventional pedagogical perspectives perceiving children as passive learners, which resulted in the adoption of a banking model of learning, cannot be easily erased. What is more, the medical model applied to the role of nursery professionals has entrapped them into looking at children as weak, helpless, and in need of care and protection. Today, in Greece and elsewhere, where the socio-economic conditions have witnessed considerable improvements compared to the post-war era, the image of the child has changed significantly and ECEC objectives are oriented toward the child’s physical, emotional and intellectual autonomy³⁷.

Early childhood education is aimed at developing skills that can help children deal with situations they are faced with in their environment, to interact with their peers and adults, to be autonomous and take initiative. At the same time, early childhood education and care provides children with an additional space for development, different from the space provided by the family, which is supported by professional pedagogues. The aim of ECEC is children’s all-round development – physical, social, emotional, cognitive and linguistic. According to their operating rules³⁸, the objectives of ECEC institutions are:

- to provide pre-school education and care in line with the latest scientific developments;
- to help children develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially;

³⁵ C. Edwards, L. Gandini, G. Forman (eds.), *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Experience in Transformation*, Santa Barbara, Praeger, 2012.

³⁶ G. Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University, 1988; D. Bridges (ed.), *Education, Autonomy and Democratic Citizenship, Philosophy in a changing world*, London and New York, Routledge, 1997.

³⁷ E. Mousena, *Forming Autonomous Citizens the Role of Education* (Формирование самостоятельных граждан – роль образования), in «Journal of Social Phenomena, Issues of Schoolchildren’s Identity Formation», 10/1 (2020), pp. 16-26.

³⁸ Government Gazette 4249/5-12-2017.

- to sensitize parents to issues of modern pedagogy and psychology by providing information and guidance;
- to contribute to pre-school children's smooth transition from the family to the school environment, but also to the wider social and educational environment;
- to provide nutrition and care, meeting hygiene and security standards;
- to facilitate working and unemployed parents.

According to the same regulations, the nursery curriculum is designed according to the singularity, needs, and interests of each and every child, and the characteristics of their age. It embraces a child-centered approach, whereby the pedagogue appreciates and respects the children's and their families' individual, social and cultural differences. The time allocated to rest, relaxation and free play in outdoor or indoor spaces is determined according to the children's age, as well as their individual and biological needs. The Whole Child Approach is adopted, which, drawing on the theories of Fröbel³⁹, Pestalozzi⁴⁰, Dewey⁴¹, Malaguzzi⁴², and the work of modern developmental psychology theories, favors an institutionalized preschool setting in which the child feels safe, healthy, engaged, supported and challenged, and knowledge and skills are developed that will support children in living in the modern globalized environment.

Early childhood services should address the following needs:

- *The need to socialize*: owing to the scarcity of free spaces where children can play safely, there is an increased need for preschool education and care spaces.
- *Compensatory education*: Especially for children from poor socio-cultural backgrounds and the children of economic migrants, the contribution of early childhood education can be decisive, as it provides an opportunity for child – but also family – inclusion in the host country, by familiarizing children both with the language they will be taught later at school and with habits, moral practices, and behaviors, i.e., with the environment in which they live.
- *Communication, speech development*: The rapid growth of knowledge in modern society makes the development of children's mental capabilities

³⁹ M. Soetard, *Friedrich Frobel. Pedagogie et vie*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1990.

⁴⁰ J.-H., Pestalozzi, *Mes recherches sur la marche de la nature dans le développement du genre humain*, Lausanne, Payot, (1797), 1994.

⁴¹ J. Dewey, *Dewey on Education, Selections*. With an Introduction and Notes by Martin S. Dworkin, Classics in Education, No. 3, New York, N.Y., Teachers College Press, 1959.

⁴² C. Edwards, L. Gandini, G. Forman (eds.), *The Hundred Languages of Children*, cit.

increasingly necessary. However, parents' efforts to this end are not always sufficient for the development of the communication potential of children, the cultivation of speech and the acquisition of knowledge processing. According to research findings, attending educational institutions from a young age can, to a certain extent, counterbalance these shortcomings.

- *Supporting children with special needs or facing difficulties*: Many young children are faced with problems which can be eliminated over time with the aid of early childhood education and care. Issues related to socialization, association with other children, speech, and separation from the parents or learning difficulties can be addressed through early childhood education.
- *Preparing children for school*: There is scientific evidence that proves the determining role of the first five years of life, particularly years 0–3, for the child's later development. Proper education and guidance at these ages suit the requirements for healthy development and a smooth transition to school, and future inclusion in society and the workplace. Given the above, the state should call for a comprehensive policy in this field, aiming to provide equal opportunities to all children entitled to education⁴³.

The main influences on the pedagogical work in Greek nurseries are the Froebelian and Deweyan models. Experiential and communicative learning is promoted and the nursery institution is open to parents and the rest of society; it is no longer a fortress closed to the outside world. The fundamental principles on which the pedagogical action relies are child-centeredness, active learning through exploration and discovery, verbal interaction and acting in small groups, and the pedagogue as co-explorer and consultant. It also relies on the provision of opportunities for supporting the children's cultural and linguistic identities, play as the principal method of learning, self-awareness and autonomy, the use of technology, access to different sources of knowledge within and outside the nursery, collaboration with parents and educators from all levels of education. In the pedagogical framework of early childhood education and care, the development of language and communication play a key role; the pedagogue's verbal communication can support or weaken both children's linguistic development and their motivation to learn⁴⁴.

A centrally defined curriculum framework for nursery schools has not been established yet; the curriculum is designed to meet local characteris-

⁴³ Οικονομική και Κοινωνική Επιτροπή (ΟΚΕ), *Προσχολική Αγωγή και Πρωτοβάθμια Εκπαίδευση*, Γνώμη, Αθήνα, 2007.

⁴⁴ E. Mousena, T. Sidiropoulou, *Oral Communication Skills and Pedagogy*, in B.O. Cavero, L.N. Calvet (eds.), *New Pedagogical Challenges in the 21st Century*, London, IntechOpen, 2018, pp. 231-247.

tics. Thus, the pedagogical work is organized, implemented and provided with feedback on a cooperative local basis. Nursery pedagogues are also referred to the Early Childhood Curriculum framework put together by the Technological Institution of Athens and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in 2009⁴⁵. According to the Early Childhood Curriculum, each child is the starting point and the point of reference of all educational activities, from planning to the implementation of pedagogical practices and the process of reflection. In this process, the child is not treated in isolation, but in his relationship with his peers, his family, the pedagogues and the environment of the nursery school.

The Early Childhood Curriculum describes the basic skills and knowledge that all children need to succeed in life and proposes activities to be implemented by the pedagogue. The focal point is the concept of *cultivation* and the particular meaning we understand it to have for children's lives as an active social and emotional process of learning the world through experience and the senses. *Cultivation* focuses on three levels/images for each child: the self-image – the child in his own personal world; the image of others – the child in the child community; the world's image – the child living in and discovering the world.

These images are not only related to certain pedagogical approaches, but they also hint at important areas of psychological developmental processes. The younger the children are, the more questions they ask about themselves and the adults in their immediate environment. What is essential in the age group 0–3 is that children should feel safe within the relationships and ties they have developed with other individuals in their environment, and that their subjective and exceptionally individualized forms of expression should be supported while they are working on the creation of their self-image. Eight areas of development are defined by the Early Childhood Curriculum:

- body, movement and health;
- social and cultural life;
- communication: languages, written culture and the Media;
- artistic creativity;
- theatrical expression;
- music;
- basic experiences in mathematics;
- natural sciences and technology.

While preparing children for future challenges, pedagogues consider the theories of developmental psychology, setting appropriate goals for the

⁴⁵ E. Μουσένα, *Επικοινωνία και Προφορικότητα στην Εκπαίδευση: Προγράμματα και Παιδαγωγικές Πρακτικές*, Gutenberg, Αθήνα, 2021.

development of knowledge and skills in children. The nursery pedagogue plans and organizes the daily life in the nursery, provides motivation for different types of play, designs and implements programs, and establishes the framework for achieving goals in a meaningful way that supports child development. Observation and documentation are major tasks for early childhood pedagogues. Their role is crucial as pedagogical opportunities do not simply emerge from a well-designed curriculum; they develop on the basis of children's interests and experiences, a fact that the pedagogue can confirm by means of an on-going process of observation. As well as forming the basis of the pedagogue's and children's reflection, pedagogical documentation helps parents understand the pedagogical work carried out in the nursery. This pedagogical work is not restricted to teaching, but it ensures the conditions that will enable children to have a series of experiences. The careful observation of children's linguistic development on a daily basis helps the pedagogue record the learning process and, if necessary, identify delays or inefficiencies. Great care should be taken to ensure the progress of children who are learning Greek as a second language⁴⁶.

Close attention is paid to immigrant children and their families so as to support their rights to education and inclusion. Their mother tongue is appreciated, and the view is held that a bilingual situation can often stimulate the child's overall development. When, for example, children realize that a single object can be given different names, they start to reflect on language and speech phenomena. One of the objectives of nurseries is children's linguistic development so that all children can be able to actively participate in a conversation taking place in Greek. Cooperation with the family is a key pedagogical principle underlying the pedagogical work in nursery schools. Cooperation does not merely concern dealing with operational issues; it is also about parents' involvement in the pedagogical process. Communication and cooperation with the family is developed as a two-way process: with their knowledge and guidance, pedagogues can support parents in dealing with learning issues. Opening nurseries to families and society to negotiate critical issues transforms the nursery school into a *forum* in civil society; an *agora*, where citizens publicly discuss issues related to their social life. Thus, politics is brought to the nursery, as Peter Moss suggests, reinforcing the concept of the young child as citizen⁴⁷. Early childhood institutions are

⁴⁶ E. Mousena, *Listening and speaking as powerful literacy practices*, in «Educational Journal of the University of Patras UNESCO Chair», 7/2 (2020), pp. 17-26.

⁴⁷ G. Dahlberg, P. Moss, A. Pence, *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care – Languages of Evaluation*, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, 2013; Z. Millei, K.P. Kallio, *Recognizing politics in the nursery: Early childhood education*

seen as spaces where children's autonomy is built and their political identity shaped from an early age.

Conclusion

The analysis of ECEC institutions for children aged 0–4 in Greece from 1950 to the present day discussed in this chapter looks at the ideological/political and social conditions that caused the development of nurseries, the education and role of the professionals working closely with children, and the pedagogical work provided in them. The period following World War II and the Greek civil war found Greece financially destroyed and ideologically split. The economic reconstruction of the country meant that new working conditions and new needs emerged for families. Childhood was used as a space for the projection of opposing political ideologies, as well as a means of strengthening citizens' national identity. Most of the nurseries established during this period were in rural areas, especially in northern Greece.

Regarding nursery professionals from 1950–1983, it seems that the medical paradigm dominated both in terms of the studies of pedagogues and in terms of the work they produced. The picture changed afterwards with the increase in the years of their studies, the curriculum content, with medicine-oriented subjects decreasing and pedagogical ones increasing, and finally, with the inclusion of ECEC pedagogical studies in universities.

The role of ECEC institutions has been transformed over this 70-year period. Instead of institutions addressing biological needs, health protection and provision of care, ECEC institutions now take a holistic perspective of the child, primarily addressing his interests and his learning competences. This can be seen in the pedagogical programs of nurseries, in pedagogical practice, and in the opening of ECEC institutions to families and society. Their new role is to work as *forums* in civil society, a role that is in line with today's multicultural and rapidly changing world.

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The Institutionalization of the Day Nursery from 1945 until the 1980s and the Role of Professional Training for Staff

Aggné Pirka Veronika and Janek Noémi

Abstract – The history of day nurseries – which is part of the social welfare system in Hungary – has not been investigated much, except for some aspects studied from the micro-historical point of view. Only a few macro-historical works undertake a comprehensive historical presentation related to the care of children up to the age of three years.

The aim of this chapter is to explore some aspects of the history of day nurseries between 1945 and 1990 in Hungary, with a special focus on the 1960s and '70s. Starting from the background and specific elements of professional attitude changes in the Hungarian day nurseries of the 1960s, it will explore the pedagogical aspects of these changes. The analysis is based on primary and secondary sources, as well as sources from the Budapest Day Nursery Museum.

In 1954, the Code of Conduct for Day Nurseries was published for the first time, where, besides quantity, quality appeared in the everyday work of pedagogy and development. Between 1960 and 1969, rules for the construction of day nurseries were set out (to prevent overcrowding and comply with hygiene rules). In 1966, a ministerial recommendation was issued to establish methodological day nurseries, where theoretical and practical demonstrations were held for employees of day nurseries to support children's play. The acceleration of the professional pedagogical development of day nurseries started in the 1970s. New content regulators appeared; professional discourse started to achieve higher quality pedagogical work in day nurseries. The National Institute of Day Care Centres, established in 1970, was tasked with including the organization of further training, professional supervision, and the development and introduction of new educational and methodological principles in day nurseries.

Introduction

This chapter highlights the history of nursery education in Hungary from 1945 to the present with particular focus on the 1960s and 1970s. The first part presents the role of the state in the establishment of nurseries in the post-World War II period, and the Code of Conduct for Nurseries, published in 1954, considered to be the first document of quality nursery work. In the second part, it explores the factors behind professional attitude changes and characteristics in the history of Hungarian nursery education in the 1960s and how the medical-health model transformed into a model that also follows a pedagogical approach. At the same time, it also presents the professional work of people who played a significant role in the field of nursery care in the indicated period; those whose contributions in the field made nursery education a professional occupation in a psychological and pedagogical sense. The third part describes the period of development, and lastly the fourth part presents the most important legal, structural and pedagogical changes that have taken place to date.

1. *State involvement in the establishment and operation of nurseries after World War II*

In Hungary, institutional nursery development started after 1945 and was first initiated by the II post-destruction recovery caused by World War II. The so-called “Ratkó era”, and the increasing proportion of women in production work¹ also contributed to this. In her recent study, Ágnes Nyitrai states that

After World War II, nursery education received strong political emphasis. Collective education has become of paramount importance, and institutional education was intended to play a decisive role in the realization of the socialist human ideal, as well as in the education of parents in addition to the education of the child².

Before World War II, there were eight nurseries in Budapest and eight in the countryside, these were mainly established by associations and factories. The establishment of nurseries with the involvement of the state was

¹ T. Valuch, *Magánélet Kádár János korában*, Budapest, Corvina Kiadó, 2011.

² Á. Nyitrai, *A gondozás-neveléstől a nevelés-gondozásig: kisgyermeknevelési koncepciók változásai a szakemberképzésben és a bölcsődei munkában*, in «Gyermeknevelés», 8/1 (2015), pp. 15-25.

first regulated by Decree 13.430 / 1948 prescribed by the government. As there was no experience of and there had been no buildings designed as such institutes, firstly ordinary flats or apartments were remodeled, or if recently built, hospital buildings. Rules governing the construction of hospitals were taken into account.

With the central management of the state, maternity homes, orphanages and maternity protection centers were established in 1949³. As a result of maternal and child protection measures, the ban on abortion until 1956, and socialist propaganda, the number of births increased significantly in the 1950s. Consequently, the capacity of nurseries had to be increased to ensure that mothers could work after a short period of maternity leave⁴.

However, overcrowding, the lack of good health conditions and professional qualifications soon became a problem: children were transferred to formula feeding and as there was no sickness benefit for parents, children were often taken into the nursery even when they were sick⁵.

Resolution 1011/1951 of the Council of Ministers decided on conditions for the employment of women. In every factory and office, where a minimum of 250 women with an infant less than 9 months old worked, a nursery had to be set up and its opening hours adjusted to the mothers' shifts. Between 1946 and 1950, 5108, and between 1951 and 1955, 17549 nursery places were established.

In the meantime, day nurseries based on Soviet type designs appeared. The nurseries did not meet hygiene requirements and care could not be provided effectively, so hospitalization problems arose. Professional work related to nursery life dealt with the morbidity associated with hospitalization. Even then, Emmi Pikler highlights in her studies, that the personal relationship between nursery care practitioner and child could be effective without the physical and mental impairment usually associated with institutionalisation.

Ágnes Akócsi (1926-1973) was one of the first to write about improving the work in nurseries (*Nevelés a bölcsődében*, 1954)⁶. Ágnes Akócsi completed her secondary education in Szeged, then passed the qualification exam at the Buda State Kindergarten Training School and started work as a

³ S. Mészárosné Darvai, *Bölcsődetörténet*, in V.Pirka, A., Gy. Mikonya, S. Mészárosné Darvai, E. Szarka (eds.), *Kora gyermekkori nevelés-és családtörténet*, Budapest, ELTE Tanító-és Óvóképző Kar, 2014, pp. 106-111.

⁴ I. Mészáros, A. Németh, B. Pukánszky, *Neveléstörténet*, Budapest, Osiris Kiadó, 2004.

⁵ K. Mészáros, *A bölcsődei nevelés története Magyarországon*, Budapest, ELTE Tanító-és Óvóképző Kar, 2013.

⁶ É. Vokony, *Kis magyar bölcsődetörténet*, in «Kapocs», 2 (2002), pp. 50-54.

kindergarten teacher. From 1946 to 1973 she worked in the Department of Child Health at the Department of Child Welfare in the Ministry of Welfare. She played a significant role in the professional work related to the construction, furnishing, equipping, and development of personal and material conditions in the 1960s⁷.

The strengthening of the health point of view in nursery life was supported by the establishment of the Ministry of Health in 1950, nurseries then came under the supervision of this Ministry⁸. In 1954, the Rules and Regulations for Nurseries was published for the first time, resulting in the pedagogical research, as quality appeared among quantity in development. In her work, Akócsi details which areas were affected⁹. The rules set out responsibilities for children's meals, agendas and care. Emphasis was placed on the professional work of nurses and on the creation of effective relationships with the family.

On the basis of Nyitrai's work¹⁰, the following tasks seem to have played important roles in the organization of the work of the nurseries: (1) the operation had to take into account the working hours of mothers and design appropriate opening times; (2) children spending as much time outdoors as possible became a more important principle; (3) one educational session had to be provided for the children in each group; (4) in the case of infants, bathing, awareness and feeding were the main tasks for practitioners; (5) provision for basic emotional needs of the children was important; (6) awareness raising among parents should be included; (7) doctors and nursery care practitioners should regularly evaluate their work.

One of the most important principles of the Code is that *care and education* could not be separated. Pedagogical and health aspects have emerged in the basic document regarding the organization of nursery life. Aspects of development are described in homogeneous groups according to age, agenda, play, comfortable surroundings, motor and verbal development, guided and free tasks, appropriate furniture, and the use of a special education teacher¹¹.

⁷ See: <<http://www.magyarbolcsodek.hu/egyesuletunk/dijaink>> (retrieved on 3/01/2021).

⁸ Mészáros, *A bölcsődei nevelés története Magyarországon*, cit.

⁹ Á. Akócsi, *Nevelés a bölcsődében*, Budapest, Egészségügyi Minisztérium, 1954.

¹⁰ Á. Nyitrai, *Pedagógiai szemléletmód a bölcsődei nevelésben-gondozásban: történeti kitekintés*, in J. Podráczky (ed.), *Szemelvények a kisgyermeknevelés köréből I.* Dombóvár, Dombóváry Szecsox Nyomda Kft, 2015, pp. 35-56.

¹¹ Á. Nyitrai, *A gondozás-neveléstől a nevelés-gondozásig: kisgyermeknevelési koncepciók változásai a szakemberképzésben és a bölcsődei munkában*, in «Gyermeknevelés», 8/1 (2020), pp. 15-25.

In 1955, the document called *health record* (Health Record) was introduced, in which not only the doctor but also the nursery care practitioner could record the characteristics of the child's intellectual, emotional, sensory, and motor development based on their observations. Based on the suggestions of Akócsi and Varga, kindergarten education would provide guidelines for the development of nursery education¹².

From the mid-1950s onwards, articles and studies were published dealing with the importance of the first years of life and the importance of the role of the mother-child relationship in early development. In addition, in the Hungarian literature, there were works of Emmi Pikler, which presented the results of nursery care and education¹³.

2. *Main changes in nursery construction, training, and activity in the Sixties*

The improvement of day nurseries' activities continued to advance in the Sixties. Between 1960 and 1969, rules for the construction of nurseries were developed (to prevent congestion and to comply with hygiene rules), mainly based on Soviet, Bulgarian, Czech and GDR examples. The first nursery furniture catalog was published in 1969, which included the necessary equipment for the nursery. The rooms were made of wood, the terrace and the playground contained metal furniture and tools for motor development. Plaid, flannel pants and blouses were eliminated, children were dressed by gender; porcelain plates and glass cups were used instead of enamel pots.

In 1961-62, Mária Keresztúri started theoretical and practical demonstrations of «stimulating activity». The goal was to control children's play activities. A person who played an important role in the field of nursery education in the 1950s and 1960s, as praised by Ágnes Nyitrai as «[...] one of the outstanding personalities of nursery education»¹⁴ is Sándorné Akócsi. Her writings appeared in health journals in the 1950s and 1960s, where she outlined her conceptualisations of important principles in the field that served as a basis for a change of attitude. In her opinion, the permanence of nursery care practitioners, the use of kindergarten experiences and cooperation with families all contribute to the improvement of nursery practice.

¹² S. Akócsi, Á. Varga, *Hogyan javíthatjuk a bölcsődei munkánkat?*, in «Egészségügyi Munka», 5 (1955), pp. 75-78.

¹³ Vokony, *Kis magyar bölcsődetörténet*, cit., pp. 50-54.

¹⁴ Nyitrai, *Pedagógiai szemléletmód a bölcsődei nevelésben-gondozásban: történeti kitekintés*, cit, p. 38.

With regard to the training of nursery nurses, she states that they should receive the same training as kindergarten teachers and school teachers¹⁵. In 1965, the Ministry of Health raised the training of nurses from one year to two, with more emphasis on pedagogical and psychological knowledge¹⁶.

Childcare benefit (in Hungarian called GYED/ Gyermekgondozási Díj) was introduced in Hungary by Government Decree 3/1967. Nevertheless, Sándorné Akócsi still considered the approach to the development of nurseries to be professionally well-founded, as in her opinion the majority of working women would only use this service until their child was one year old¹⁷. On the other hand, the increase in the number of nursery places is justified by the fact that 50% of the institutions operating at that time were of poor quality, and had to be replaced by the development or creation of new places. Nurseries were still established in pre-existing buildings and flats or apartments with few alterations. Meanwhile, the number of children increased, but the floor space did not, so overcrowding developed.

In accordance with the design directive issued in 1966, a new type of nursery provided the possibility of moving, sleeping and playing outdoors. Therefore, the buildings were on the ground floor; the playground was accessible from the building because the children's room had a direct exit to the terrace. One group of children was to include 10 children, and sleeping outdoors helped reduce the number of respiratory illnesses. According to Ágnes Akócsi, «the nursery has emerged from the concept of a childcare center, it has become a popular institution of health care»¹⁸. Ágnes Akócsi also supported play in nursery life, according to her «[...] play is one of the defining main activities»¹⁹. Improvement in nutrition was helped by the fact that those preparing the food should be qualified as cooks. On the newly built housing estates, complexes of buildings appeared, which also served as nurseries and kindergartens.

In 1965, the National Planning Office decided that the construction of a nursery and kindergarten on a new plot in the new housing estates would help parents. It was also good for children to have direct access (from nursery to kindergarten) to their peers²⁰.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ S. Akócsi, *Bölcsődék szervezésének időszerű kérdései, I. Országos Bölcsődei Ankét*, Szolnok, 1971, pp. 5-14.

¹⁷ S. Akócsi, *A bölcsődék fejlődése, helyzete*, in «Népegészségügy», 5/49 (1968), pp. 283-286.

¹⁸ *Ivi*, p. 284.

¹⁹ *Ivi*, p. 285.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

In 1966, a ministerial recommendation (Ministry of Health/Egészségügyi Minisztérium) was issued on the suggestion of Sándorné Akócsi for the establishment of teaching and training nurseries, and theoretical and practical demonstrations were held for those working in nurseries to support children's play²¹.

In several of her writings, Akócsiné presents the expectations of the nursery care practitioner, and according to her opinion²², it is important to show the practitioners during their training that a direct emotional connection should be established with the child. Also, the pedagogical methods appropriate to the child's age should be applied, as well as a continuous timetable of activity where stimuli must be provided in optimal amounts, and provision made for children's basic needs, including emotional protection.

In 1967, the Department of Early Childhood Education of the Hungarian Pedagogy Association was established, whose central professional topic is the problem of nursery to kindergarten - the issue of transition.

3. *Emmi Pikler's concept and activity*

In 1985, the contribution of Dr Emmi Pikler was commemorated by Agnes Binet and Dr Gyorgyne Peter. Emmi Pikler was the author of the well known "Lóczy method": «Once again, an irreplaceable person has left us»²³. For her work, she was awarded the «Order of Merit for Socialist Hungary» and the title of Outstanding Doctor twice²⁴.

Dr Pikler completed her university studies in Vienna in the 1920s when she obtained a degree in pediatrics from the Pirquet Clinic and then she worked in the Department of Pediatric Surgery at Salzer. She gained practical experience in the two places which determined her professional approach and practice²⁵. Judit Falk cites the words of Pikler, who said that «collaboration with children has been resolved in an exemplary manner»²⁶. She returned to Hungary and worked as a family doctor. The first field of her professional thought was realized within family education. V. Agnes

²¹ Vokony, *Kis magyar bölcsődetörténet*, cit., pp. 50-54.

²² S. Akócsi, *Bölcsődék szervezésének időszerű kérdései, I. Országos Bölcsődei Ankét*, cit., pp. 5-14.

²³ V.Á. Binét, *Pikler Emmi (1902-1984)*, in «Magyar pszichológiai szemle», 6/42 (1985), pp. 532-536.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ J. Falk, *Negyvenéves a Lóczy*, in «Magyar Pszichológiai Szemle», 45/1 (1989), p. 117.

Binét quotes Pikler's thoughts as follows: «[...] Combining my ideas with those of my teacher-husband, at the birth of our first child, a son, in 1931, we decided to give him the opportunity to move independently, play individually, and take the initiative on his own, so to speak»²⁷.

In 1946 Pikler was commissioned to organize and run the orphanage on Lóczy Street. The work started in difficult conditions,

In each room there are hospital beds equipped with hard pillows and hard blankets... It is cool in the morning and there is nothing to pull on the children's feet, no slippers or material from which slippers can be made. Bath water should be heated in the kitchen downstairs and brought up from there. There is no dairy kitchen²⁸.

The work of the nurses there was also criticized:

Nurses are full of distrust. There is not a lot of work to do, but they do not even think of the possibility that something could be done carefully and attentively. Children are not cared for but 'cleaned up' or 'fed', preferably in minutes, with as few movements as possible²⁹.

Skilled nurses were replaced by untrained young girls interested in child-rearing, whom the nurses themselves had taught and cared for. In the orphanage, not just caring was provided. The 3-4-month-old infants were only in bed during sleep and rest periods, during waking hours they were put in a common playground inside or outdoors. At Emmi Pikler's Institute, children were able to develop according to their own individual developmental pace; "coercive" force in the case of stages of ontogenetic movement development was unknown. Infants were observed, and notes were made of their developmental characteristics. Non-intervention did not mean abandonment, metacommunicative signs also showed children that attention to them was important. Lóczy's work was also watched with interest by two French psychiatrists, Genevieve Appell and Myriam David, and in their analysis and work (*Lóczy ou le maternage insolite*) they outlined the four principles that permeated Lóczy's work, specifically: 1) evaluation of the child's activities made by their own initiative; 2) the characteristics of the child's relationship with one person and support; 3) the child's appropriate recognition of situations depending on her/his developmental stage; 4) promoting and maintaining the child's somatic health.

²⁷ Binét, *Pikler Emmi (1902-1984)*, cit., p. 533.

²⁸ Falk, *Negyvenéves a Lóczy*, cit., p. 120.

²⁹ *Ivi*, p. 121.

Pikler and her colleagues broke with the operational practice of hospital and shelter-type institutions even when the works of Spitz and Bowlby had not yet appeared in Hungarian professional discourse. The Lóczy model implemented such personal and material educational conditions and internal organizational structures that the growing child would become more and more familiar with the material environment and social relationships, be able to form deep emotional relationships, and accept new knowledge.

More extensive research work had been carried out at the institution since 1961, when it became a Demonstration Orphanage, and from 1964 it became the Institute of Methodology for the Care and Education of Infants and Young Children of the Ministry of Health. This was when a textbook for nurses, *Development and Care of a Healthy Infant and Child* and a note on “Education” were published. The curriculum and topics of vocational school and vocational high school training were also developed.

Lóczy became the National Methodological Institute of Orphanages in 1970, and fieldwork was carried out at the national level. They toured all the orphanages to see the adaptability of the Lóczy model. They saw examples of physical and mental impairment in many institutions where children had been placed for longer periods.

Nearly 200 writings by Emmi Pikler and her colleagues appeared in national and international forums. Pikler’s monograph was also published in French, Italian and Spanish and German³⁰. Emmi Pikler’s new pedagogical and early childhood education procedures were effective against the development of frequent institutionalisation and its associated impairment in orphanages (nurseries). According to Pikler,

It is important that children find out as much as possible on their own. If we help with everything in solving the tasks, we will take away from them exactly what would have been most important for their intellectual development. Children who acquire something through independent experimentation acquire a completely different kind of knowledge than the ones who are supplied with ready made solutions³¹.

Her professional ideas were recognised and cited in several works by national and international professionals³². Pikler’s idea was that a child is able to develop in its own rhythm, through its own attempts, if it feels the

³⁰ J. Falk, *Negyvenéves a Lóczy*, in «Magyar Pszichológiai Szemle», 45/1 (1989), p. 122.

³¹ See: «<https://www.pikler.hu/pikler-emmi>» (retrieved on 03/02/2021).

³² „Mit tud már a baba?”; „Anyák könyve”; „Adatok a csecsemő mozgásfejlődéséről”.

love that manifests itself from the adult. In her view, children are autonomous personalities that she wants to get to know, as in this way she can unfold what lies within them. In care and education, it was important for the nursery care practitioner to provide emotional and physical security to the child. One of the important moments of her principles is an agenda that provides security for the child in nurseries.

During her institutional work, Emmi Pikler considered it important for children to spend as much time outdoors as possible. A typical agenda or timetable from the orphanage (nursery) showed long periods of exposure to the outdoors, and everyday outdoor play in the open air³³.

A detailed presentation of Pikler's method and photo documentation of the children she raised can be found in her work *What Does the Baby already Know?*. After World War II Pikler wrote a book, titled *The Book of Mothers*, which became a handbook for parents of young children for many years. In 1968, she published her book, *Data on Infant Motor Development*, which contains observations and work on the infant's home environment³⁴.

4. *Adaptation to the needs of families, the establishment of BOMI (1970s to 1980s)*

Since the 1970s, the operation of nurseries has been characterized by adaptation to the needs of the family while preserving the social and family support function, as argued by Sarolta Zsuzsanna Mészárosné Darvay³⁵. In her work published in 1971, Akócsi discusses the forms of contact (parent meeting, family visit, talking with parents, lecture series, open days) between nursery care practitioner and parent that provide an opportunity for parents to track the work of nursery care practitioners³⁶. From the 1970s onwards, we can talk about the acceleration of the development of vocational education in nurseries. New content regulations emerged, and professional discourse began to achieve higher quality nursery pedagogical work.

Sándorné Akócsi (1971) presented, in the 1st National Nursery School Questionnaire, ways in which developments could be implemented within the framework of the five-year plans. He emphasized that the nursery

³³ See: «<https://www.pikler.hu/pikler-emmi>» (retrieved on 03/02/2021).

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ Mészárosné Darvay, *Bölcsődetörténet*, in V. Pirka, A.G. Mikonya, S.Z. Mészárosné Darvay, E. Szarka (eds.), *Kora gyermekkori nevelés- és családtörténet*, cit.

³⁶ S. Akócsi, *Bölcsődék szervezésének időszerű kérdései, I. Országos Bölcsődei Ankét*, cit., pp. 5-14.

school «became a popular institution in health care»³⁷, while indicating that pedagogical and psychological knowledge had become more important in the training of nurses since the second half of the 1960s. From 1969, professional training sessions for nursery teachers were held, in which professional content such as the issue of care and education and the development of a continuous agenda came to the fore.

In 1970, the National Methodological Institute of Nurseries (in Hungarian called: *Bölcsődék Országos Módszertani Intézete*, BOMI) was established by dr. Erzsébet Polónyi, chief physician, whose tasks included the organization of further training, professional supervision, the development and introduction of new educational and methodological principles in nursery education³⁸. According to Nyitrai, the most important elements that emerged among the nursery institution's responsibilities were: professional supervision, development of nurseries into a professional network, scientific research, methodological development, development of the training of nursery nurses³⁹.

Until 1990, nurseries remained within the framework of the health care system, but there was an increasing emphasis on pedagogical and psychological aspects in the organization of nursery work. Professional content elements emerged at the national level in nursery education, such as meeting the basic needs of children, developing appropriate habits regarding nutrition, cleanliness, clothing, and alternating sleep-wake hours. In order to raise the standard of professional work, centrally, the following books were made available to nurseries: Educational Methodology Guide, Health Care Administration III and IV and Child-rearing. On the 1st Questionnaire, Sándorné Akócsi emphasized that it had become an accepted view in professional circles that the primary and most important activity of children in nurseries was play⁴⁰, therefore toys and motor development tools were provided from a central framework for the provision of play equipment⁴¹.

The National Institute of Methodology for Orphanages (in Hungarian called: *Csecsemőotthonok Országos Módszertani Intézete*, CSOMI) was established in 1970 by dr. Emmi Pikler. The professional work of the two institutions connected at several points. In the field of care, BOMI operated according to Pikler principles.

³⁷ *Ivi*, p. 7.

³⁸ É. Vokony, *Kis magyar bölcsődetörténet*, in «Kapocs», 2 (2002), pp. 50-54.

³⁹ Nyitrai, *Pedagógiai szemléletmód a bölcsődei nevelésben-gondozásban: történeti kitekintés*, cit., pp. 35-56.

⁴⁰ Akócsi, *Bölcsődék szervezésének időszerű kérdései, I. Országos Bölcsődei Ankét*, cit.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

A national network of demonstration nurseries was set up, creating an unified methodological control system. International relations were established mainly in the field of research and methodological developments in German and English. From the 1980s, nurseries also welcomed children with special educational needs.

In the 1970s, the principle of stimulation of activity in nurseries was dominant. CSOMI did not apply this, which also had an impact on the cessation of stimulation in nurseries. Engagement in the activity meant that the nursery care practitioner did not start from what the child was interested in, but held a fixed session with the child at a specific time and with different topical content each day. In 1979 stimulation of activity was replaced by free play⁴². According to Ágnes Ferenczi, a good-natured child spends most of his or her day playing with toys, and this is achieved when he or she feels good in the nursery⁴³. The *Game in the Nursery* (1979) methodological letter intended the nursery care practitioner to play a monitoring role in the background during the game activity.

During the 1990's, after the change of regime, the professional methodological culture of the nursery was organized into a system and documents regulating the whole nursery care system were introduced⁴⁴. With regard to specialist training, BOMI (*Bölcsődék Országos Módszertani Intézete*) and CSOMI (*Csecsemőotthonok Országos Módszertani Intézete*) have been cooperating in the development of training since the 1970s. Both training and further training operated according to a central curriculum during this time, from 1975 it was not possible to obtain a degree in infant and child care in health vocational secondary schools, new entrants were unskilled and could obtain a vocational qualification in 1-2 years. From 1978, training for nurses began, those who graduated had a minimum of 2 years' work experience, had not reached the age of 45, and worked in a managerial or deputy managerial position. It was only after the change of regime that the structure that operates to this day emerged⁴⁵.

⁴² Á. Nyitrai, *A gondozás-neveléstől a nevelés-gondozásig: kisgyermeknevelési koncepciók változásai a szakemberképzésben és a bölcsődei munkában*, in «Gyermeknevelés», 8/1 (2020), pp. 15-25.

⁴³ Á. Ferenczi, *Játéktevékenység a bölcsődében. 2. sz. módszertani levél. Előadások-Közlemények-Dokumentumok. Módszertani levelek, irányelvek*, Bölcsődék Országos Módszertani Intézete, Budapest, 1979.

⁴⁴ Nyitrai, *A gondozás-neveléstől a nevelés-gondozásig: kisgyermeknevelési koncepciók változásai a szakemberképzésben és a bölcsődei munkában*, cit., pp. 15-25.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

5. The operation of nurseries in Hungary from the change of regime to the present day

After the change of regime, the professional-methodological culture of nurseries developed into a unified system, which was based on the emergence of content regulations. In 1993, edited by Katalin Mátay⁴⁶, chief physician, the Nursery Professional and Organizational Guide was published, which sets out principles, tasks, methods and tools. One of the chapters of the 1997 revised version of her work⁴⁷, *The Professional Basic Program in Nursery Care*, is the first in the series of basic programs. In this, the concepts related to the care, upbringing and development of disabled children are already in evidence.

In 1997, the Child Protection Act came into force in Hungary, which made day care for children, including nursery care, part of basic child care⁴⁸. In Hungary, nursery care is part of the social welfare system, not public education. The nurseries are municipal or private. In her study, Darvay indicates that nursery education has been defined since 2008 by the National Basic Program for Nursery Education, the Nursery Methodology Guidelines, and the professional programs of each institution⁴⁹.

With regard to nursery care training, 3-years training based on graduation was developed in the 1990s. In the first year, there was training with child nurses, and from the second year it was possible to specialize in child-care training. Nursing education was introduced into higher education as an accredited tertiary education in 1999 and has appeared as a BA in infant and young child education since 2008⁵⁰.

6. Conclusion

After World War II, a continuous development and change of attitude can be observed in the field of nursery education in Hungary. Firstly, infra-structural development becomes a key element of professional discourse,

⁴⁶ K. Mátay, *Bölcsődei szakmai és szervezési útmutató*, Bölcsődék Országos Módszertani Intézete, Budapest, 1993.

⁴⁷ K. Mátay, *A bölcsődék működési engedélyének szakmai követelményei*, Bölcsődék Országos Módszertani Intézete, Budapest, 1997.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹ Mészárosné Darvay, *Bölcsődetörténet*, in V. Pirka, A.G. Mikonya, S.Z. Mészárosné Darvay, E. Szarka (eds.), *Kora gyermekkori nevelés- és családtörténet*, cit., pp. 106-111.

⁵⁰ Á. Nyitrai, *A gondozás-neveléstől a nevelés-gondozásig: kisgyermeknevelési koncepciók változásai a szakemberképzésben és a bölcsődei munkában*, cit., pp. 15-25.

including the quantitative and qualitative design of buildings due to the rapid increase in the number of children, secondly, the creation of the right material environment. The work of the National Methodological Institute of Orphanages and Emmi Pikler's activities played a decisive role in the change of attitude related to the work of nurseries. Combining the work of BOMI and CSOMI provided an opportunity to replace the "program" of activity stimulation with free play and a new kind of caring role. In "Lóczy", Pikler and her colleagues operated according to a care-education method founded on Pikler's own principles, based on the child's own pace of development and her own inner curiosity in her daily work.

After the change of regime, the professional and legal regulations appeared, which still determine the care and upbringing of children aged 0-3 in nurseries. The professional approach of nurseries operating in Hungary is well reflected in the following considerations by Korintus Mihályné, Ágnes Nyitrai and Judit Rózsa concerning the child's development:

[...] the continued supportive and affirmative presence of an adult accepted by children and providing security for them, activities adapted to the child's needs and development, the experiences associated with them and the provision of adult models play a key role⁵¹.

In recent years, the number of nursery places in Hungary has increased. There is a growing demand from parents for this form of day care for their children. In 2019, 45,889 children were enrolled in the four forms of nursery care in Hungary⁵².

The European Commission classifies early childhood education and care as follows: the first stage is compulsory nursery care from the age of 20 weeks to the age of 3 years, and the second stage is the compulsory pre-school education from the age of 3 years to the start of school. For day care for children, classify up to 3 years of age as 'Nursery', 'Mini nursery', 'workplace nursery', 'Family nursery', 'Daytime child-minding', or 'Alternative day care'⁵³. Nursery care is part of the social welfare system, while pre-school education is part of the public education system, both of managed by the Ministry of Human Capacities. Nurseries belong to the

⁵¹ K. Mihályné, Á. Nyitrai, J. Rózsa, *Játék a bölcsődében. Módszertani Levél*, Bölcsődék Országos Módszertani Intézete, Budapest, 1997, p. 6.

⁵² See <<https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/stattukor/kisgyermnapkozbeni/gyermnapkozbeni19.pdf>> (retrieved on 05/08/2021).

⁵³ See <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/early-childhood-education-and-care-35_en> (retrieved on 25/05/2021).

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The Reform of Day Nurseries in the Soviet Union. Towards a Preschool Education System (1945– 1970s)

Dorena Caroli

Abstract – This chapter lays out the main changes that affected the Soviet system of preschool education, in particular day nurseries for very young children, from 1945 to the end of the 1970s. This period spans the last phase of Stalinism, de-Stalinization and the so-called Khrushchev Thaw (from mid-1950s to the mid-1960s). The period can be divided into two. The first phase, which concerns the years immediately after the war, was characterized by an initial increase in the number of day nurseries, which, however, were unable to offer adequate care and assistance to children due to the lack of suitable health conditions and qualified staff. This situation, accompanied by poor implementation of the construction plan for the nursery buildings, led to a quest for solutions at the local level, in the form of the merger of the day nurseries with the kindergartens. The formation of such unified institutions increased over time, with the consequent development of continuous education for children up to seven years of age, both in urban and rural areas. The second part deals with the elaboration of different psycho-pedagogical theories that, after the repression of paedology in 1936, constituted the basis for the introduction of new educational methods in the nurseries. Two trends emerged in continuity with the past, the first linked to Pavlovian psychology and the second to the research of the “historical-cultural” school founded by the well-known psychologist Lev Vygotsky. The reality is complex and very different from the propaganda of a near-universal admission of children under the age of three to these institutions. Nonetheless, the progressive creation of a preschool system contributed to the increasing transfer of these institutions into the purview of the Ministry of Education, making them educational institutions, as was happening in other European countries.

Introduction

This chapter presents some aspects of the evolution of preschool education institutions in the Soviet Union in the thirty years from the end of the World War II to the end of the 1970s. Concerning the history of day nurseries, this period, which coincides with the last phase of Stalinism (Stalin died in 1953), de-Stalinization and also the so-called Thaw, is still little studied but is interesting due to the characteristics of the preschool institutions after the Second World War in comparison with the previous twenty years.

The history of day nurseries after World War II underwent various phases that will be described in this chapter. In order to better grasp the pre- and post-World War II developments, it must be explained that, after the October Revolution, the new government was particularly interested in infancy and the education of children to found a new communist society¹. Compared to the tsarist past, the 1920s reforms aimed at improving the living conditions of children and educating “a new child” in the light of communism. The institutions in charge of preschool education were managed by two government institutions: the People’s Commissariat for Enlightenment, which dealt with kindergartens for children aged four–seven as well as the school system², and the People’s Commissariat for Health, which dealt with day nurseries (*detskie iasli* in Russian) for children under the age of three and was in charge of health policy³.

The development of these childcare institutions, therefore, depended on the policies of the two Commissariats, bearing in mind that the education sector was held back in its reforms because it had to invest a large part of its resources to address the mass problem of abandoned children during the 1920s⁴. These children of various ages left without families were welcomed

¹ D. Caroli, *Il ‘nuovo bambino’ in Unione sovietica dalla Rivoluzione d’ottobre alla caduta del regime comunista (1917-1991)*, in M. Gecchele, S. Polenghi, P. Dal Toso (eds.), *Il Novecento: il secolo del bambino?*, Bergamo, Edizioni Junior-Spaggiari, 2017, pp. 105-123.

² L.A. Kirschenbaum, *Small Comrades. Revolutionizing Childhood in Soviet Russia, 1917–1932*, New York, Routledge Falmer, 2001, pp. 50-62; Y. Valkanova and K.J. Brehony, *The Gifts and ‘Contributions’: Friedrich Froebel and Russian Education (1850–1929)*, in «History of Education», 35/2 (2006), pp. 189-207.

³ D. Caroli, *Day Nurseries and Childcare in Europe, 1800–1939*, London, Palgrave, 2017, pp. 267-293; Kirschenbaum, *Small Comrades. Revolutionizing Childhood in Soviet Russia, 1917–1932*, cit., pp. 50-62.

⁴ D. Caroli, *Socialisme et protection sociale: une tautologie? L’enfance abandonnée en URSS (1917–1931)*, in «Annales ESC», 54/6 (1999), pp. 1291-1316.

into orphanages and working communities⁵. Instead, the infant-toddler centres entered the network of services in favour of the mother and the child separately, as in Italy during the fascist period, and while expressing a pronatalist demographic policy in Italy, they had a health vocation, aimed at preventing disease and infant mortality. In any case, both institutions had to contribute to improving the conditions not only of childhood but also of women, who were forced to emancipated themselves from the traditional role of mother to become workers.

For this reason, the network of services for children experienced an important development following the post-revolutionary years both in urban and rural areas, although after WWII there was a reversal of trends compared to the past. While before the Revolution there was a greater diffusion of day nurseries in rural areas, in conjunction with the first five-year plan (1928–1932), its presence was recorded above all in the city, with particular intensity in the industrial areas that employed female labourers. The wellbeing and health of children were fundamental for the new regime, and avant-garde architects also committed themselves to the construction of buildings. An interesting building model, with the constructivist style, was designed in 1932 by famous architect Nikolaj A. Miliutin (1889–1942), who specialized in the construction of the socialist city. The building, featuring geometric structures with a large-windowed façade, was to become a model for the neighbourhood kindergartens and aimed to satisfy the health as well as aesthetic needs of the socialist city⁶.

From the end of the 1920s, however, with the advent of Stalinism, the political system became totalitarian in the sense that it imposed decisions through coercion, terror and violence. Among the later legislative interventions concerning childcare services was the decree of 27 June 1936 of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars: "On the prohibition of abortions and on the increase of material assistance to women during childbirth, the institution of state assistance to large families, the expansion of the network of maternity hospitals, day nurseries, the strengthening of criminal sanctions for non-payment of alimony and some changes to the divorce law"⁷.

This decree, which established a return to a more traditional conception of the family, expressed an authoritarian policy that implied an invasion of the private lives of women, although officially it wanted to support their emancipation. In the best day nurseries, built in 1936–1937, however, oth-

⁵ D. Caroli, *L'enfance abandonnée et délinquante dans la Russie soviétique (1917–1937)*, Préf. de Jutta Scherrer, Parigi, L'Harmattan, 2004.

⁶ N.A. Miliutin, *Iasli*, in «Sovetskaia Arhitektura», 5/5 (1932), pp. 81-104.

⁷ Caroli, *Day Nurseries and Childcare in Europe, 1800–1939*, cit., pp. 267-293.

er institutions such as maternity wards, clinics, infant hospitals and baby homes were set up. The situation of women did not improve either, since the labour legislation of this period involved differential treatment of workers and exclusion and/or dismissal in the absence of political conditions of various kinds⁸.

Comparing this to the mother and child protection policy of the 1930s, scholar David L. Hoffmann states:

although the Soviet effort to glorify motherhood resembled pronatalist propaganda in other countries, it was distinguished in one crucial way. The Soviet government encouraged and expected women to continue working while pregnant and after giving birth. To ensure that pregnant women could find or maintain jobs outside the home, the Politburo approved a decree in October 1936 that made it a criminal offence to refuse to hire or to lower the pay of women during pregnancy. The Soviet construction of gender emphasized women's roles as both workers and mothers and denied any contradiction between the two⁹.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore to analyse some of the main features of the system of services for children both from an organizational point of view and from its educational context, which will reveal a slow process of de-Stalinization. Totalitarian management, following the repression of paedology, which had been rejected as a "false science" in 1936, had imposed, above all, attention to the health aspect and ideological content, often devoid of educational activities that corresponded to the age of the children and the different stages of development.

The joint analysis of archival documents and some articles published in the journal *Preschool Education (Doshkol'noe vospitanie)* shows that the preschool education system that was created did not favour, at least in the following twenty years, a complete reconciliation between the work of the woman and the family, contrary to the image of the propaganda. The continuity of the pre-war reforms was only an appearance. The analysis of these preschool institutions reveals a more complex situation than a real and effective emancipation of women from their traditional role or the communist education of young children. In the period under consideration, it is possible to observe two main phases.

⁸ D. Caroli, *Histoire de la protection sociale en Union soviétique (1919–1939)*. Préf. de R. Sani, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2010.

⁹ D.L. Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses. Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914–1939*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2011, pp. 143–156 (p. 147).

In the first phase (roughly 1945–1955), day nurseries were exclusively the responsibility of the Ministry of Health (as it was called from 1944), which set about reopening these institutions. Their number increased significantly, although the numerous government interventions did not solve the problem of the lack of buildings and staff. The number of day nurseries was reduced, and a new trend began of combining them with kindergartens in institutions called day-nursery–kindergartens (*iasli-sady*). In the second phase, from the mid-1950s to the end of the 1970s, the management of day nurseries underwent another important change. In fact, one can observe the gradual union of day nurseries and kindergartens to create a preschool system, with a consequent decrease in the number of nurseries. In this sense, Decree No. 1287 of 28 July 1959 “On measures for the further development of educational institutions, the improvement of education and medical care of preschool children”, established the presence of *kindergarten (detskie sady)*, which in some case were already functioning in the education system managed by the Ministry of Education. Consequently, these services, initially under the Ministry of Health, saw greater intervention from the Ministry of Education, which was responsible for organizing new educational institutions and developing methods that guaranteed continued education until the child entered school at the age of seven years.

The second part presents the debate over the development of educational methods for children of different age groups, which also provided a theoretical basis for training staff who had become impoverished after the repression of paedology. It was similar to what happened to Italian day nurseries (*nidi*), which could not renew their educational methods following Montessori’s emigration in 1934. In the Soviet Union, at first, there was an interest in the conceptions of psychology that had been developed before the war, in particular the Pavlovian theory of conditioned reflexes that conceived education as a set of stimuli that effectively conditioned the behaviour of young children in different stages of development. Attention to the development of children’s language also emerged, which can be traced back to some principles of the Soviet “historical-cultural” school founded by the famous psychologist Lev S. Vygotsky (1896–1934). From the late 1960s and early 1970s, the progressive theories prohibited during Stalinism began to circulate and a plurality of methods and theories that were more attentive to the individual psychological development of the child began to emerge.

1. *Offshoots of communism: the institutional and legislative reform of the second post-war period*

The history of day nurseries in the war years and in the years immediately following it is characterized by a reduction in these childcare institutions, although back in 1942 there had already been an increase in infant institutions organized by industries in remote areas (Ural and Siberia, Dal'nevostok and Volga). These day nurseries, like those opened after 1944 in the liberated cities, were set in buildings that were unsuitable from a sanitary point of view, particularly in the destroyed cities of Stalingrad, Rostov-on-Don, Sevastopol and Novorossiysk. In addition, due to the decrease in births, places were left empty in the day nurseries and many of them had to be closed. In any case, 95 per cent of the day nurseries were reopened after the end of the war. In 1945, there were 4,689 day nurseries with 329,900 places available for the reception of children and, despite the elimination of 11,000 places in the day nurseries, as of 1 January 1948, the cities of the Russian Republic had 4,754 day nurseries with 314,200 places. In order to restore the number of places in the nurseries, 154 kindergartens, with 10,716 places, were planned to be built that year¹⁰.

Generally, the conditions in the day nurseries were not very good. Many things needed to organize activities suitable for children – beds, tables, mattresses, blankets, linens and dishes – were missing. Even essentials for childcare and medical care were lacking. There was no modern anthropometric equipment for measuring the height of children. In almost all the day nurseries, children up to one year old wore clothes from their homes, because the day nurseries were not able to supply them with uniforms¹¹.

The number of places available doesn't indicate a generalized reception for the whole day of children up to three years of age: 56 per cent of these places were reserved for children whose mothers were workers, so that they could work any shift. In the case that they couldn't take care of their child at home, mothers could place their children in the child's home, where children without a parent were usually placed¹². The remaining 44 per cent of places were occupied by the children of office workers in various sectors and of peasants. It was estimated that children up to one year of age took up about 30 per cent of the total places, while those over three years of age took up 23.3 per cent. The differences in age between children pushed the local

¹⁰ *Svodka o sostoianii obsluzhivaniia detei v iasliakh gorodov i promysh. centrov RSFSR (1947–1948)*, A-482, op. 47, delo 8624, ll. 1-2.

¹¹ *Ivi*, l. 4.

¹² *Ivi*, l. 6.

authorities (namely the Ministry of Health) to create adequate conditions for childcare¹³. The remainder consisted of two–three-year-old children.

A new edition of the textbook for day nurseries was printed very soon after WWII. The authors were specialists who had already published similar textbooks before the war. Also, the establishment of the World Health Organisation on 7 April 1948 may have been an important element in pushing to improve the health of the child afterwards the war years. Children were also entitled to wellbeing from the first months of life under Soviet social policy, which pursued the general wellbeing of its citizens. In 1948, Mariana Iu. Kistiakovskaia and Revekka Ia. Fridman published the *Textbook for the Education of Children in Infant-Toddler Centres and Children's Homes (Rukovodstvo po vospitaniiu detei v iasliakh i domakh rebenka)*¹⁴, which distinguished two educational services for children, nurseries and homes of the child: the first offered day care, the second weekly care. In the day nurseries, which are the institutions of interest here, children went from being in custody in their first months to the educational, playful, musical-motor activities of the day nurseries¹⁵. The textbook also took into consideration the importance of a good relationship with parents so that they too would contribute to the proper care of their child.

The following year, Frida Markovna Ilupina (1898–1987), a member of the local health administration of Ivanovo and later of the Institute of Health Organization and History of Medicine named after N.A. Semashko, published the long essay *A Kindergarten at the Service of the Worker*, which described the various aspects of the functioning of nurseries¹⁶. In the first part, Ilupina presented data relating to the availability of nursery places for the children of textile workers in the Ivanovo region (as of 1 January 1949 there were 11,450 places in the region), stating that 20 per cent of the entire health budget was spent on maintaining day nurseries. In the second part, Ilupina stated that the nursery had to develop socialization skills in the children. The staff had to be in constant contact with future mothers, as well as their families, during pregnancy, through a system of home visits (with the help of a nurse). In this sense, Ilupina also underlined:

Mothers who send their children to kindergarten must be engaged in their education, transferring the methods of the nursery and organizing the life of a

¹³ *Ivi*, ll. 13–14.

¹⁴ M.Iu. Kistiakovskaia, R.Ja. Fridman, *Rukovodstvo po vospitaniiu detei v iasliakh i domakh rebenka*, ed. by M.D. Kovriginov, N.M. Shchelovanova, N.M. Aksarinoi, Akademiia med. Nauk SSSR, Moskva, Izd. Akademii meditsinskikh Nauk SSSR, 1948.

¹⁵ *Ivi*, pp. 32–33.

¹⁶ F.M. Ilupina, *Detskie iasli na sluzhbe rabotnits*, Ivanovo, Oblgiz, 1949, p. 8.

child in the most appropriate way possible in the family environment. The child spends most of his time at home, in the family itself. Only with uniform guidelines in nursery and family education can the correct development of the child be ensured¹⁷.

The organizational and educational issues Ilupina analysed were important in the development of the day nurseries, although the gap between good intentions and reality remained clearly visible. The improvement of these institutions came in small steps, based on the interventions by the government and in particular the Ministry of Health. During 1950, the day nursery places in rural localities were only 72.6 per cent filled due to the lack of adequate general conditions. The buildings did not meet the sanitary standards. As for internal organization, children were not separated into groups, there was no isolation room, food was scarce because the supply was irregular, and there was no necessary linen¹⁸. As of 1 January 1951, there were 5,795 day nurseries with 151,140 children in agricultural localities, with an average of twenty-six children for each childcare institution. Among these institutions, 1,318, with 42,371 places, were located in district centres, while almost double, 2,439 (56,859 places) were in the nurseries of collective farms (*sovchozy*). This meant that the district centre institutions averaged thirty-two children, while those in collective companies averaged 23¹⁹. In the following years, there was a progressive growth in both urban and rural locations: by 1955, there were a total of 474,220 places, of which 322,740 were in cities and 151,480 were in the countryside²⁰.

During the mid-1950s, two new textbooks for nurseries and kindergartens were published: the second edition of *The Guide for the Education of Children in day nurseries and Homes (Rukovodstvo po vospitaniuu detei v iasliakh i domakh rebenka)* edited by Nina M. Aksarina, Maria D. Kovrigina and Nikolai M. Shchelovanov came out in 1957 (the first edition had been published in 1948), and the *Guide to Education in the Kindergarten (Rukovodstvo dlia vospitaniia deskogo sada)* edited by M.V. Zaluzhskaia was published in 1954²¹.

¹⁷ *Ivi*, p. 43.

¹⁸ *Kratkaia spravka o sostoianii raboty iaslei v sel'skoj mestnosti / raitsentrov i so-vchozov*, A-482, op. 49, delo 3989, ll. 28-31.

¹⁹ *Ivi*, l. 30.

²⁰ *Otchet o rabote otдела-iaslei i domov rebenka Minzdrava RSFSR za 1955 god*, A-482, op. 50, delo 1822, ll. 11-13.

²¹ Kistiakovskaia, Fridman, *Rukovodstvo po vospitaniuu detei v iasliakh i domakh rebenka*, cit.; N.M. Aksarina, M.D. Kovrigina, N.M. Shchelovanov (eds.), *Rukovodstvo po*

In fact, a great variety of events were unfolding, especially in rural areas. In remote rural locations such as the Volga, Siberia, Altai and Kazakhstan, the opening of day nurseries was also intended to combat infant mortality, especially during the summer. Funded by collective companies (*sovchozy*), day nurseries were created with more than twenty-five children, with two or three groups of children depending on age. In large collective farms, day nurseries operated year-round, while in small farms they only operated for six–seven months, when peasant women were engaged in agricultural work. On the other hand, in many regions – such as Irbit'sk, Kaliningrad, Kaluga, Kurgan, Saratov, Rostov, Tambov, Chita (of the Transbaikalia region), the region of Altai and the Republics of Dagestan and Tatarstan – plans to build childcare services were delayed²².

From the mid-1950s, the organization of Day Nurseries and kindergartens in general still suffered from a lack of means and personnel, whether in urban localities, near industrial areas or in rural areas. These problems led to the merger of day nurseries with kindergartens to create the so-called *kombinaty* (that is combinations of preschool institutions), which joined two institutions, combining the care and education aspects. This phenomenon, which became more and more widespread, caused organizational problems in the following years.

The expansion of the network of day nurseries and kindergartens was foreseen in the seven-year economic development plan of the USSR, adopted at the XXI Congress of the Communist Party (Moscow, 27 January to 5 February 1959), but the actual construction of new day nurseries was small. The large number of children cared for in the family meant that the family too had to be invested in with a special programme.

Three main aspects were taken up to improve care in nurseries and kindergartens.

The first concerned the role of the staff in day nurseries and kindergartens, who also had to become organizers of parent groups so that common principles were established in the institutions and at home, such as maintaining hygienic and sanitary conditions and ways of developing children's speech, thinking and play. The second concerned the children's counselling centres, which were to become important institutions and were to train peo-

vospitaniu detei v iasliakh i domakh rebenka, Moskva, Medgiz, 1957, 2nd ed. by M.V. Zaluzhskaia, *Rukovodstvo dlia vospitaniia deskogo sada*, Moskva, Uchpedgiz, 1954.

²² See the text of Provision «On the measures for the further development of educational institutions, the improvement of education and medical care of preschool children» (*O merakh po dal'neishemu razvitiu detskikh doshkol'nikh uchrezhdenii, uluchsheniui vospitaniia i meditsinskogo obsluzhivaniia detei doshkol'no vozrasta ot iuliiia 1959*), «www.consultant.ru» (retrieved on 15/10/2018).

ple in the “profession of parenting”. It was necessary to organize pedagogical points so that the parents could be instructed in the education of children, creating a unique educational system. The third aspect concerned the organization of training for personnel specialized in the care of children. Pedagogical institutes were required to adequately train staff. There was an improvement in the training of nurses-educators for kindergartens and children’s homes thanks to courses held locally by health institutions on very early childhood. Some municipal medical centres in Moscow and the departments of health organized training courses for nurse-educators, who had had a middle education. These courses, in addition to the medical and biological disciplines, included 296 hours of early childhood education²³.

From this perspective, provision no. 1287 of 28 July 1959 “On the measures for the further development of educational institutions, the improvement of education and medical care of preschool children” (*O merakh po dal’neishemu razvitiuu detskikh doshkol’nikh uchrezhdenii, uluchsheniuiu vospitaniia i meditsinskogo obsluzhivaniia detei doshkol’no vozrasta ot iul’ia 1959*), promulgated by the Presidency of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Council of Ministers of the Russian Republic at the beginning of the first seven-year plan (1959–1965), represented a very important legislative act. The text of the law reported that 2,390,000 children were in day nurseries (although in reality there were fewer), and provided for the construction of nursery schools and preschool institutions for children of two age groups (two months–three years and three–seven years) in order to better rationalize the local infrastructure to protect women’s work.

To carry out the seven-year planning of the construction of kindergartens, the provision delegated the executive committees of local authorities (Councils of People’s Deputies) to open them, while industrial enterprises, various institutions, state farms and collective farms were put in charge of financing. The implementation of this provision would have meant double management, as the local health authorities were responsible for the prevention and health part, while the local administration of the educational sector oversaw the pedagogical direction.

According to this normative act, the realization of the planned construction of day nurseries depended on the local (industrial and agricultural) enterprises that, due to the presence of different production sectors (textile, mechanical or food for example) or regional discrepancies, would have provided for their financing very differently. A study of the Kursk region demonstrates that since 1951 seasonal day nurseries for the workers of Soviet agricultural and collective farms had been organized, as planned

²³ *Ibidem*.

by the provision of 29 March 1951, when the distribution of subsidies to mothers (under the 1 January 1948 arrangement) began to be effective and the opening of nurseries and kindergartens also showed an increase over the previous five years²⁴. Compared to the fourteen with 1,043 places in 1959, in 1964 there were eighteen day nurseries and day-nursery-kindergartens with 1,815 places. Typically, only the companies that contributed to financing had these childcare institutions²⁵. Again, it can be assumed that female workers adopted alternative solutions to care for children up to three years of age while they were at work.

The tendency to combine day nurseries and kindergartens into institutions called *kombinaty* led to their organization being united to form mixed institutions (in the sense of the age of the children), which posed a series of problems that were dealt with several times during the 1960s. Among the most important were the division of children into groups, educational continuity and staff training. Of the cases of *kombinaty* that arose at the local level, that of the agricultural production sector of Moscow is particularly interesting. A report by the inspector of the Social Insurance Council evaluated the functioning of the *kombinat* organized in the agricultural area of this region. The inspector stated that alongside the kindergartens, the birth of these particular institutions was inevitable in agricultural localities, where there are small enterprises (of the type of artisanal production cooperatives), because, given the small number of children, the construction and maintenance of day nurseries and kindergartens as one institution was more advantageous²⁶.

From her description, it emerges that the merger of some institutions (day nurseries and kindergartens) was indeed convenient from a territorial point of view, while also posing a number of problems. In fact, the unified management of these institutions had many advantages in organizing age-appropriate educational activities, especially in the event that the person in charge of the *kombinat* was a pedagogue. Thus:

a single line would be established in the education of the child from nursery age to school. Educators would know the individual characteristics of all children. By having constant contact with medical staff, pedagogues would have

²⁴ N.N. Koroteeva, M.S. Golubitskii, *Politika Sovetskogo gosudarstva v sfere okhrany materinstva i detstva v 1950-60-e gody (Na materiale Kurskoi oblasti)*, in «Izvestiia Iugo-Zapadnogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta. Serii Istorii i Pravo», 1/18 (2016), pp. 93-98 (p. 96).

²⁵ *Ivi*, p. 94.

²⁶ L. Ostrovskaia, *Ob'edinennye doshkol'nye uchrezhdeniia v sel'skoi mestnosti*, in «Doshkol'noe vospitanie», 8 (1959), pp. 11-12.

more conscious and attentive attitudes towards the physical development of the child. For their part, the nurses (*meditsinskie sestry*) who work with children of nursery age would receive some pedagogical knowledge, would deal with the personality of each child [and] would acquire the working methods of the educator²⁷.

In addition to educational continuity, the unified management also had other advantages, such as the opportunity to gain experience in the education of children of different preschool ages and the facilitated transition from one institution to another, making the shift from one group to another “painless” for the child. It would also make contact with parents easier, as they would have an exchange with the same person for seven years. In collaboration with the staff and educators, the manager could learn about the family’s lifestyle, and more particularly the way the mother and father worked for the education of their children. In this sense, the best combined institutions in the Moscow region were those of the “Luch” farms in Moscow, Zagorsk, Mitrochinsk and Pechorsk.

However, the introduction of a single management had to address different needs related to the different ages of children and staff. As regards the first aspect, it was necessary to divide the children into groups; in most of the *kombinaty*, there were two or three groups of children, all of mixed ages. In the day nursery age group (15–20 children) there were children aged from a few months up to 3 years and the preschool age group was three–seven years. There was a need for a further subdivision of the preschool age group and probably also in the day nursery age group for two reasons: to guarantee a real education (unlike the custody of seasonal institutions) and to protect them from colds and infectious diseases both during activities within the institutions and during walks.

Food preparation was another complex element of these combined institutions, as they had to prepare three–four menus for children of different ages (from four months to one year through feeding bottles, ground baby food up to two years and preschool nutrition).

Staff remuneration was another problem because, the two different state institutions (the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education) had two different statutes, with different methods, wages and instructions. Generally, though, the most important staff problem was the lack of adequate training. The high turnover of managers and the poor training of nurses-educators meant nurseries could not always function well. Generally, the day nurseries had nurses without pedagogical training. In fact, they needed expert educators with pedagogical training, who would combine experience,

²⁷ *Ivi*, p. 11.

professional intuition and knowledge of child psychology. When the staff had medical training, they neglected the education of healthy children, instead taking care of those with health problems. These issues revealed the urgency of staff training for pedagogical activity in a unified preschool institution²⁸.

This problem revealed the need for staff specialization in daytime medical institutions for young children accepting various age groups. The inspector stressed that there was still no specialized pedagogy for this age group in preschool training institutes. It was necessary to convene conferences of various types of infantile institutions and entities for the definition of plans and tasks to be completed immediately²⁹.

The problems that occurred in the *kombinaty* of the Moscow region were representative of the general situation, particularly when it came to the continuity and training of care and education personnel. The continuity between the preschool institutions required more qualified staff in the different age groups and the reform of the elementary school in 1958 had raised the question of a better connection between schools and the surrounding society³⁰. The following year, the first of the seven-year plan (1959–1965), there was also an important recovery with an increase in the number of these institutions: compared to the 751,890 children who were welcomed into Russian kindergartens in 1940, in 1959, there were more than 1.5 million³¹.

As S.V. Iakovlev highlighted in an article published the following year, early childhood education was one of the main pedagogical tasks of this post-war planning phase. He believed that the deployment of the network of children's institutions resulting from the increase in funding had drawn greater scientific attention to the development of methods for the education of preschool children (see also the second part of this chapter). However, he noted that the joint management of the education of children of infant and preschool age had been affected both theoretically and practically by the management of the two ministries that had not agreed on this educational continuity, i.e. the passage of children from one institution to the next (kindergarten).

He observed that the two textbooks for the staff of nurseries and kindergartens published in previous years had not solved some problems of the

²⁸ *Ivi*, pp. 12-13.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ L. Coumel, "*Rapprocher l'école et la vie*"? *Une histoire des réformes et de l'enseignement en Russie soviétique (1918–1964)*, Toulouse, Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2014, pp. 65-74.

³¹ S.V. Iakovlev, *O edinoj sisteme vospitaniia detei predshkol'nogo i doshkol'nogo vozrasta*, in «Doshkol'noe vospitanie», 1 (1960), pp. 12-15.

passage of children from one institution to another. Among the aspects that prevented educational continuity, and which were real inconsistencies between the two textbooks published in the 1950s, were, for example, the poor skills of children in language development, the organization of routines and hygiene habits. As regards the first question, the language development of children in the nurseries was lower than that required in the kindergartens.

In the day nurseries, children did not develop enough conversation skills, most likely due to the insufficiency of stimulating and socialization activities between the educator and the children or among the children themselves. For this reason, the level demanded by kindergarten educators for children transferred from day nurseries to kindergartens seemed too high. As for the daily routine, and in particular the hours of sleep, 12–13 hours of sleep per day were expected in the day nurseries for children up to three years old, while for the group of children in the kindergarten, it was 14 hours, forcing three-year-olds to sleep two more hours in the kindergarten. Finally, the children who arrived from the day nurseries into the groups of small children in the kindergarten already knew how to use cutlery for eating, so it was not necessary to pay particular attention to this³².

In practice, therefore, the staff of the day nurseries did not always prepare children for moving to kindergarten. Despite the inconsistencies in the textbooks, the move towards the formation of a single education system for young and preschool-aged children had to continue and grow, thanks to the merger of day nurseries and kindergartens into a single institution, as well as in the light of the 1958 reform “On strengthening the link between school and life”. The development of a unique method of educational continuity based on theoretical results in specialized pedagogy for these age groups was important for the growth of the child until the age of seven.

This was explained by the poor qualifications of the staff. Iakovlev stressed that middle and higher pedagogical institutes prepared educators for kindergartens but should have introduced early age pedagogy (*pedagogika predoshkol'nogo vozrasta*) in order to also prepare nursery staff. Furthermore, he suggested concentrating the pedagogical and methodical direction of the unified preschool institutions in the ministries of education of the various republics. Local health institutions should have taken care of the health aspect of the nurseries, compliance with the hygiene rules in the institutions for children and the increasing number of medical staff and the improving of their skills.

During the 1960s, the government and the Health Commissioner faced the problems of structural deficiencies in day nurseries and kindergartens. The opening of preschool institutions privileged nursery–kindergartens to

³² *Ivi*, p. 14.

the detriment of actual nurseries, especially due to the lack of health personnel. The general tendency was to support day-nursery-kindergartens and local administrations tried to work in this direction, although it was not possible to observe specific dynamics at the administrative level³³.

The implementation of the 1959 law encountered local disparities among the various regions from the point of view of the organization of the nurseries and their merger with the kindergartens. Some local health sections did not have the means or did not distribute them adequately to the day nurseries. In others, the lack of collaboration between the two local administrations (health and education) had not merged the day nurseries and kindergartens into a single educational system, and in general the nurseries had not been put under the purview of the local education authorities.

During the all-Russian conference of 28 February 1963, in which the Deputy Minister of Health participated, along with the heads of companies, the communist Party, social organizations, agricultural economics and planning, it emerged that in some cities such as Sverdlovsk the nurseries carried out some educational activities. The day nurseries had not yet been merged with the kindergartens nor had they been transferred to the local education administration³⁴. In this region, between 1961 and 1963, the health conditions of children up to one year of age had worsened. In the day nurseries of the city, the average weight of the children had dropped from 11.6 kg to 8.8 kg and finally to 5.6 kg. In the countryside, however, conditions were better, with only a slight deterioration from 21.7 kg to 19.5 kg and to 18 kg. In the day-nursery-kindergartens, children up to one year of age held 2 per cent of places, but many day nurseries had none at all, and they waited up to a year to a year and a half before being assisted³⁵.

These statistics, which were not isolated, reveal not only a difference in the health conditions of the children, but also the fact that there was no correspondence between the end of the working woman's maternity leave and the child's entry into the institutions. Although improvement was noted in some regions, these two problems persisted for another ten years or so. During 1963, for example, in the Vologda region, some improvements were noted in the day nurseries – the day nurseries were equipped for daily activities and toys were provided, although the educational ones were not regular and little attention was paid to drawing. Younger children were neglected

³³ See for example Y. Gorlitzki, O. Khlevniuk, *Substate Dictatorship. Networks, Loyalty, and Institutional Change in the Soviet Union*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2020.

³⁴ *Tezisy vystupleniia* R. Malyshevoi, A-482, op. 50, delo 8518, ll. 24-25.

³⁵ *Iz sparvki o vypolnenii post. N. 1287 ot 28.7.59 2 «O merakh po dal'neishemu razvitiu doshkol' uchrezhdenii po Sverdlovskoi oblasti»*, A-482, op. 50, delo 9643, l. 122.

in favour of older ones. The educational activity was well organized when there was an educator who specialized in music alongside the educating nurses. There were shortcomings from the point of view of the relationship with peers and the development of incorrect and disconnected language³⁶.

In 1964, the magazine *Izvestiia* published an article titled *The Little Child Asks to Speak (Slovo prosit malysh)*, in which it was emphasized that it was difficult for parents to find a place in nursery groups that had been merged with kindergartens. The availability of places in day nurseries per 100 workers compared to 1940 had dropped from 5.2 to 4.8, compared to the 8.6 required by law for urban locations. The reason was that the local administrations had neglected this sector: few buildings had been built for day nurseries and not enough construction had been planned. In general, the children's institutions did not respect hygiene rules: children were gathered in groups of 25–30 (compared to the regulation of 15–20), the buildings were not suitable, there were no verandas for exposure to open air, isolation rooms, gymnastics rooms or service rooms³⁷. There was also a lack of medical staff in the children's institutions, and nurses were not trained to work in these institutions. For lack of places, children up to one year of age waited and were left at home with whoever happened to be available, perhaps schoolchildren, who did not look after them suitably. Nonetheless, the local department of education did not welcome children aged over 12 months, giving them priority over the older children aged one year and half or two³⁸.

The problem of the lack of places in the day nurseries led to various solutions, including that of a closer connection between day nurseries and kindergartens, as already described. This connection, which made it possible to free up places in the nurseries, facilitated the transfer of children from two years of age from the nurseries to the kindergartens, where there were also groups of children under the age of three years.

In 1964, a conference was organized in Moscow on the transfer of groups of children from the age of two from nurseries to educational institutions. During this conference, the local authority acknowledged that in Moscow the local staff had proposed accepting children from two years of age into the kindergartens and transforming the day-nursery–kindergartens into kindergartens. This solution had not solved the problem of creating places in the day nurseries. In fact, the crèches did not accept children up to one year

³⁶ *Iz otchetov o vypolnenii prikaza N. 270/254 ot 5 avgusta 1963g., Vologodskaia oblast'*, A-482, op. 50, delo 9645, ll. 220, 224.

³⁷ *Spravka po stat'e Kius «Slovo prosit malysh», napechatannoi v gazete «Izvestiia» ot 12.05.1964g.*, A-482, op. 50, delo 9643, ll. 38-39.

³⁸ *Ivi*, l. 40.

of age because they could not guarantee health care for this age group. To this end, the local health section was initiating staff training³⁹.

However, in the city of Moscow, for example, the lack of places in the day nurseries was also because of the habit of accepting and assisting children separately in the two institutions to complete the places available: children up to two years were taken into the day nurseries and those from two to seven years old were accepted into the kindergartens, while the latter were supposed to accept children of both age groups. This separation caused a problem for women who worked and had more than two children. At first, in 1966, the Minister of Health intervened to call for a joint completion or filling of places with a view to the educational continuity of the child. This was echoed by the local health authority who stated that the separate completion had caused a difficult situation for access and admission of children into the nurseries⁴⁰, since one ended up giving precedence to the older ones. In this context a sort of vicious cycle arose whereby the lack of places in the day nurseries could not be solved concretely; there were no places or staff for younger children.

As early as 1964, in the Russian Republic, the government adopted a series of measures aimed at increasing the number of available places, improving the staff and consolidating the union of preschool institutions – measures that produced an increase of 10,700 places in day nurseries, 139,100 in kindergartens and 128,000 in merged institutions. In the following years, health authorities transferred 129,000 places to unified institutions run by the local education administration. To improve educational activity, there was a plan to increase the number of educators, establish a sort of patronage of nurseries, better organize the distribution of places for both age groups, move children aged more than three years from day nurseries to the kindergartens, and concentrate the management of the institutes in a single institution⁴¹.

In the Russian Republic, after this transfer of places, at the beginning of 1966, 15,737 day-nursery–kindergartens were organized in which 1,591,600 children up to seven years old were being educated. Although the construction of the day nurseries had been interrupted by a state law, there had been an expansion of the places in the existing day nurseries thanks to the adaptation of the premises of existing institutions. This led to crowding,

³⁹ *Protokol soveshchaniia po voprosu o peredache organam nar. obrazovaniia grupp v iasliakh dlia detei s 2-kh let*, in A-482, op. 50, delo 9643, ll. 44-47.

⁴⁰ *Sovet Ministrov RSFSR na poruchenie N. 6381-396 ot 29.IV.1966g.*, A-482, op. 50, delo 2999, l. 22.

⁴¹ *Zapiska nachal'nogo otдела Minzdrava RSFSR (15 apreliia 1966)*, A-482, op. 50, delo 2999, ll. 25-26.

more intense work for the staff and an increase in infectious diseases in 1960–1965⁴².

Until the end of 1966, new day nurseries were not built either in the capital or other cities of the Russian Republic. At the end of 1966, according to an arrangement made in January 1966, four nurseries were built in the capital for children up to two years of age. A survey conducted at the end of the year revealed that there were no places for young children:

Parents who have children aged from one to three months up to two years do not place them in the day nurseries; instead, they prefer to wait their turn to place the child in the nursery–kindergarten, where he will be educated until school⁴³.

Furthermore, in the newly organized day nurseries, the specialists (paediatricians and educators appointed by the central agencies) found:

organizing the care of twenty children up to one year of age was difficult. Children get tired, cry, and are not cared for quickly and adequately, which has a negative effect on their neuro-physical health. The specialists also note that the completion of day nurseries by two-year-olds and their subsequent transfer to the kindergarten leads to an increase in diseases, since in the period of adaptation to the new institution, children often and for a long time get sick⁴⁴.

Based on these findings, the College of the Ministry of Health and some specialists from the Institute of Preschool Education retraced their steps from the past and decided:

instead of accomplishing the completion of infant institutions, it was preferable to maintain the unique preschool institutions that fully guarantee a fair system of education for children up to school. Considering that a quarter of the crèches are organized by the Ministry [of Health], the minister considers it possible to resolve their future business by making them into infantile *kombinaty*⁴⁵.

⁴² *Gosplan RRSFR (8 ianvaria 1966g.), O razvittii seti det. doshk. uchrezhdenii (po postanovleniiu SM. SSSR N. 558). Zapiska Ministra zdr. RSFSR, V. Trofimova, A-482, op. 54, delo 3, ll. 77-78.*

⁴³ *Porucheniiia SM SSSR i RSFSR o lech. prof. pomoshchi detiam i materi i dok-nty po ikh vypolneniiu, ianvar'-dekabr' 1966 goda, A-482, op. 54, delo 3, l. 47.*

⁴⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁵ *Ivi, l. 49.*

This problem of the lack of places in the day nurseries and the completion of infantile institutions (usually nursery schools) was also widespread in the other regions. The poor living conditions of the children in the day nurseries had also caused below-average physical development (in the city of Krasnoiarsk). In such cases, it was probably the children of single mothers who had no choice: in order to work they had to accept the local service, even if it was poor.

To meet the needs of agricultural work for women, the provision of 10 October 1965 “On improving the activity of kolkhozes’ preschool institutions” was issued, but its implementation was not so rapid and did not correspond to the planning figures, as in the case of the agricultural region of Kursk, which had to find different solutions to deal with the lack of buildings. With regard to the plan drawn up in 1969 to open 1,144 seasonal childcare institutions for 32,000 children in the region, the farms allocated the funds to build forty-nine childcare institutions. Another 859 institutions were built to accommodate 20,290 children; of these, 43 per cent were seasonal and housed in purpose-built buildings (compared to 40.3 per cent in 1968), 44.3 per cent were in adapted buildings, and 12.7 per cent were in private homes (compared to 15 per cent in 1968). Fifteen buildings had been built, and thirty-four were under construction⁴⁶.

In the following years, the steady increase in the number of children accepted reflected the general improvement in the living conditions of the population in the 1970s. In the summer of 1965, there were 3.9 million children up to six years of age in seasonal institutions. At the end of 1965, there were 62,000 institutions for children (crèches, day-nursery–kindergartens and kindergartens), which educated 7.7 million children under the age of 7⁴⁷.

In a note dated 8 August 1966, the Minister of Health Vladimir V. Trofimov (1915–1992) stated that since 1967, the central institution in charge of planning (*Gosplan*) should have exclusively planned the development of the network of unified institutions, striving to achieve an increase of 80–85 per cent in the number of places. The minister confirmed that the institutions for children (nurseries and kindergartens) should be filled in a disjoint way (according to the age of the children), stating that it was necessary to plan the increase in the number of children of nursery and kindergarten age

⁴⁶ *Spravki Kurskogo oblzdravotdela o chode vypolneniia prikaza Minzdrava, Min-sel'koza, Minprosveta RSFSR «Ob uluchshenii raboty det. doshk. ucherzhenii kolchozov ot 10.11. 1965» (10 noiabria 1969g.)*, Fond A-482, op. 54, delo 3568, ll. 39-42.

⁴⁷ *V Sovet Ministrov SSSR. O seti i rabote detskikh doshkol'nykh uchrezhdenii (nachal'nik CSU SSSR)*, V. Starovskii (6 iuliia 1996g.), A-482, op. 54, delo 3.

separately; with 36–38 per cent of places for children up to three years and 62–64 per cent for those from three to seven years⁴⁸.

In 1977, the Soviet Union boasted nearly 73,000 childcare institutions, including nearly 9 million children up to seven years of age. The process of merging nurseries and kindergartens had almost certainly achieved better results in the access and education of the children – the staff was more trained and competent and, undoubtedly in the context of the improvement of economic conditions, the quality of the day-nursery–kindergartens improved and became more age appropriate.

2. *New educational methods for the day nurseries*

In the history of nursery schools after the Second World War, the case of the Soviet Union is unique as one can observe the transformation of day nurseries into educational institutions as early as the 1920s thanks to the elaboration of educational methods that corresponded with the developmental stages of children under the age of three years. In fact, after the October Revolution, day nurseries distinguished themselves from contemporary European nurseries because they offered educational activities specially developed for different age groups. This was made possible thanks to the studies of the psycho-pedagogy of infant development, known as paedology (*pedologiia*), which developed considerably because it had to offer the theoretical basis for the reform of the Soviet school and education system.

Already in the mid-1920s, educational, play and motor activities that were very stimulating for the growth and psycho-physical wellbeing of children in the various stages of growth were organized in the nurseries. Furthermore, for the good health and growth of the child, the staff had to cultivate better relationships with parents, so that the family could guarantee appropriate home conditions⁴⁹.

There were numerous experiments that tried to adopt very innovative psycho-pedagogical methods to educate children. For this reason, Soviet propaganda claimed, the Soviet Union was the homeland of happy childhoods. The repression of paedology in 1936 was the culmination of a totalitarian policy that, by the second half of the 1920s, had proved hostile to psychoanalysis and involved the removal of paedologists from educational

⁴⁸ *Gosplan RRSFR (8 ianvaria 1966g.), O razvitii seti det. doshk. uchrezhdenii (po posta. SM. SSSR N. 558). Zapiska Ministra zdr. RSFSR, V. Trofimova, A-482, op. 54, delo 3, l. 79.*

⁴⁹ Caroli, *Day Nurseries and Childcare in Europe, 1800–1939*, cit., pp. 274–280.

institutions and a ban on the circulation of more than one hundred published works on paedology.

Among the books prohibited by the 1936 provision were, for example, Lev S. Vygotsky, *Pedagogical Psychology. Short Course (Pedagogicheskaiia psichologiia. Kratkii kurs, 1926)* and the *Fundamentals of Paedology (Osnovy pedologii, 1935)*, fundamental works in the “historical-cultural” school of psychology. According to Vygotsky’s conception,

brain maturation, interaction with the environment, the evolution of brain functions and development of psychological functions were closely interconnected. It was therefore logical that attention should be placed on language, given the central role it plays in the complex of its psychic functions⁵⁰.

According to Vygotsky, the higher psychic functions manifest themselves first in the context of social activities, then through the mediation of language and finally as thought understood as an individual activity⁵¹.

The list also included *Early Childhood Paedology (Pedologiia rannego detstva, 1932)* by Arnold Gesell (1880–1961)⁵², which dealt with the observation of the stages of maturation of the young child and would help to develop new educational strategies taking into account the stages of the child’s development. The reasons for the repression were various. Among these, there was the interest in the individuality of the child in its stages of development, which according to Marxist psychology had to be interpreted in a neurophysiological key, not through psychoanalysis (and its method of study of psychopathologies), as, for example, the unconscious or the Oedipus complex were unacceptable to Marxist psychology⁵³.

The interruption of these studies and experiments caused the lack of adequate pedagogy for day nurseries and the progress of children from the day nursery to the kindergarten. Inevitably, this also had repercussions on

⁵⁰ A. Angelini, *La psicoanalisi in Russia. Dai precursori agli anni trenta*. Pref. di Cesare Musatti, Napoli, Liguori, 1988, p. 117.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² D. Caroli, *Koncepciia vospitaniia besprizornykh detei pedologa Stepana Stepanovicha Molozhavogo i repressiia pedologii (1924-1937), so spiskom zapreshchennykh knig po pedologii (1936)/ The conception of education of the abandoned children by Stepan Stepanovich Molozhavi and the repression of the pedagogy (1924-1937), with a list of the forbidden books about pedagogy (1936)*, in «Istoriko-pedagogicheskii zhurnal», IX (2019), pp. 90-95.

⁵³ A. Etkind, *Eros of the Impossible. The History of the Psychoanalysis in Russia*, transl. by N. and M. Rubins, Boulder Colorado, WestviewPress/HarperCollins, 1997, pp. 259-263.

the training of personnel who did not have specializations. However, it can be assumed that the legacy of Vygotsky's pedagogical concepts and "historical-cultural" school was still present in some scientific circles. In the first year of the war, 1940, a collection of essays entitled *Methodology of Language Development of Children in Nurseries*⁵⁴ was published under the direction of Nina M. Aksarina and Nikolai M. Schelovanov, specialists at the Ministry of Health. Also significant is the collection by V. Fediaevskaia, *To Small Children (Malym detiam, 1944)*, published in Kazan to develop children's language skills: from age 2, they could understand the meaning with the help of poems accompanied by the movement of the hand palms and from the 3, they could also repeat the words. In fact, a repertoire of genres suitable for this age was also published, which, using repetition and rhyme, facilitated the memorization and articulation of language even among non-Russian children⁵⁵.

Immediately after the war, in 1947, Revekka Iakovlevna Fridman published the treatise *The Development of Behaviour and Education of Children from 9–10 Months to 1 Year and 6 Months*, under the direction of Aksarina and Schelovanov. Fridman was the editor of the first nursery textbook published under the aegis of the Institute of Paediatrics of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the Ministry of Health (in particular, the Methodology Centre of Management of Healthcare and Prophylaxis Institutions of the Ministry of Health). The treatise started from the motor skills of children aged nine–ten months, which they made interesting as an "object of education". In addition, the understanding of language and the contact that was established with adults helped children orient themselves in the surrounding environment⁵⁶. This meant that the environment had to facilitate their growth with age-appropriate activities and games.

Between the last phase of Stalinism and the first years of de-Stalinization, in fear of new waves of dismissals and purges related to paedology, many psychologists and doctors took the starting point for the study of infantile behaviour as a psychological conception that referred to Pavlovian reflexology. According to the psychophysiological conception of the reflex-

⁵⁴ E.K. Kaverina, V.A. Petrova, G.L. Rozengart, *Metodika razvitiia rechi detei v iasliakh*, pod red. N.M. Aksarinoi, N.M. Schelovanova, Moskva, Narkomzdrav SSSR Gosizdat Meditsinskoi Literatury Medgiz, 1940.

⁵⁵ V.M. Fediaevskaia (ed.), *Malym detiam. Sbornik pribautok, shutok, stichov, pesenok, skazok, i rasskazov dlia detei iasel'nogo vozrasta*, Tatgosizdat, Sektor Iunosheskoj i detskoi literatury, Kazan, 1944.

⁵⁶ R.Ia. Fridman, *Razvitie povedeniia i vospitanie detei v vozraste ot 9 / 10 mesiatsev do 1 goda 6 mesiatsev*, pod red. N.M. Shchelovanova, N.M. Aksarinoi, Moskva, Izdanie Instituta Sanitarnogo Prosveshcheniia, 1947, p. 3.

es at an early age, educational mechanisms constituted positive stimuli for the behaviour of children, without considering the role of consciousness as an «active organization of psychic functions», as Vygotsky did⁵⁷.

It is interesting to note that Shchelovanov and Aksarina published in 1949 the second edition of *The Education of Children in the Day Nurseries*, in which they demonstrated their knowledge of the phenomenon of hospitalism (*gospitalizm*) against which, among other things, the staff of the nurseries had been warned as far back as in the 1920s⁵⁸. Most likely, René Spitz's essay on the "hospitalization syndrome"⁵⁹, deepened reflections already known among doctors and which consisted of a syndrome that sparked "anaclitic depression", caused by the lack of maternal care, considered as a consequence of early reception of children in infant institutions. The importance attributed by Spitz to mother-child interaction for the harmonious development of the child's personality certainly made him disliked by Soviet psychologists, who had banned psychoanalysis in the mid-twenties. Regarding this concept, however, Shchelovanov and Aksarina limited themselves to writing that «hospitalism (*gospitalizm*) is the lack of conditions, necessary for the normal life and development of children, which leads to the lack of development of the organism and neuropsychic activity and also to a poor state of health»⁶⁰.

This meant that, according to the two Soviet specialists, it was necessary to guarantee the best developmental conditions to prevent childhood illnesses and growth delays. Although this phenomenon could also manifest itself in day nurseries, it was more frequent in children's homes, where the children remained longer without maternal care. It was therefore necessary to guarantee their good health by creating conditions suitable for their development during the first three months of life. Education had to ensure that a good educational relationship was created between the nurses and the nannies (*sestry i niani*), and the children. According to the standards of a good education, by two years of age, children were expected to be able to communicate, share and exchange toys with others without damaging them⁶¹. Parents with young children also had to be trained. In 1949, Efim A. Arkin (1873–1948), a doctor, psychologist and one of the most important

⁵⁷ Angelini, *La psicoanalisi in Russia. Dai precursori agli anni trenta*, cit., p. 118.

⁵⁸ Caroli, *Day nurseries and childcare in Europe, 1800-1939*, cit., pp. 274-275.

⁵⁹ R.A. Spitz, *Hospitalism—An Inquiry Into the Genesis of Psychiatric Conditions in Early Childhood*, in «Psychoanalytic Study of the Child», 1 (1945), pp. 53-74.

⁶⁰ N.M. Aksarina, N.M. Shchelovanov (Pod red.), *Vospitanie detei v iasliakh. Uchebnik dlia shkol'iasel'nikh sester i posobie dlia rabotnikov iaslei*, Moskva-Leningrad, Medgiz, Narkomzdrav, 1939; 1949, 2nd ed., pp. 11-12.

⁶¹ *Ivi*, p. 17.

specialists in preschool education, published *To Parents on Education. The Education of the Child in the Family up to the First Year of Life*⁶². Many parents were unprepared to cope with childish behaviour such as tantrums and stubbornness, and tended to punish or neglect children during the early years that were critical to the child's growth.

Also in 1949, Nikolaj L. Figurin and M.P. Denisova published *The Stages of Development of Children from Birth to One Year*, in which they studied the development of the child from a reflexological point of view (especially in the system of food reflexes), in order to propose new methods of childcare. The volume was edited by Aksarina in collaboration with Schelovanov, who had been active in the field since the 1920s. Interestingly, the work by Figurin and Denisova was based on Vladimir Bekhterev's school of psychoneurology that, in post-revolutionary Russia, had formed an important basis for the development of paedology:

A general overview of the development of behaviour in the first six months of a child's life from a reflexological point of view was first of all given by V. M. Bekhterev, who showed a gradual complication of a child's combined reflex activity from birth to six months. At the 3rd Congress of Paediatricians [1925], Nikolaj Matveevich Schelovanov (1892–1984) provided a general description of the development of behaviour in the first year of life, first outlining those stages of development, which we have begun to describe in more detail⁶³.

The reference that many made to the conception of reflexes to develop new educational methods «beckoned toward behaviourism and the reduction of mental to neural processes»⁶⁴.

From this perspective, a 1952 article by Z.V. Manujlenko stated that

The assimilation of Ivan P. Pavlov on the first and second signal systems, on their joint activity and a correct understanding of the characteristics of their interaction in a child is important for infant education, for the development of their language and their thinking⁶⁵.

⁶² E.A. Arkin, *Roditeliam o vospitanii. Vospitanie rebenka v sem'e ot goda do zrelosti*, Moskva-Leningrad, Akademiia Pedagogicheskikh Nauk RSFSR, 1948.

⁶³ N.L. Figurin, M.P. Denisova, *Etapy razvitiia povedeniia detei v vozraste ot rozhdeniia do odnogo goda*, Moskva, Medgiz, 1949.

⁶⁴ D. Joravsky, *Russian Psychology. A Critical History*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989, p. 448-463 (p. 450).

⁶⁵ Z.V. Manujlenko, *Uchenie I.P. Pavlova o dvukh signal'nykh sistemakh i ego znachenie dlia vospitaniia detei doshkol'nogo vozrasta*, in «Doshkol'noe vospitanie», 2/25 (1952), pp. 1-15.

This «second signal system according to Pavlov mediated language and thought», leading to the theory of a metapsychology that mediated between psychology, understood as the study of higher nervous activity, and neurophysiology, with the aim of uniting them in the future. Thanks to this dualism, concepts such as «sensation, thought and feelings» were excluded⁶⁶.

To give another example of this interest in Pavlovian reflexology, an article published in 1959 in the journal “Family and School” (*Semia i shkola*) confirmed this trend. Its author, paediatrician V. Dobreitzer, advised parents to repeat the daily nursery life at home, in the family, so that children over four–five months old could get used to the rules of daily life in the nursery, allowing children over four–five months to get used to the rules of routine better, probably to simplify the mechanism of unconditional reflexes⁶⁷.

Since the second half of the 1950s, the debate regarding this conception referred to a problem that had arisen in the daily practice of day nurseries, that of educational continuity between nurseries and kindergartens following the merger of the institutions. This trend, which highlighted the need to develop new research on early childhood pedagogy, also involved new experiments in this field.

Iakovlev, one of the first to criticize this shortcoming, complained that early childhood pedagogy had developed separately from general pedagogy. In his article, he did not mention the repression of paedology, although he recalled that a conference on preschool education in 1925 had also established that early childhood pedagogy had to be part of a single educational system. The realization of this link had to be achieved thanks to similar methods, working conditions and knowledge of those responsible for the children passing from one institution to another⁶⁸. Iakovlev stated that a great deal of research had been conducted following that conference and that, since 1930 at the Institute of Paediatrics of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the Soviet Union (AMN SSSR), directed by Shchelovanov, there was a section devoted to developing a pedagogy for young children. Since the mid-1950s, the collective of scholars of the chair of paediatrics of the Central Institute for the specialization of doctors under the direction of Aksarina and other collaborators in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and Kharkov were conducting research in this field⁶⁹.

Educational continuity required knowledge of the child’s psychological development, as well as theories of family pedagogy. To this end, the

⁶⁶ Joravsky, *Russian Psychology. A Critical History*, cit., p. 451.

⁶⁷ V. Dobreicer, *V iasliakh i v sem’e*, in «*Semia i shkola*», 12 (1959), pp. 7-8.

⁶⁸ Iakovlev, *O edinoin sisteme vospitaniia detei predshkol’nogo i doshkol’nogo vozrasta*, cit., pp. 12-15.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*.

provision of 8 March 1960 of the Council of Ministers and the order of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Russia of 23 February 1960 approved the foundation of the Research Institute on Preschool Education (*Institut doshkol'nogo vospitaniia*). Initially, the institute dealt with preschool education for the Russian Republic, but after 1969 its activity covered all the Soviet republics. The Ministry of Education also contributed to the creation of specialized pedagogical institutes in preschool institutions and faculties aimed at training better qualified scholars in scientific research centres. Valentina Gennad'evna Nechaeva, head of the institute, among the leading specialists in early childhood pedagogy, conducted numerous studies on the education of young children and on their behaviour, which was increasingly seen from the perspective of continuity going into the next phase of the day-nursery–kindergarten.

The relative detente at the political level was a great stimulus. In a very significant article from 1963, Nechaeva stated that the educational conditions in the unified institutions were favourable for the development of three-year-olds⁷⁰. Nechaeva conducted numerous studies observing the children in these unified institutions. These institutions welcomed children aged two–three years, who were the youngest group of preschool age. The formation of this group of the youngest allowed their development to be observed from a broader perspective, considering everything they learnt in the first two years of life. Nechaeva argued that the presence of mixed-age groups was positive. In fact, among the characteristic features of their age were curiosity, the need for socialization in the form of emotional stimulation and under the influence of the need for knowledge, and the desire to ask and know. However, adults engaged in the care of children paid little attention to direct dialogue with them or to activities that stimulated children's mental representations and the development of their knowledge skills.

These gaps in educational work that occurred in the day nurseries are also noted in the work of the unified institutions with three-year-olds. To this end, under the direction of Nechaeva, some collaborators of the Institute of Preschool Education started an investigation of forty-seven of these institutions to study the conditions of socialization between educators and children, and among children of different ages. This research revealed a number of educational deficiencies in younger children:

in most cases, language is poorly developed in children, games are primitive, and the stock of images is poor. To explain the causes of the developmental delay of three-year-olds, we found that there was extremely limited personal

⁷⁰ V.G. Nechaeva, *Obshchenie detei raznogo vozrasta v ob'edinennom doshkol'nom uchrezhdenii*, in «Sovetskaia pedagogika», 9 (1963), pp. 56–62.

contact between the educator and the children, and also artificial isolation by the older children. Very frequently, children of this age are placed with two-year-olds, which to some extent contributes to the mental, moral and language development of three-year-olds, but nevertheless cannot fully meet their increasing mental and moral needs. The screening showed that three-year-old children who are raised in mixed groups of young children lag behind in development significantly. This abruptly affects their language and the character of their playful activity⁷¹.

These problems are explained by the fact that the nurse-educators, busy with the care of the children in these groups, neglected the older children. Adults generally did not address a particular child, but more often the whole group. Therefore, monotonous orders (“sit down at the table”, “be composed and keep quiet, or “eat politely”) did not develop skills in young children. There were differences in communication. In fact, in groups of small children, communication between peers was often limited to gestures and expressive sounds, but not words.

The inclusion of children under the age of three in mixed-age groups, on the other hand, has presented numerous advantages from an educational point of view. The presence of the older ones, of preschool age, offered the opportunity to turn to the older children who have more developed skills, as they constantly see the games the older children play, note examples of exact pronunciation, hear the difference and freedom of spoken language, and observe habits of behaviour and service⁷².

Analysing the different conditions of socialization and their differing influence on children, Nechaeva held that this influence could give positive educational results only with an educational intervention oriented by the educator. For this, it was important to explain the extent to which the pedagogical conditions of socialization could exert a positive influence and to follow the influence on the moral and language development of children of three years of age, since it is precisely at this age that language is formed and they set up feelings and moral relationships.

To study the stages of development of these skills in relation to the age of children, two other researchers, T.A. Markova and L.A. Pen’evskaia, collaborated in the research to investigate other aspects in depth. Markova, studied the influence of socialization on the moral development of children, while Pen’evskaia investigated the development of language for a year and a half in the kindergarten in the Kiev district of Moscow, with the collabo-

⁷¹ *Ibidem.*

⁷² *Ibidem.*

ration of educators R.F. Ivanova, I.K. Markova, R.G. Episheva, E.M. Klimanova, L.B. Komiagina and the head of the kindergarten M.P. Remizova.

The study examined two groups, as well as a third control group. The first group, made up of twenty-three children aged two–three, was allowed (if there was no quarantine) to socialize with older children during walks, games and distractions, in the organization of some activities and in their little square. The second group had twenty-seven children aged two–six years, with nine children from each age group. The control group consisted of three-year-old children following the usual daily routine.

The socialization of children of different preschool ages had already been addressed in the history of pedagogy and the positive impact of interacting with children of different ages on their education and moral development was observed. For this reason, the older children were included in the second group, in which the children addressed each other affectionately, and learnt to care for younger children. Great significance was also given to qualities such as organization, discipline and strong habits of polite behaviour. This would have made it possible to observe the socialization of children in the process of collective games in daily life and the reciprocal influences reflected in the content of their activity.

These observations and studies brought out the peculiar traits of children's socialization determined by their age-related experiences. The experiment revealed that in the presence of regular visits from older children to the three-year-olds, stable bonds form. These bonds are the basis on which shared work activity and games takes place, in which the younger ones learn things from simple manipulation to more complex play, as well as more active conversation. When an older child took on the task of looking after the younger ones, socialization acquired a pedagogical meaning because they felt responsible: they tried to make it more interesting for the younger ones to participate in games, and wanted to teach and explain things to them. Thanks to this experiment, interactions between the two age groups and their characteristics could be better understood. In interacting with two–three-year-old children, children aged four–five take on the task of helping them, trying to play roles such as the mother, in a series of playful activities. Sometimes, however, they also show their superiority. However, six–seven-year-old children teach the younger ones without showing superiority. The younger ones get along better with them, and the games are longer than those with four-year-olds⁷³.

Pen'kovskaia and Markova highlighted different results. Pen'kovskaia showed that the socialization of small children with older children facilitated the development of language and this led to organizing moments of

⁷³ *Ivi*, p. 58.

shared play, such as a walk. Markova pointed out that the presence of a pedagogical direction in the socialization of adults and children helped to improve the level of moral development of the child.

Frequent contact brings positive activity and emotions. The experiment was based on contact two–three times a week, during walks and afternoon activities⁷⁴. The experiment therefore demonstrated the positive effects of planned meetings, two–three times a week for about 30 minutes to an hour, under the direction of an educator. In fact, socialization stimulates imitation, as the example of adults was adopted by the three-year-olds and mutual friendships were established, influencing the children’s characters positively⁷⁵.

These researches, which have yet to be reconstructed from the point of view of their results, have made a great contribution to the study of early childhood development and behaviour and the function of the interaction between groups of children.

In 1970, the Director of the Institute of Preschool Education Alexander Viktorovich Zaporozhets (1905–1981), who was close to the “historical-cultural” school⁷⁶, published new studies on preschool education in which he stated that the preschool phase was important for the formation of human personality, abilities and qualities, on which the children’s future school success depended⁷⁷. Under his direction, new trends were developed in the field of developmental psychology studies in preschool education. In 1976, he made a specific reference to the role of psychoanalysis in child developmental psychology.

In 1978 Zaporozhets, in collaboration with Pjotr Iakovlevich Galperin and Sofia Nikolaeva Karpova, published a study collection on educational and creative activities, characterized by stimulating activities in nurseries and kindergartens, revealing a great improvement in the quality of childhood educational services. The educational activities were specific to the age group and distinguished for example, the group of children under the age of two from the others. For each age group, there were different activities that were generally very stimulating for the child’s growth. Drawing

⁷⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 59-60.

⁷⁵ *Ivi*, p. 62.

⁷⁶ Angelini, *La psicoanalisi in Russia. Dai precursori agli anni trenta*, cit., pp. 116-117.

⁷⁷ A.V. Zaporozhets, *Aktual’nyye pedagogicheskie problemy doshkol’nogo vospitaniia. Materialy k dokladu na Vsesoiuznykh pedagogicheskikh chteniakh 1970 goda*, Leningrad-Moskva, Znanie, 1970, p. 6.

was among the most developed activities⁷⁸. Child developmental psychology was formulated in a new way:

The object of child psychology is the study of the conditions and causes driving the ontogenesis of the human psyche, the development of individual mental processes (cognitive, volitional, emotional), as well as the different childhood activities (games, work, learning), the formation of personality qualities, the psychological characteristics of the age and individual children⁷⁹.

This definition promised the dissemination of a plurality of educational methods. Knowledge of child psychology offered the basis for developing new, more age-appropriate educational methods that respect their individuality. The Soviet crèches, considered from the educational perspective of preschool education, were characterized by progressive changes as a function of a pedagogical project that concerned all the years of life that preceded school. The development of the psychological sciences, thanks to the legacy of the “historical-cultural” school, accompanied this important transformation of nurseries into pedagogical institutions.

Conclusions

The reconstruction of the history of childcare services after the Second World War and in particular during the 1945–1978 period, which corresponds to the so-called “thirty glorious years” (1945–1975), reveals some important phases of change both at the institutional level and in educational methods. After the war ended, the Soviet government immediately tried to restore and improve preschool institutions, revealing some major trends. At the institutional level, alongside the problems of disorganization, structural deficiencies, and lack of buildings and adequate sanitary conditions, there was also the lack of places in day nurseries, and generally for children up to 1 years old.

In relation to these problems, on the one hand, the trend emerged of combining day nurseries and kindergartens, with a more accentuated role of the Ministry of Education. This meant that, compared to the research that claimed a large number of preschool institutions guaranteed a place

⁷⁸ P.Ia. Gal’perin, A.V. Zaporozhets, S.N. Karpova, *Aktual’nye problemy vozrastnoi psikhologii. Materialy k kursu leksii*, Moskva, Izdatel’stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1978.

⁷⁹ *Ivi*, p. 5.

for children so as to encourage women to join the workforce⁸⁰, the reality was different. This confirms what the historian Donald Filtzer says about the fact that World War II created only a modest increase in the number of Soviet women working:

During the Khrushchev period, the problem [...] was how to overcome the economic incentives that many women had to remain within the domestic economy, where their labour was more advantageous to the family budget than work in industry or services. Moreover, once recruited, there was no question of women being made redundant, although they could be displaced from certain mechanized jobs if management felt compelled to offer this work to men⁸¹.

This conciliatory function – the conciliation between women working and their maternal role – of the day nurseries was mainly realized later, as demonstrated by the research of Anatoli Rakhkochkine:

In the 1950s and 1960s, the expansion of all-day education in the Soviet Union was motivated above all by both economic and ideological motives. As was the case in other communist countries, the Soviet state faced a labor shortage that compelled it to bring more married women, in particular mothers, into the workforce. To do this, the government needed to expand all-day childcare and education. Because of a dramatically declining birth rate, in the 1970s and 1980s the extension of all-day education became an important part of a broader pronatalist family policy that sought to increase the fertility rate⁸².

⁸⁰ «For example, in 1954 the proportion of women workers in machine-building was 44 percent and in electrical engineering it was 47 per cent. Women made up 64 per cent of machine operators, 70 per cent of turret-lathe operators, and 42 percent of locomotive and motor drivers», see A. Schuster, *Women's Role in the Soviet Union. Ideology and reality*, in «The Russian Review», 30/3 (1971), p. 263.

⁸¹ D. Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and De-Stalinization: The Consolidation of the Modern System of Soviet Production Relations 1953–1964*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 205.

⁸² A. Rakhkochkine, *Beyond Ideology: The Time Policy of Russian School Education since 1945*, in K. Hagemann, K.H. Jaraus, C. Allemann-Ghionda (eds.), *Children, Families, and States. Time Policies of Childcare, Preschool, and Primary Education in Europe*, New York Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2011, pp. 323-343 (see pp. 323-324).

However, in order to describe these further changes, it will also be necessary to analyse the archival documents of the Ministry of Education to verify how this conciliatory function was implemented in the 1980s⁸³.

From the point of view of the renewal of contents and pedagogical concepts, one can note the emergence of two main trends in the psychology of young children, which reveal a different continuity with past research. The first is reflexology, which interpreted psychic phenomena and education in a more mechanical way. The second trend in research is related to language development inspired by the “historical-cultural” school of Lev S. Vygotsky, who appreciated Jean Piaget’s conception of the development of the child⁸⁴. The continuity with these studies was visible in the attention to the socialization of the child and the development of language that was the subject of research from the early 1960s to the revival of psycho-pedagogical studies related to preschool-age children. Vygotsky’s works, the best known of which is *Thought and Language* (1934), left a profound trace, and it has been re-published since the mid-1980s⁸⁵.

Since the 1960s, thanks to the studies conducted by the specialists at the Institute of Preschool Education, the renewal of educational activities within the nurseries began, with experiments that studied the behaviour of children organized into groups of various ages. However, some concepts, such as psychoanalysis, that could have contributed to the renewal of educational methods and activities within the nursery schools have only recently been accepted. The rehabilitation of paedology in the 1980s⁸⁶, at a time when daycare methods were also being renewed, and its transformation into a pedagogical institution at an international level, fuelled great interest in previously discredited theories. The work of the American psychoanalyst John Bowlby (1907–1990), who studied attachment, that is, the bond with the mother in the first months of life, when the child is first placed in day nurseries, was only translated into Russian in 2003⁸⁷. The circulation of some

⁸³ E. Iarskaia-Smirnova, P. Romanov, *Multiplicity and Discontinuity in the Soviet Welfare State*, in S. Hering (ed.), *Social Care Under Socialism (1945–1989). Ambitions, Ambiguities, and Mismanagement*, Opladen & Farmington Hills, MI, Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2009, pp. 213-225.

⁸⁴ D. Joravsky, *Russian Psychology. A Critical History*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989, p. 455.

⁸⁵ *Ivi*, pp. 453-454.

⁸⁶ A. Byford, *Science of the Child in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020, pp. 255-261.

⁸⁷ J. Bowlby, *Attachment*, London, The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, 1969 (trans. into Russian *Priviazannost’*. Per. N.G. Grigor’evna and V.G. Burmenskaia, red. Vst. Stat’ia V.G. Burmenskaia, Moskva, Gardariki, 2003).

theories underlying an educational renewal of psychoanalytic inspiration in Russia is even more recent. Even the work of the psychoanalyst René Spitz (1887–1974), published in France in 1958 and immediately translated into Italian, was only translated into Russian in 2006⁸⁸.

Although the history of the development of nurseries has typical characteristics of the Soviet system, it can be observed that the transformation of nurseries into educational institutions and the problem of educational continuity, discussed since the 1960s, reveals a process of transformation of day nurseries into pedagogical institutions that welcome children under the age of 7.

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⁸⁸ R.S. Spitz, *The First Year of Life: A Psychoanalytic Study of Normal and Deviant Development of Object Relations*, New York, International Universities Press, 1965 (transl. into English *Pervyj god zizhni rebenka. Psichooanaliticheskoe issledovanie normal'nogo i otkloniaiushego razvitiia ob'ektnykh otnošenii*. Per. s angl. L.B. Summ. Pod red. A.M. Bokovikova, Moskva, Akademicheskii proekt, 2006).

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and Behaviour, «International Journal for the Historiography of Education» (9/1, 2019); *Women should remain very womanly: Female university students and work in Spain in 1968*, «History of Education & Children's Literature» (XIV/2, 2019). In collaboration with Andrés Payà Rico and Tatiane Ermel de Freitas, she published *Twenty-five years of History of Education Doctoral Dissertations in Spain (1990-2015)*, in *Academic and Institutional Issues*, «Historie de l'Éducation» (154, 2020).

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Finito di stampare per Clueb
da Editografica – Rastignano (Bo)
nel mese di dicembre 2022

