

Transforming Early Childhood in England

Towards a Democratic Education

Edited by Claire Cameron and Peter Moss

UCLPRESS

The background of the cover is a textured teal color. Scattered across the surface are several autumn leaves in various shades of orange, red, and brown. The leaves are of different shapes and sizes, some showing signs of decay or being partially eaten. The overall aesthetic is natural and organic.

Transforming Early Childhood in England

Transforming Early Childhood in England

Towards a Democratic Education

Edited by Claire Cameron and Peter Moss

 **UCL**PRESS

First published in 2020 by
UCL Press
University College London
Gower Street
London WC1E 6BT

Available to download free: www.uclpress.co.uk

Collection © Editors, 2020
Text © Contributors, 2020
Images © Contributors and copyright holders named in captions, 2020

The authors have asserted their rights under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the authors of this work.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from The British Library.

This book is published under a Creative Commons 4.0 International licence (CC BY 4.0). This licence allows you to share, copy, distribute and transmit the work; to adapt the work and to make commercial use of the work providing attribution is made to the authors (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work). Attribution should include the following information:

Cameron, C. and Moss, P. (eds.). 2020. *Transforming Early Childhood in England: Towards a Democratic Education*. London: UCL Press. <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781787357167>

Further details about Creative Commons licence are available at
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

Any third-party material in this book is published under the book's Creative Commons licence unless indicated otherwise in the credit line to the material. If you would like to reuse any third-party material not covered by the book's Creative Commons licence, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

ISBN: 978-1-78735-718-1 (Hbk.)
ISBN: 978-1-78735-717-4 (Pbk.)
ISBN: 978-1-78735-716-7 (PDF)
ISBN: 978-1-78735-719-8 (epub)
ISBN: 978-1-78735-720-4 (mobi)
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781787357167>

Contents

<i>About the contributors</i>	vii
<i>List of figures and tables</i>	xiii
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xiv
<i>Preface: The pandemic as a moment of decision</i>	xv
1 Introduction: The state we're in <i>Peter Moss and Claire Cameron</i>	1
2 Families living in hard times <i>Abigail Knight, Rebecca O'Connell and Julia Brannen</i>	19
3 Child health and homelessness <i>Diana Margot Rosenthal and Monica Lakhanpaul</i>	34
4 Towards a unified and unifying ECEC system from birth to 6 years <i>Peter Moss</i>	54
5 Towards a 'rich' ECEC workforce <i>Claire Cameron</i>	67
6 Towards a public ECEC system <i>Eva Lloyd</i>	83
7 Towards a child-centred curriculum <i>Georgina Trevor, Amanda Ince and Lynn Ang</i>	100
8 Towards valuing children's signs of learning <i>Kate Cowan and Rosie Flewitt</i>	119
9 Towards a listening ECEC system <i>Alison Clark</i>	134

10	Towards a democratic ECEC system <i>Diana Sousa</i>	151
11	Towards a pluralist and participatory accountability <i>Guy Roberts-Holmes</i>	170
12	Towards empowerment for food and eating in ECEC <i>Francesca Vaghi</i>	188
13	Towards an ECEC system in synergy with parenting leave <i>Margaret O'Brien and Peter Moss</i>	203
14	Conclusion: From 'the state we're in' to 'what do we want for our children?' <i>Peter Moss and Claire Cameron</i>	220
	<i>Index</i>	239

About the contributors

Peter Moss is Emeritus Professor of Early Childhood Provision at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education. He co-founded the international network on leave policies and for 10 years co-edited the book series 'Contesting Early Childhood'. Much of his work has been cross-national and his interests include early childhood education, democracy in education and the relationship between employment, care and gender. His most recent books are *Alternative Narratives in Early Childhood* (Routledge, 2019) and *Parental Leave and Beyond* (edited with Alison Koslowski and Ann-Zofie Duvander, Policy Press, 2019).

Claire Cameron is Professor of Social Pedagogy at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education. She has a long-standing record of research on children's services, including studies of the early childhood care and education workforce. Publications include *Men in the Nursery: Gender and caring work* (with Charlie Owen and Peter Moss, Paul Chapman Publishing, 1999), *Care Work in Europe: Current understandings and future directions* (with Peter Moss, Routledge, 2007), *International Perspectives in the Early Years* (edited with Linda Miller, SAGE, 2014) and *The SAGE Handbook of Early Childhood Policy* (edited with Linda Miller, Carmen Dalli and Nancy Barbour, SAGE, 2018).

Lynn Ang is Professor of Early Childhood in the Department of Learning and Leadership, UCL Institute of Education. She is an expert in early learning, early childhood and primary education, and international evidence-based research, particularly in developing countries. She has led and co-led many major research grants including a five-year study to assess the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the World Bank Early Learning Partnership (ELP) (2018–22) and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)-funded project 'Manor Park Talks' (2018–20) to embed an evidence-based intervention programme of professional development to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged 2-year-olds accessing free early education entitlement in Manor Park, Newham, UK.

Julia Brannen is Professor of Sociology of the Family at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education and a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. She has an international and national reputation for research on the family lives of parents, children and young people and work–family issues in Britain and Europe, intergenerational relationships, and food in families and a particular interest in methodology including mixed methods, biographical approaches and comparative research. Her latest book is *Social Research Matters* (Bristol University Press, 2019).

Alison Clark is Honorary Senior Research Fellow at UCL Institute of Education, University College London and Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of South-Eastern Norway. She is an academic and an artist who developed the Mosaic approach – a visual, participatory research framework first published in 2001 and since adopted and adapted widely by practitioners and researchers. Her research interests include young children’s rights, early childhood environments and slow pedagogies. Recent research includes ‘Children’s Photographic Voices’, a collaboration between the University of South-Eastern Norway, local kindergartens and Preus, the National Museum of Photography in Horten, Norway.

Kate Cowan is an education researcher interested in young children’s multimodal communication. Based at UCL Institute of Education, University College London, her research interests include play, creativity, literacies and digital technologies. Her work also involves developing multimodal methodologies and considers the ethics of video-based research with young children. Recent research projects include ‘Playing the Archive’ (funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council) and ‘Valuing Young Children’s Signs of Learning’ (funded by the Froebel Trust). Prior to joining UCL Institute of Education, Kate worked as a nursery teacher and she remains committed to connecting research and practice.

Rosie Flewitt is Professor of Early Childhood Communication in the Education and Social Research Institute (ESRI), Manchester Metropolitan University, and former Co-Director of the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Pedagogy at UCL Institute of Education, University College London. She is an expert in young children’s multimodal meaning-making and in ethnographic research with young children, their parents and professional educators. Recent publications include the award-winning book *Storytelling in Early Childhood: Enriching language, literacy and classroom culture* (edited with Teresa Cremin, Ben Mardell and Joan Swann,

Routledge, 2017); the *Routledge Handbook of Digital Literacies in Early Childhood* (edited with Ola Erstad, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and Íris Susana Pires Pereira, 2019); and *Research Methods for Early Childhood Education* (with Lynn Ang, Bloomsbury, 2020), in the 'National Centre for Research Methods' book series.

Amanda Ince is Programme Leader for MA Primary Education and MA Early Years Education at UCL Institute of Education, University College London and Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She has a background as an early years teacher and works with early years professionals on developing practice through action research and practitioner enquiry in settings across London and the south-east of England. Her research focuses on professional learning, leadership in early years and the use of cognitive dissonance as an educative resource. Her latest book is *A Practical Guide to Action Research and Teacher Enquiry: Making a difference in the early years* (with Eleanor Kitto, Routledge, 2019).

Abigail Knight is Honorary Senior Research Associate at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education and also an independent social worker and researcher. She has over 20 years' experience of carrying out qualitative research with children, young people and families experiencing challenging circumstances, such as poverty, inequality and disability; her most recent role was leading the UK qualitative phase of a European Research Council-funded study 'Families and Food in Hard Times'. She has published in journals such as *Child and Family Social Work* and the *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*.

Monica Lakhanpaul is Professor of Integrated Community Child Health at UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, University College London. She is UCL Pro-Vice-Provost South Asia and now leads a multidisciplinary translational research group. Her expertise is in cross-sector, multidisciplinary, structured and collaborative approaches from clinical trials to intervention design to participatory methods including public engagement, citizen science and working with the arts and humanities to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and transform services for patients. Her research programmes currently run in the UK and India.

Eva Lloyd is Professor of Early Childhood in the Cass School of Education and Communities at the University of East London (UEL); she previously worked at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL Institute of

Education. She directs UEL's International Centre for the Study of the Mixed Economy of Childcare (ICMEC), which she co-founded in 2007 with Professor Helen Penn. Her research and publications focus on early childhood education and care (ECEC) policies and systems, particularly the impact of marketised ECEC systems on children growing up with disadvantage. She has worked extensively with (inter)national policymakers and co-authored a range of policy studies and evaluations. In 2013 she received an OBE for services to education.

Margaret O'Brien is Professor of Child and Family Policy and Director of the Thomas Coram Research Unit at UCL Institute of Education, University College London. She researches and has published widely on fathers and family life with a focus on work–family policies, parenting and family support, including the Economic and Social Research Council Modern Fatherhood project (<http://www.modernfatherhood.org/>) and *Comparative Perspectives on Work-Life Balance and Gender Equality: Fathers on leave alone* (Springer, 2016). Since 2015 she has been a coordinator of the International Network on Leave Policies and Research (<https://www.leavenetwork.org/>). She is currently working on an EU-funded project 'Monitoring the Eligibility for Parental Leave in EU-28 Countries'.

Rebecca O'Connell is Reader in the Sociology of Food and Families at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education. From 2014 to 2019 she was Principal Investigator of the European Research Council-funded study 'Families and Food in Hard Times'. She is co-author, with Julia Brannen, of *Food, Families and Work* (Bloomsbury, 2016) and, with Abigail Knight and Julia Brannen, of *Living Hand to Mouth: Children and food in low-income families* (Child Poverty Action Group, 2019). She is also co-editor, with Ulla Gustafsson, Alison Draper and Andrea Tonner, of *What is Food? Researching a topic with many meanings* (Routledge, 2019).

Guy Roberts-Holmes is Associate Professor at UCL Institute of Education, University College London. His research has focused on neoliberal early years accountabilities and their pedagogical effects. His recent publications include *The Introduction of the Reception Baseline Assessment* (with Alice Bradbury, NUT and ATL, 2015), which won the BERA (British Educational Research Association) Impact Award (2016); *The Datafication of Early Years and Primary Education* (with Alice Bradbury, Routledge, 2017), which examined the development and impact of digital accountabilities; and *Grouping in the Early Years and Key Stage 1: A*

necessary evil (with Alice Bradbury, National Education Union, 2018), which demonstrated the rise and impacts of ability labelling in the early years and primary school.

Diana Margot Rosenthal, originally from New York, is a doctoral candidate at UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, University College London. She studied international health policy and management at the New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service and demography at the London School of Hygiene and Medicine. She has coordinated many international studies in the health care and nonprofit sectors. Her research interests include child health, inclusion health, health behaviour and promotion, mixed-method approaches, citizen science, co-production, shared decision making, digital innovation and public engagement. Her PhD explores the barriers and facilitators to optimal health and access to health services for homeless children under 5 years old and the challenges faced by their mothers.

Diana Sousa is Senior Teaching Fellow at UCL Institute of Education, University College London, and Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She previously worked as an educator in a variety of early childhood settings and was Senior Lecturer in Education on the BA Education Studies and Early Childhood course at the University of Winchester, where she was actively involved in developing the early childhood pathway within the Education Studies programme. Her research focuses on education systems, policies and practices around the globe, the examination of dominant discourses within education in general and the place of democracy in early childhood education in particular.

Georgina Trevor works as a member of the management team in a north London private nursery. She pursued a career in education following an MA in Early Years from UCL Institute of Education, University College London in 2017. Prior to this she took a BA (Hons) in Fine Art from Glasgow School of Art and worked during the intervening decade in conservation framing and art logistics. She volunteers in her spare time as a Trustee for Home-Start Camden & Islington, a grass-roots charity that supports and empowers parents of young children struggling to cope with the pressures of day-to-day life.

Francesca Vaghi is an early career researcher interested in the anthropology of policy, medical anthropology, and childhood studies. She completed her PhD in Social Anthropology and Sociology at SOAS

University of London in 2019. For her doctoral research, Francesca conducted ethnographic fieldwork in an inner London nursery over a 12-month period. Aside from investigating how children create self and peer identities through food and eating practices, her work explored how children's food policy fits into family intervention policies more broadly and how notions of 'good food' and 'good parenting' (particularly 'mothering') are interlinked. She is currently a tutor at the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh.

List of figures and tables

Figures

3.1	Probability of homelessness by age 30 (Source: based on an example by Bramley and Fitzpatrick 2018)	49
10.1	The activities map shows how children identify and choose activities from a range of possibilities within the classroom environment. As a 'self-regulatory' tool, this is where children plan, register and monitor their individual choices (Source: Folque 2008)	163
10.2	The group diary shows how children reflect on their group interactions throughout the week. In this tool, children express their likes, dislikes, what they did and what they want to do (Source: Folque 2008)	164
10.3	The council meeting is a whole group dialogic activity, which includes all children and adults in the classroom. It is a participatory tool of evaluation, planning and negotiation of the curriculum, the rules of co-living and individual and collaborative projects (Source: Folque 2008)	165
10.4	Interaction with families and communities (Source: Folque 2008)	166

Tables

3.1	Studies of homeless children	41
3.2	Interventions and programmes for homeless children	45
5.1	Numbers of childcare workers (England): 2012–14 and 2018	69
5.2	Highest level of qualification: Childcare workers (England) (2018) and all working-age population (2017)	70
8.1	Practitioner reflections on observing and documenting learning	123

List of abbreviations

CPAG	Child Poverty Action Group
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DfE	Department for Education (England)
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ECE	early childhood education
ECEC	early childhood education and care
ELGs	early learning goals
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYP	Early Years Professional
EYT	Early Years Teacher
MEM	Movimento da Escola Moderna (Portuguese Modern School Movement)
NCTL	National College for Teaching and Leadership
NHS	National Health Service
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
ONS	Office for National Statistics
RBA	reception baseline assessment
RCPCH	Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
SEND	special educational needs and disability
SPPA	Social Pedagogy Professional Association
UNCRC	United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly

Preface: The pandemic as a moment of decision

Claire Cameron and Peter Moss

As we entered into the final stages of producing this book, the world changed. Covid-19 swept across continents and countries, leaving disruption, suffering and death in its wake, compelling governments to take unprecedented steps to try to contain and suppress this plague, placing populations under lockdown and mobilising resources that would have seemed unimaginable a few weeks earlier. Covid-19 has also mercilessly exposed the flaws of the societies it has ravaged: the inequalities and injustices, as the poor, the precarious and other vulnerable groups have suffered the most; the neglect of public services and the undermining of welfare states that have weakened the capacity to resist; and the erosion of values necessary for effective collective action – equality, democracy, solidarity. Michael O’Higgins (2020), the President of Ireland, has pointedly referred to ‘the impact decades of unfettered neoliberalism have had on whole sectors of society and economy, left without protection as to basic necessities of life, security and the ability to participate’.

Dark times indeed, yet with faint glimmers of light showing through. Some leaders have been calm, reassuring and visionary, recognising that people’s well-being is fundamentally necessary for economic revival. There have been countless acts of individual and community kindness and care. After years of derision and disregard, we have been reminded of the value of the social state, of collective action and of the caring professions. Carbon emissions and other pollution have abated, swathes of cities have been dedicated to walking and cycling and the frenetic pace of modern-day life has temporarily slowed. There has also been cause and space to reflect on that life – the ‘pause’ button has been momentarily pressed, but do we want to resume as before once the crisis has passed or seek a different and better life? Arundhati Roy (2020, n.p.), the Indian

author and political activist, captures this sense that the pandemic is a moment for rethinking what we want, when she writes that:

Nothing could be worse than a return to normality. Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.

In short, after the storm we can try to get back to 'normal'. Or we can decide that, in the words of a graffiti in Hong Kong, 'there can be no return to normal because normal was the problem in the first place'. Instead of more of the same we can opt for transformation, ready to imagine another and better world and to strive to achieve that vision.

This book is about the transformation option for one aspect of society – early childhood education and care. Given the moment of decision we find ourselves unexpectedly in, we think it is even more timely and relevant than when a group of us first began discussing the book in 2019. For this is a book that charts the deep flaws and pervasive dysfunctions in the past 'normal' and offers an imagined alternative, a transformation towards an integrated and universal system of public services for young children and their families, a revalued early childhood workforce that is trusted and supported, a pedagogy of listening that values all learning, accountability that is participatory and meaningful – and with the whole system of early childhood education inscribed with an ethic of care and the values of equality, democracy and solidarity. An imagined alternative, but one given credence by real examples of what is possible, drawn from home and abroad.

Rebecca Solnit (2020) has suggested that 'it is too soon to know what will emerge from this emergency, but not too soon to start looking for chances to help decide it'. It is in this spirit that we offer this book: as a contribution to help decide on the future of early childhood education and care, as part of a much wider discussion about what we want for our children and for our world.

References

- O'Higgins, M. (2020) 'Out of the tragedy of coronavirus may come hope of a more just society'. Online. www.socialeurope.eu/out-of-the-tragedy-of-coronavirus-may-come-hope-of-a-more-just-society (accessed 20 May 2020).
- Roy, A. (2020) 'The pandemic is a portal'. Online. www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fefcd274e920ca (accessed 20 May 2020).
- Solnit, R. (2020) "'The impossible has already happened": What coronavirus can teach us about hope'. Online. www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/07/what-coronavirus-can-teach-us-about-hope-rebecca-solnit (accessed 20 May 2020).

1

Introduction: The state we're in

Peter Moss and Claire Cameron

Today's [early childhood education and care] services are not simply inadequate in quantity; they are also fragmented and unresponsive to changing needs. One of the few benefits of the present bleak economic climate is that it may offer a chance to review existing policies, experiment with new options and work out better policies not only for pre-school services but for families with young children. (Tizard et al. 1976, 226)

A system flawed and dysfunctional

The words with which we start this chapter appeared in *All Our Children: Pre-school services in a changing society*, published more than 40 years ago, written by members of the UCL Institute of Education, University College London (IOE). The sad thing is that they could as easily have been written today about England's system of early childhood education and care (ECEC), a widely used term referring to the range of services providing part-time or full-time education and care for children below compulsory school age, as well as (in some cases) support for their families. This is a book about the continuing need for review, experiment and discussion, written to address the continuing need for transformative change of a system that remains fundamentally flawed and dysfunctional, still fragmented and unresponsive. It is a book about decades of policy neglect followed by intense policy activism, but with no pause for thought, no time given to democratic deliberation about options, in order to guide the transition from one state to the other. It is, therefore, a book about how England missed opportunities to reflect and change direction. But it is a book,

also, about possibilities and hope, about how it might be possible, even at this late stage, to alter course and create an inclusive, coherent and democratic system of early childhood services.

The flaws in the existing system are many, and will be explored in greater detail in the chapters that follow. Despite responsibility for and regulation of ECEC now being unified in one central government department, the Department for Education (DfE), and one central government agency, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), the ECEC system in England remains deeply split, divided between 'childcare' and 'education' when it comes to access, funding, workforce and provision; split, too, due to the absence in policy of an integrative and holistic concept, which understands care and education as fundamentally inseparable. The system is fragmented between many types of provision – day nurseries, childminders, preschools (formerly playgroups), nursery and reception classes in primary schools, nursery schools, children's centres and afterschool clubs – each offering different services to different groups of families and children, producing a disparate sector that both lacks coherence and is socially divisive. The system is further riven by services, both private and public, operating in a market where they must compete for the custom of parent-consumers. To add to this picture of confusion and disconnection, there is an absence of policy synergy with other relevant areas, such as parental leave and health.

The workforce is clearly a vital ingredient in the success or otherwise of any ECEC system. But in England it is not only divided, between a minority of teachers and a large and growing majority of childcare workers, but the latter are professionally and socially devalued, many surviving on poverty wages while, at the same time, many parents complain of the high fees they have to pay. Overall, the workforce remains as gendered as ever, almost entirely reliant on women workers, a major contributor to the gender gap in pay and prospects.

Compared with most other countries, primary education starts early, prematurely curtailing the period of early childhood education. Compulsory school age is 5, but children enter primary school reception classes at age 4. This leaves a weak ECEC sector, short in length and often requiring children to be moved from one type of service to another, and subservient to the compulsory school sector and its agenda, its role increasingly defined in terms of 'readying' or 'preparing' children for primary school. As such, it is vulnerable to 'schoolification', a process that, as the first *Starting Strong* report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) warned, threatens to bring inappropriate practice into early childhood education, narrowing the

education on offer as a focus on literacy and numeracy leads ‘to neglect of other important areas of early learning and development’ (OECD 2001, 42). Such constriction of purpose has been compounded by an increasing policy obsession with predefining and measuring outcomes. This has led to what Loris Malaguzzi, one of the twentieth-century’s greatest educational thinkers and practitioners and a leading figure in the development of early childhood education in the Italian city of Reggio Emilia, described as ‘prophetic pedagogy’ – that ‘knows everything beforehand, knows everything that will happen, does not have one uncertainty’; and to ‘Anglo-Saxon testology’ – with ‘its rush to categorise ... which is nothing but a ridiculous simplification of knowledge, and a robbing of meaning from individual histories’ (Cagliari et al. 2016, 421, 378).

Last but not least, the system suffers from a serious democratic deficit. Democracy is missing from ECEC as a stated fundamental value, as a daily practice, and as a means of governing the system and individual services. But there is also an absence of democratic accountability to local communities, as the role of elected local authorities in the system has been hollowed out, leaving the field to a powerful central government (overseeing policy and regulation, and directly responsible for a growing number of academy and free schools) and a myriad of individual services, many run as businesses for profit.

Before going further, and delving into the reasons for this litany of failings, we want to make it clear that our criticisms in this chapter and those that follow are not aimed at those who work in the early childhood sector but, rather, at the system that determines the conditions under which they operate. Early childhood workers have a demanding and important job, and they show commitment to doing it well, despite most being atrociously paid and poorly valued by society. There are examples, too, of individual services that are working with innovation and creativity. But these efforts are made despite of, not because of, the system; a system that fails the workforce as much as it does children and their families.

How did we get here?

Policy neglect: Post-war years

The blame for the flawed and dysfunctional state that ECEC is in today can be laid at the door of a combination of policy neglect and ill-considered policy activism. For five decades after the Second World

War, successive governments showed little interest in ECEC; other areas of education were prioritised, while there was a pervasive indifference, even hostility, to doing anything to support maternal employment (even statutory maternity leave was not introduced until the mid-1970s, the United Kingdom (UK) lagging behind the rest of Europe). Some (mostly left-wing-controlled) local authorities developed part-time nursery education for 3- and 4-year-olds in school-based nursery classes, more and more 4-year-olds were taken into reception classes, and playgroups emerged as a private response by parents and communities to the lack of public provision. Childminders were the main formal provision for children whose parents were employed, though for many years they were sorely neglected. For many years, too, the main day nursery presence was provided by local authorities, as a limited and welfare-orientated service for children deemed to be 'in need' or whose single parent was studying or at work. Private day nurseries were few and far between. Overall, therefore, public support for ECEC, such as it was, depended on local authorities, or at least those who gave it some priority, while workforce development figured not at all.

This began to change towards the end of the 1980s, as the number of women with young children re-entering the labour market increased, a shift matched by a rapid growth of private day nurseries, forming a de facto 'day care' market, alongside the existing childminding sector. But apart from some improvements to regulation, following the 1989 Children Act, no winds of change ruffled the still surface of early childhood policy until towards the end of the Conservative hegemony, under Prime Minister John Major, when tentative support was introduced for the 'childcare' costs of low-income families (the so-called 'childcare disregard' for families on benefits) and a commitment was made to introduce universal part-time nursery education. A pilot scheme was put in place to test the use of vouchers as the means to fund this expansion, the intention being to stimulate market competition in provision of this proposed entitlement.

Policy priority: 1997–2010

These first stirrings of the winds of change turned to a full-blown gale with the election of a Labour government in 1997. Early childhood education and care became, almost overnight, a policy priority, adopted as a vital component in achieving key government objectives, including increasing women's employment and reducing child poverty, but much else besides.

These ambitious aspirations are apparent in a 2002 ‘interdepartmental childcare review’ document from the Cabinet Office:

The availability of good quality, affordable childcare is key to achieving some important government objectives. Childcare can improve educational outcomes for children. Childcare enables parents, particularly mothers, to go out to work, or increase their hours of work, thereby lifting their families out of poverty. It also plays a key role in extending choice for women by enhancing their ability to compete in the labour market on more equal terms ...

Childcare can also play an important role in meeting other top level objectives, for example in improving health, boosting productivity, improving public services, closing the gender pay gap and reducing crime. The targets to achieve 70 per cent employment among lone parents by 2010 and to eradicate child poverty by 2020 are those that are most obviously related. Childcare is essential for those objectives to be met. (Cabinet Office Strategy Unit 2002, 5)

We can hear in this excerpt the enthusiasm and salvationist tone of the newly converted, inspired by a belief that ECEC might provide what Ed Zigler (2003, 12), one of the founders of the Head Start early intervention programme in the United States, has called a ‘magical permanent cure for the problems associated with poverty’.

Gale-force change brought with it a constant flurry of activity: policy proposals, policy documents, policy initiatives and research reports poured out of Whitehall (see the Appendix for a timeline from 1997 to 2020 showing the main policy developments in ECEC and parenting leave, the subject of Chapter 13, in England). And much happened on the ground as a result, including:

- both policy responsibility and regulation were integrated and centralised, within the national education ministry and the national schools inspectorate
- an early years curriculum was introduced, along with an assessment procedure for 5-year-olds
- workforce qualifications were improved and a new professional role introduced
- the Sure Start early intervention programme was initiated and rapidly spread, while 3,500 children’s centres were opened in less than a decade

- entitlement to nursery education for all 3- and 4-year-olds was established and implemented
- new types of public subsidy came on stream.

Services increased throughout the period of the Labour government across most forms of provision. Private day nurseries, which as noted earlier had begun to grow under the Conservative government, continued to increase rapidly after 1997 and throughout the next 13 years (while local authority day nurseries disappeared). In a 2004 update of its national Childcare Strategy, the government could claim that the:

National Childcare Strategy has delivered an additional net 525,000 new registered childcare places in England since 1997, benefiting 1.1 million children. By 2008 the number of childcare places will have doubled since 1997. These places are in a wide range of settings. (HM Treasury 2004, 22)

These figures, it should be noted, include places for children of school age as well as those under 5 years of age.

Between 2005 and 2010, the number of places in full-time childcare for under 5s grew further by 40 per cent (from 511,000 to 716,700) (Brind et al. 2011, 54). Places for under 5s in primary schools grew from 791,500 in 2006 to 825,500 in 2010, the growth in school provision being considerably less than for full-time childcare because such provision was already quite high in 1997, due to the active policy of a substantial number of local authorities. However, as already noted, children's centres grew from none to 3,500 in less than a decade.

Resources devoted to early childhood also increased; public expenditure on ECEC rose substantially during the 13 years of Labour government, though from a low starting point. The main additional items were the costs of the early education entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds, childcare tax credits to subsidise parents' use of private childcare services, and the Sure Start programme followed by children's centres. Brewer (2009) estimated that total government spending on ECEC in England in 2008/9 came to £5.3 billion – or around 0.4 per cent of GDP – with the three items above accounting for just over three-quarters (77 per cent) of this expenditure.

Yet this newfound priority, and accompanying activity, failed to fix the glaring flaws in the system in England – indeed, in some respects it made them worse. Developments in public funding only served to widen the childcare/education divide, with direct funding to services for delivering early education but a variety of subsidies paid to parents for use of

'childcare' services. A new graduate professional qualification – the Early Years Professional (EYP) – was created, but EYPs lacked parity of status and conditions with school teachers. The government set the modest goal of a graduate leading all day nurseries by 2015, but this was never achieved and was subsequently rescinded. Children's centres were innovative but varied in the range of services they offered (some, for example, offered family support and advice and not early education and childcare), and added to the welter of different types of services. Deliberate promotion of marketisation and private providers created more division in the system and less inclusion for children and families, with children from more-advantaged backgrounds more likely to attend private day nurseries than their less-advantaged peers.

A fundamental problem was the failure by government to make space and take time to deliberate upon the ECEC system – what there was in 1997 and what might be needed to transform it in order to remove flaws and dysfunctionalities. A report was commissioned early on from a senior Treasury official, Norman Glass, to examine early intervention – from which the Sure Start programme emerged – but there was no early report on the ECEC system overall, setting out current problems and possible future directions. England participated in the OECD's major comparative study of early childhood policies, *Starting Strong*, with a review by an OECD team undertaken in 2000 – but no attempt was made to use this experience and the review's overall conclusions to think about reform to the system. Much early childhood research was commissioned by the government, including evaluations of Sure Start and a longitudinal study of the effects of early education – but such research did not extend to studying the ECEC system overall and its effects: for example, in a system heavily reliant on markets and private provision, there was no research funded by the government into how these worked in practice and with what consequences.

Above all, there was never any democratic politics of early childhood. Loris Malaguzzi argued that education is 'always a political discourse whether we know it or not. It is about working with cultural choices, but it clearly also means working with political choices' (Cagliari et al. 2016, 267). Put another way, education policy and practice should be based on asking and deliberating upon political questions – questions that produce alternative, and often conflicting, answers. Such questions as: What is our image of the child, the early childhood centre, the worker in the centre? What is the purpose of early childhood education and care, what is it for? What do we mean by 'education' and 'care'? What are the fundamental values of ECEC, and what ethics should it work with? It is

on the basis of such questions and the choices that they evince, produced through democratic deliberation and contestation, at different levels and engaging a full range of stakeholders, that transformative change might have been introduced after 1997. It never happened. Instead, government focused on technical questions, most famously, ‘what works?’

In the absence of such research, such reflection, such deliberation, and reinforced by the government’s belief in market solutions to public policy, the upshot was successive missed opportunities for transformation. Instead, the approach adopted was ‘more of the same’ when it came to the basic system of provision and its delivery, with various new programmes and projects grafted on to the existing ramshackle structure. In the words of a recent study of England’s post-1997 experience:

The English story was one of stalled integration. Transferring responsibility for ECEC and SACC [school-age childcare] to education initiated a process of integration, with an integrated inspection system and a 0–5 curriculum. But progress towards a fully integrated ECEC system as in Sweden, eradicating the ‘early education’/‘childcare’ divide, halted before it tackled the ‘wicked’ issues of access, funding, workforce and provision ... Overall, therefore, England combined continuity in the system’s dysfunctional aspects with discontinuity in its major attempt at radical reform [children’s centres]. Diversity of providers and funding, with uniformity of content and practice, continued under the firm direction of a highly centralised government. Moreover, while much attention was paid to the impact of early childhood intervention (e.g., large national studies of Sure Start and the effectiveness of early childhood education), the overall system of ECEC and SACC was never evaluated. (Cohen et al. 2018, 11)

Policy in the age of austerity: 2010–2020

This sorry story gets sorer if we consider what has happened since the end of Labour’s term in power. Governments since 2010 have maintained a policy interest in ECEC but continued to avoid addressing the flaws and dysfunctions of the system. Indeed, in some respects they have, once again, worsened:

- Increased emphasis has been placed on school readiness in revising the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS, the early years curriculum).

- Another professional qualification has been introduced – the Early Years Teacher (EYT) – but again without parity of status or conditions with school teachers.
- The childcare/education split has been accentuated, both in the language of government (for example, in policy documents titled *More Great Childcare* or *More Affordable Childcare*) and in policy (for example, introducing ‘tax-free childcare’, a new subsidy for parents using ‘childcare services’ and, most egregiously, through the introduction of 30 hours’ free ‘childcare’ for 3- and 4-year-olds with employed parents).

Government policy has had other deleterious effects. Sustained austerity measures, in particular savage cuts to social security payments and local authority funding, have made life harder for many families with young children and led to a drastic reduction of children’s centres and a diminution of the role of those that survive. A report published in April 2018 (Smith et al. 2018), summarised below, paints a sorry picture of the current state of the last Labour government’s flagship policy:

As many as 1,000 Sure Start centres across the country have closed since 2009 – twice as many as the government has reported ... By its peak in August 2009, there were 3,632 centres, with over half (54%) in the 30% most disadvantaged areas. However, in recent years, its status as a key national programme has diminished, accompanied by substantial budget cuts, the suspension of Ofsted inspections and increasingly uneven local provision ... By 2017, sixteen authorities who had closed more than half of their centres accounted for 55% of the total number of closures. But in areas with fewer closures there’s been a reduction of services and staff, leading to fewer open access services such as Stay and Play and more parents having to rely on public transport to find a centre offering what they need ... According to the report, ‘services are now “hollowed out” – much more thinly spread, often no longer “in pram-pushing distance”. The focus of centres has changed to referred families with high need, and provision has diversified as national direction has weakened, leading to a variety of strategies to survive in an environment of declining resources and loss of strategic direction.’ (Sutton Trust 2018)

The winds of change have turned decidedly chilly.

Why we've written this book

In our view, the ECEC system in England is a failure on many counts; it does not work for children or parents, or for workers or society. The problems are wide-ranging, deep-seated and long-lasting. Tweaking things, what the social theorist Roberto Unger (2004, lviii) describes as 'reformist tinkering with the established system ... [consisting] simply in the accumulation of practical solutions to practical problems', is totally inadequate to the scale of the challenge. So, too, is action that 'remains within the same mode of thought, a transformation that is only a way of adjusting the same thought more closely to the reality of things' (Foucault 1988, 154). Without a fundamental change of thinking, a new 'mode of thought', change is necessarily superficial, not transformational.

That is why we call for *transformative* change, which starts from re-thinking, for as the philosopher Michel Foucault argues, 'as soon as one can no longer think things as one formerly thought them, transformation becomes both very urgent, very difficult and quite possible' (Foucault 1988, 154). An essential ingredient of such re-thinking is to ask, deliberate on and make choices about political questions, such as the ones cited above. From re-thinking and making new political choices may follow root-and-branch reform that tackles the flaws and dysfunctions of a system that has grown without adequate thought, rigorous examination of alternatives and democratic deliberation; as Helen Penn (2019, 5) has pointed out, an acceptance of the private market, a salient feature of ECEC services in England, 'happened almost without debate. The market's ubiquitous hold on the sector is rarely discussed and unconditionally accepted.'

Of course, none of this is easy. ECEC is set in its ways; interests are vested, assumptions are entrenched and ideas about what is possible are circumscribed. Nor is the current state of affairs in ECEC due to chance but, instead, it has been shaped by strong forces. For example, it is no accident that early childhood services in England are so comprehensively marketised, so reliant on private for-profit providers and so in thrall to targets and standardised assessment. Rather, this is the product of a neo-liberal ideology that places great value on competition and individualism, markets and private provision, an ideology that has spread globally but has taken deepest root in the UK and the United States – and which has shrugged off all criticism with the Thatcherite mantra 'there is no alternative'. While neoliberalism's hegemony brings with it, as part of its armoury of governance, new public management and its principles that include defining explicit standards and measuring performance to

ensure ‘output control’ (see Moss 2013 for a fuller discussion of neoliberalism and ECEC).

Or to take another example, it is difficult to understand what has happened in ECEC in England over the last 25 years, in particular the unrestrained direction of policy from Whitehall (the seat of England’s national government in London), without appreciating just how centralised the nation is. This has been so for centuries, England long being one of the most centralised states in Europe; but it has become more so in recent years as an already powerful national government has weakened the capacity for intermediate bodies to initiate, influence or mitigate developments, bodies such as local authorities, trades unions and universities. To take one example, local authorities in England (some, not all) were pace-setters in the provision and integration of ECEC services in the 1970s through to the 1990s, but today this level of government is a pale shadow of its former self, its powers much reduced and its funding cut to the bone, with past functions assumed by either central agencies or private providers.

Given such circumstances, it would be easy to conclude that it is too late and too difficult to embark on transformative change, that ways of thinking and doing things are too encrusted to regain free movement. That is a possibility. But we have chosen to reject this conclusion. Given sufficient thought, time and commitment, given a growing awareness that there are in fact alternatives, we think transformative change is still, just, within the national grasp. After all, so much of what seems taken-for-granted today would have seemed fanciful and far-fetched only 40 years ago – there has been a lot of transformative change since 1979 in response to the growing hegemony of neoliberalism. But even neoliberalism, powerful and persistent as it is, is not immutable and is arguably in crisis – part of the profound problems of our day, rather than the solution.

Milton Friedman (1982, ix), one of the godfathers of the neoliberal regime that has spread so far and wide since the 1980s, and which reaches deep into England’s contemporary ECEC, had a clear insight about transformative change as far back as the 1960s, when his ideas had little traction:

Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable.

It is with these words in mind that we address transformative change in ECEC. We have set out to examine the ECEC system in England as it exists today, developing a critique of the state we are in. We have set this critique within a wider context, of the material and health conditions of families with young children, many of whom have faced very hard times during a period of prolonged and deep austerity. Not that we think ECEC is a ‘magical permanent cure’ for poverty, homelessness and so much else that is wrong with society today. But we think it essential to start by acknowledging the reality of life for so many in contemporary England.

Important as it is, we want the book to be more than critique. We want it to be constructive and positive, paying equal attention to how to tackle the many flaws in the current ECEC system, and so bring about transformative change that will create an ECEC system that is integrated and coherent, inclusive and democratic, and that can contribute (along with other policies and services) to bettering the lives of young children and their families. Our aim, in Milton Friedman’s (1982, ix) words, is to ‘develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable’ – indeed to insist that there are indeed alternatives.

The book approaches its task of critique and transformation by drawing on experts in the field working at or otherwise connected to the IOE, each setting out the current problems in their field and proposing how to move towards transformative change. We hasten to add that we make no claim for IOE’s monopoly of ECEC wisdom; there are many other sources around the country. But we have seen the book as an opportunity to benefit from institutional connections that link up diverse disciplinary and other perspectives.

As well as domestic expertise, many contributors draw on knowledge from abroad. We think that reference to the policies and experiences of other countries is important. This is not because we believe in a simple transference model between countries; given very different past traditions, current understandings and national contexts, such simple ‘policy borrowing’, even if considered desirable, is manifestly impractical. Rather, we look to other countries for two reasons. First, to remind readers that there are alternatives, and by so doing enabling them to ‘stand against the current of received wisdom ... interrupting the fluency of the narratives that encode [one’s] experience and making them stutter’ (Rose 1999, 20). Second, to act as a provocation to thought and questioning – to ask why we think, talk and do things in a particular way and how might we think, talk and act differently.

What follows

Before providing the customary overview of what follows this introduction, we want to make two important points about the scope of the book. First, where are we looking? Although the focus of the book is England, we hope it will be of wider interest and relevance. While acknowledging some significant differences with other parts of the UK (for example, curriculum), to which responsibility for ECEC has been devolved, there are substantial similarities between the ECEC systems of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. And because there are similarities, too, with other anglophone countries, all of which have proven particularly susceptible to neoliberal ideology and policy, we hope that this book also speaks to readers beyond the UK.

Second, what are we looking at? We have said, at the beginning, that this book is about the system of early childhood education and care encompassing ‘the range of services providing ... education and care for children below compulsory school age as well as (in some cases) support for their families’. But the age range is not, in practice, that clear-cut. Five years old may be the official age for compulsory school attendance, but many children actually enter the primary school system before that; while aspects of ‘early childhood’ carry over into primary school, for instance the EYFS, which includes reception classes, the first year of primary school. Given that in most other countries, compulsory school age starts at 6 years, and that authors in this book make the case for following suit in England, the book strays on occasion beyond ‘up to 5 years of age’.

Having clarified these parameters, we can set out our offering. Chapters 2 and 3 provide some necessary context, examining the difficult circumstances that many young children and their families live in today, with poor health and inadequate incomes and housing. We then turn to consider early childhood education and care, investigating the divided state of the system (Chapter 4), the unhappy situation of the workforce (Chapter 5) and to what extent we can speak of a public ECEC system (Chapter 6). We consider different aspects of early childhood services themselves, and what goes on inside them, including the curriculum (Chapter 7), learning (Chapter 8), listening (Chapter 9), democracy (Chapter 10), assessment and accountability (Chapter 11) and food and eating (Chapter 12). Chapter 13 considers the relationship between ECEC and another important policy area for young children and their families, parenting leave. The book concludes (Chapter 14) with some reflections and proposals about a new direction for ECEC, as one possibility for transformative change.

The need for the book is, we believe, clear and urgent. The early childhood field in England has fallen under a dictatorship of no alternative in recent years, with critical voices largely confined to arguing how best to make adjustments to things as they are: tinkering with, rather than questioning, basic assumptions and values, structures and practices. In short, the focus has been fixed on the system as it is – the state we’re in – and not on what we as a society might want and hope for – what we want for our children. Drawing on the wealth of experience and expertise at IOE, both national and international in scope, this book aims to contest that dictatorship, to ask critical questions and to propose radical reform: in short, to put ECEC back on the political agenda as a subject that calls for political questions to be asked and political choices to be made.

Appendix

Timeline for main policy publications and developments related to early childhood education and care: England, 1997–2020

1997	<p>Labour government elected with Tony Blair as prime minister</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government introduces early excellence centres, to provide models of high-quality, integrated services
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) announces Sure Start, targeted intervention programme for children under 4 and families • Entitlement to free part-time early education for 4-year-olds • Responsibility for childcare moved to Department for Education and Employment • National childcare strategy set out in Green Paper
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More generous demand subsidy for childcare costs, ‘childcare credit’ • First Sure Start projects • Parental leave introduced following adoption of EU directive
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSR announces further expansion of Sure Start, to reach one-third of poor children by 2003/4 • Government announces plans for 900 neighbourhood nurseries in disadvantaged areas • Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage
2001	<p>Labour government re-elected</p>
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-departmental childcare review

-
- 2003
- *Birth to Three Matters: A framework to support children in their earliest years*
 - *The Day Care and Child Minding (National Standards) (England) Regulations*
 - Report of inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié
 - First 32 children's centres established; early excellence centres to become children's centres
 - More services brought into Department for Education and Skills including children's social services; first Minister for Children
 - *Every Child Matters* Green Paper; proposals include Children's Trusts, common assessment framework, Sure Start children's centres, extended schools and a Children's Commissioner
 - Paid paternity leave introduced; maternity leave extended from 9 to 12 months
- 2004
- Funding announced for children's centres in 20% most disadvantaged wards by 2008; later target increased from 1,700 to 2,500 children's centres
 - Children Act [1989] 2004 requires that all sites providing for children under 8 years must be registered with Ofsted and meet national standards
 - Additional funding announced to provide children's centres in each of 20% most disadvantaged wards by 2008; later target increased from 1,700 to 2,500 children's centres
 - Entitlement to free part-time early education for 3-year-olds
 - Children Act provides legal underpinning for *Every Child Matters* initiative; duty on health, education, youth justice and social services to cooperate; enables local authorities to set up Children's Trusts to promote integrated working and all areas to have these Trusts by 2008
 - *Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: A ten-year strategy for childcare* published, including 3,500 children's centres by 2010
- 2005
- Labour government re-elected**
- Local authorities gain more control over children's centres; local Sure Start projects start being wound up
 - Consultation paper on Children's Workforce Strategy
- 2006
- Children's centre funding to be via local authorities, not centrally; 1,000 centres open
 - Childcare Act places new duties on local authorities, including to secure sufficient childcare for employed parents
 - Government response to Children's Workforce Strategy consultation, including the early years professional as new model; one in every children's centre by 2010 and in every 'full day care setting' by 2015
-

2007	<p>Gordon Brown becomes prime minister</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) created, taking responsibility for youth justice and anti-social behaviour by young people
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) introduced, incorporating curriculum and standards for services for children from birth until end of first (reception) year in primary school; EYFS profile to assess attainment of early learning goals (ELGs) • Phase 3 of children’s centre expansion begins • DCSF issues <i>Practice Guidelines for the Early Years Foundation Stage</i>. All managers must hold relevant level 3 qualification and half of other staff level 2, where there is a child aged under 8 years old
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government announces free, part-time early education to be extended to the most disadvantaged 2-year-olds • Apprenticeships, Skills and Learning Act places duty on local authorities to establish and maintain sufficient children’s centres to meet local needs • DCSF with Department for Work and Pensions, Cabinet Office & HM Treasury publish update on 10-year strategy: <i>Next Steps for Early Learning and Childcare. Building on the 10-year strategy</i>
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target of 3,500 children’s centres reached • ‘Additional paternity leave’ introduced; mothers can transfer part of maternity leave to fathers <p>Conservative-led Coalition government elected, with David Cameron as prime minister</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major cuts in public funding initiated • DCSF becomes Department for Education (DfE); government bans term ‘Every Child Matters’ • Free early education for 3- and 4-year-olds increased from 12.5 to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks a year (570 hours per year)
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of EYFS
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised EYFS introduced following review • <i>Supporting Families in the Foundation Years</i> setting out government’s vision for early help and intervention • Free, part-time early education for 20% most disadvantaged 2-year-olds • Two government policy papers: <i>More Great Childcare</i> and <i>More Affordable Childcare</i> • Local authorities required to produce an annual report and action plan to explain how they are ensuring there is sufficient childcare in their area • <i>Foundations for Quality</i> (the ‘Nutbrown review’) reviews ECEC qualifications, including recommendation for early years specialist with qualified teacher status

2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early years teacher replaces early years professional, but without qualified teacher status
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of free, part-time early education for 40% most disadvantaged 2-year-olds • Plans announced for a reception baseline assessment (RBA) to measure the abilities of 4- and 5-year-olds at the start of school • Shared parental leave introduced; mothers can transfer a longer period of maternity leave to fathers
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s centre funding down by 35% and 250 closed since 2010; reduction in services by many others <p>Conservative government elected with David Cameron as prime minister</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare Bill published including doubling of free ‘childcare’ hours (from 15 to 30 a week) for 3- and 4-year-olds with employed parents
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The phased introduction of universal credit affects childcare payments for those in receipt of this benefit. They will be eligible for up to 85% of childcare costs regardless of how many hours they work • First attempt at an RBA halted in face of widespread criticism <p>June 2016: United Kingdom European Union membership referendum (Brexit referendum): UK votes to leave EU. Theresa May becomes prime minister</p>
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised EYFS introduced • ‘Tax-free childcare’ scheme starts • 30 hours’ free ‘childcare’ for 3- and 4-year-olds with working parents • A new RBA announced, to be introduced from 2020 as a baseline measure to track pupils’ progress during primary school <p>Minority Conservative government elected with Theresa May as prime minister</p>
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New ELGs announced and revised EYFS piloted
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second attempt at an RBA piloted • DfE launches a public consultation on revising the EYFS, including proposed changes to the ELGs and the EYFS profile assessment <p>Conservative government elected with Boris Johnson as prime minister</p>

References

Brewer, M. (2009) ‘What parents pay: Balancing public and private investment’. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Day Care Trust, London.

- Brind, R., Norden, O., McGinival, S., Garnett, E., Oseman, D., La Valle, I. and Jelicic, H. (2011) *Child-care and Early Years Providers Survey 2010 (OSR17/2011)*. London: Department for Education.
- Cabinet Office Strategy Unit (2002) *Delivering for Children and Families: Interdepartmental childcare review*. London: Cabinet Office Strategy Unit.
- Cagliari, P., Castagnetti, M., Giudici, C., Rinaldi, C., Vecchi, V. and Moss, P. (eds) (2016) *Loris Malaguzzi and the Schools of Reggio Emilia: A selection of his writings and speeches 1945–1993*. London: Routledge.
- Cohen, B., Moss, P., Petrie, P. and Wallace, J. (2018) “A New Deal for Children?” – what happened next: A cross-national study of transferring early childhood services into education’. *Early Years*. Online. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2018.1504753> (accessed 10 February 2020).
- Foucault, M. (1988) *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and other writings, 1977–1984*. Trans. Alan Sheridan and others. London: Routledge.
- Friedman, M. (1982) *Capitalism and Freedom*. New ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- HM Treasury (2004) *Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: A ten-year strategy for childcare*. London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office.
- Moss, P. (2013) *Transformative Change and Real Utopias in Early Childhood Education: A story of democracy, experimentation and potentiality*. London: Routledge.
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2001) *Starting Strong I: Early childhood education and development*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- Penn, H. (2019) *Putting Childcare at the Heart of the Social Market Economy*. Brussels: Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies. Online. <https://martenscentre.eu/sites/default/files/publication-files/childcare-social-market-economy-europe.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Rose, N. (1999) *Powers of Freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, G., Sylva, K., Smith, T., Sammons, P. and Omonigho, A. (2018) *Survival, Decline or Closure? Children’s centres in England, 2018*. London: Sutton Trust.
- Sutton Trust (2018) ‘1,000 children’s centres “lost” since 2009’. Online. <https://www.suttontrust.com/newsarchive/1000-childrens-centres-closed-since-2009/> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Tizard, J., Moss, P. and Perry, J. (1976) *All Our Children: Pre-school services in a changing society*. London: Temple Smith/New Society.
- Unger, R. (2004) *False Necessity: Anti-necessitarian social theory in the service of radical democracy*. 2nd ed. London: Verso.
- Zigler, E. (2003) ‘Forty years of believing in magic is enough’. *Social Policy Report*, XVII (1), 10.

2

Families living in hard times

Abigail Knight, Rebecca O’Connell and Julia Brannen

The need for transformative change

It is to the collective interest of a nation that its children should flourish. (Pember Reeves 1913, 227)

These words were written in 1913, yet today the outlook for children in low-income families remains bleak in one of the richest countries in the world. A third of all children in the UK – around 4.5 million – are living in relative poverty, that is, below 60 per cent of average (median) income (Social Metrics Commission 2019), with rates projected to rise: by 2021, 5 million children (about 40 per cent of children) will be living in relative poverty (CPAG 2017; Hood and Waters 2017), with an extra million children likely to be living in poverty by 2023–4 (Corlett 2019). It is well documented that poverty in the early years is associated with increased likelihood of poor outcomes related to learning, behaviour and health (Children’s Commissioner 2015). Yet UK government figures published in March 2019 show that poverty is rising fastest among the under 5s (DWP 2019). This constitutes a health and social crisis (Marmot 2019).

Child poverty in the UK is worsening in the context of the so-called ‘austerity’ measures imposed since 2010, which have introduced progressively harsher cuts to social spending. These have not only reduced collective and household resources but also changed the normative expectations of the post-war welfare state. As the United Nation’s Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, said, following his visit to the UK in November 2018, a ‘harsh and uncaring ethos’ and a ‘punitive, mean-spirited and often callous approach’ have characterised welfare policy since 2010, leading to ‘great misery’.

He argues that the basis of this change is ideological rather than economic, designed to achieve social re-engineering and to restructure the relationship between the people and the state (Alston 2019, 5).

Our aim in this chapter is to examine how the UK's changing policy landscape and the associated public and policy discourses have affected families living in constrained circumstances. We do this by focusing on the case of a particular family that has been selected from a wider study of 'Families and Food in Hard Times' to exemplify some of the conditions in which families with younger children are currently living in the UK. We begin by introducing the case: a household consisting of a lone black British mother and her three children who live on a low income in an inner London borough. Following a brief recap of the wider policy context of austerity and welfare retrenchment, our discussion of the case analyses some of the social causes of the mother's lack of resources, including welfare reform and the inadequacy of benefits, the continued deregulation of the labour market and inadequate housing. We discuss her lived experiences of 'getting by' in the context of 'austerity', the rise of charity and the consequences for her, personally, of individualising poverty and shame. We conclude by making some suggestions towards transformative change.

The study: 'Families and Food in Hard Times'

The study from which the case is drawn was based at the Thomas Coram Research Unit in the UCL Institute of Education, University College London (IOE) and funded by the European Research Council (2014–19). Through a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, it sought to examine and compare the extent and experience of food poverty among young people between 11 and 15 years old and their parents in three European countries in an age of austerity – the UK, Portugal and Norway.

Between 2015 and 2017, we carried out qualitative interviews with children and parents in 45 low-income families in England. Thirty families lived in an inner London borough and 15 were in a coastal town in the south-east of England, both areas of social deprivation and high rates of child poverty of over 40 per cent (endchildpoverty.org.uk). Around half the parents in the sample were in paid employment while almost half were reliant on benefits. In a handful of cases, parents' legal status meant they were unable to work and had no recourse to public funds, that is, social security benefits, meaning they were destitute and dependent on charity.

Relative to the overall UK population, people living in households headed by someone in the Asian, Black or Other ethnic groups are disproportionately likely to be on a low income (Cabinet Office 2017), and there are wide variations in poverty rates between different ethnic groups (Kenway and Palmer 2007). In both study areas, around half the mothers were originally from the UK and were British citizens. In the inner London borough, the British mothers (18/30) included white British, black British and British Asian mothers, while a third (10/30) had migrated from outside the European Union (West and North Africa). In the coastal area, all the British mothers (8/15) were white. In the total sample, parents in 7 of the 45 families were migrants from mainland Europe. Reflecting wider evidence about poverty and food poverty, lone parent families were overrepresented (O’Connell et al. 2019).

Conceptually, the study draws on the pioneering work of sociologist Peter Townsend in adopting a relative deprivation approach to understanding poverty (Townsend 1979). That is, we are interested in the material and the social dimensions of poverty and exclusion from what is customarily regarded as an adequate standard of living, due to a lack of resources. Drawing on the work of Goffman (1974) and Walker (2014), we are also interested in the discursive context that stigmatises social groups living in poverty, the ways in which individuals internalise stigma as shame and the ways in which they seek to protect themselves from being labelled ‘poor’ and try to ‘save face’. Following Lister (2004), we are concerned with the ways in which people living in poverty enact agency and the constraints and possibilities for everyday practices of ‘getting by’ as well as more strategic and coordinated action of ‘getting organised’. As sociologists of the family we are interested in children’s, as well as parents’, contributions to households and their experiences of living on a low income.

The Davis family¹

Sandra Davis is a black British lone mother with three children, aged 11 years, 5 years and 11 months. The family lives in an inner London borough. Two of the children are disabled – the 5-year-old boy is on the autism spectrum, while the baby girl has sickle cell anaemia. The eldest child, Danisha, is a ‘young carer’ who routinely looks after her siblings, administers their medicines and helps with the cooking. Sandra has a very strong work ethic and until two years ago was employed by a security firm as a ‘bouncer’.

Life has not been kind to Sandra in recent years. After experiencing violent domestic abuse from her son's father, she and her children were moved to a women's refuge; they lost their former home and their possessions as a result. When the council housed them in their current flat, Sandra stopped working and became pregnant with her youngest child. She delayed applying for benefits. When she did apply, the advice of a victim support officer was to get rid of her car, but the car is vital to enable Sandra to get the baby to hospital for frequent appointments. Unsurprisingly, Sandra accumulated debts that she is now struggling to pay off. Sandra would prefer to be working and is worse off financially on benefits. She sees it as her job to provide for her children but childcare for her youngest child, who has a long-term condition, would be difficult to find, as well as expensive. The benefits that Sandra relies on are so inadequate that she struggles to feed her family. Consequently, she has turned to charity.

The family lives on the ground floor of a high-rise local authority block on a main road. The flat has no bath in which to wash the children, only a shower. There is no carpet and the floors are covered in cold, vinyl flooring. It is important to keep the baby warm, so Sandra applied to a charity (Family Fund) for financial help to get floor coverings. The household income is £185 a week, made up of income support, child tax credit, child benefit and disability living allowance. Some of the costs of milk are covered by Healthy Start vouchers. Danisha is entitled to and receives free school meals at her secondary school. The cost of the rent is covered by Sandra's benefits, but her main outgoings include a very high weekly gas bill of £60, around a third of her total income, due to the need to keep the baby warm. The car is also a major expense.

Sandra has to meet the cost of debt repayments, including those she built up after she moved on to a zero-hours contract when she was last in work and parking fines accrued when attending medical appointments. Some debts are for arrears on childcare, from when she used to work nights and dropped her son off at nursery in the morning so that she could sleep. However, her claim for these costs was rejected as ineligible and she is paying back around £1,800 debt at a rate of £10 per week, 'because it's like that's another problem. When you're doing shift work and nobody understands that part to it.' She has had support from Citizens Advice in making the loan repayments manageable.

Sandra spends about £35–£40 a week on food for the family. The range of local shops includes Iceland, Tesco, Savers, a bakery, Poundstretcher, Paddy Power and a few market stalls selling fruit and veg at £1 per bowl. About a mile away there is a street market. Sandra manages

by spending her limited budget at the market, by bulk buying and by cooking low-cost African and Caribbean meals such as oxtail, mutton and goat, as well as 'English' foods such as pasta and meatballs. She uses her car to search out the cheapest deals and to drive to bulk-buy discount stores for which she has a membership card. In order to manage food expenditure better, Sandra took the advice of a food bank worker to cook just enough 'for the day', and says 'I've learned as well how to minimise it, so instead of doing this whole big cooking, I now minimise it. That's for the day.' Danisha sometimes helps her mother with the cooking.

When the baby was born, Sandra withdrew from the world. Such was her distress, she could not ask for help. Her great fear was that her children would be taken away. This withdrawal from the outside world is mirrored by Danisha who talks about 'forgetting' to go to a party to which she was invited and never having friends home. It was only when social services became involved, through the baby's health visitor, that Sandra opened up and asked for help: 'because it was affecting my kids and I weren't able to hide it no more ... because my kids they were hungry.'

The family was referred to a food bank, to a place to get baby equipment and to a children's centre for clothes for the baby. While Sandra describes her experience of the food bank as positive, she also says she felt ashamed of having to resort to charity:

It felt, to be fair with you when I first went I was like 'Oh God I feel so ashamed ... This is the standard I've got to.' Like working and earning so much years ago I never had a problem in the world. I could go in any shop and spend as much as I wanted to and it was never credit cards.

Sandra's identity as a (lone) mother is strongly tied to being a 'good provider' for her family (Duncan and Edwards 1999): 'I'm supposed to protect them and guide them and look after them 'til they're mature enough to do ... I've never had to ask for help and that's what I've learnt this year.' She cannot work because of the high costs of childcare, for which she blames the government:

I'm just saying when it comes to the childcare, there's no point telling people to go to work and the childcare is not sufficient enough to work. It is never ... as I say I've never had a problem getting a job. Most interviews that I go to more likely I would get the job. Um, because it's like it's that I know that when it comes to having kids, putting them in childcare is ridiculous. I was paying £280 a week.

Sandra hates the stigma attached to being on benefits:

I can't do benefits. I don't know how people stay on it for so long because to me it's draining. It's like people look down at you, people deal with you differently and it shouldn't be like that and a lot of my arguments has always been about that, like who are you to judge because you're working?

The wider context of austerity and welfare retrenchment

While the Davis family is unique in many respects, it is also representative of families living in similar circumstances in the UK. A number of linked life events propelled Sandra into poverty: job loss, a violently abusive relationship that broke down and resulted in homelessness, coupled with the demands of parenting young children, one with a long-term illness and the other with a disability. These events caused depression. In turn, depression and the shame of being unable to provide for her children made it hard for Sandra to turn to others for support.

At a structural level, Sandra's experiences as a black lone mother reflect long-standing economic, race and gender inequalities in the UK. They are also underpinned by a number of social and labour market policies that mean work does not pay, benefits are inadequate, and responsibility for poverty is individualised and farmed out to charities. Before looking at these areas in turn, we briefly provide a historical backdrop to the social policies shaping the Davis family's situation, which are crucial in understanding the changing role of the welfare state and its impact on the lives of children and families.

The welfare state: Historical context

The UK's post-war welfare state, implemented following the Beveridge Report (1942), began to be dismantled in 1979. The Thatcher and Major governments (1979–97) promoted free market economics and sought to shrink the size of the state and make reliance on benefits increasingly unsustainable. The subsequent Blair and Brown 'New Labour' governments (1997–2010) also subscribed to these neoliberal politics (Taylor-Gooby and Larsen 2004). In promoting the marketisation of public services, they wanted to address concerns about 'welfare dependency', while at the same time aiming to increase 'equality of opportunity' (Deacon 2002). Blair's Third Way politics (Giddens 1998) involved a redefinition and 'rebalancing' of rights and responsibilities.

In New Labour's 'social investment state', children were conceptualised as adults-in-waiting and positioned as central to securing the social order and economic success (Dahlberg and Moss 2005, 4–5). In 1999, Blair pledged to end child poverty in the UK within 20 years. The Child Poverty Act 2010 legally committed the UK government to eradicate child poverty by 2020. In the period between 1997 and 2010, welfare benefits were increased, particularly those for children, and more help was given to raise earned income among families living in poverty and to improve children's services. Child poverty rates fell significantly: between 1998/9 and 2011/12, 800,000 children were lifted out of poverty (CPAG 2012, 2017).

In the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008, however, the UK was among those governments that applied 'austerity measures', curbing public sector spending with the stated aim of reducing government budget deficits. Since 2009/10 more stringent conditions to access social security entitlements have been introduced in the UK, including through the Welfare Reform Act 2012, outlined below. The Child Poverty Act 2010 was abolished in 2015 by David Cameron's Conservative government and the government's Child Poverty Unit was scrapped a year later. Figures from the House of Commons library released in September 2018 suggested that spending on welfare benefits will have shrunk by over a quarter between 2010 and 2021, that is, £37 billion (Butler 2018).

Welfare reform and the inadequacy of benefits

A lone mother of three children, one with a long-term illness and another with a disability, Sandra is not able to access the type of child-care or employment that would enable her to work. She is in receipt of child benefit, child tax credits, disability living allowance and income support. These are not enough to make ends meet.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced harsh cuts to welfare spending, such as the freezing of child benefit for four years and a 'benefit cap' on the overall value of benefits a family can receive, including a limit to the amount of housing benefit that can be claimed, despite rising rents. These government policies have disproportionately disadvantaged specific groups, such as women, disabled people, minority ethnic groups and children. Benefit changes, such as the two-child limit for child tax credit, the benefit cap and the stipulation that lone parents have to be eligible for full-time employment when their children are as young as 3 years old, have had a particularly detrimental impact on women. Lone parents

(mostly mothers) are twice as likely to experience persistent poverty as other groups, and, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic which is predicted to have negative consequences on the economy, it was estimated that the poverty rate for children in lone-parent households would be 62 per cent by 2021–2 (Portes and Reed 2018).

Perhaps the most controversial part of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 is the introduction of Universal Credit, which aims to combine six of the main means-tested benefits, including housing benefit and tax credits, into one payment. Its roll-out throughout the country has been slow, however, and its implementation fraught with difficulties. Accounts of waiting for several weeks between applying for and receiving money leading to severe hardship for families have been well documented. Reports suggest that over 3 million families will be around £50 per week worse off on Universal Credit (Brewer et al. 2017). At the time that the Davis family took part in the ‘Families and Food in Hard Times’ study, Universal Credit had not yet been introduced in their area of London. One wonders how the family fared subsequently under this punitive regime.

The continued deregulation of the labour market

Sandra was moved on to a zero-hours contract that put paid to her chances of accessing sick leave (when she was hospitalised after her ex-partner’s abuse) and led to her depending on credit to provide for her family.

A second aim of Universal Credit was to improve people’s incentives to increase their earnings by withdrawing benefits more slowly as their earnings increase. Yet, despite the ideological mantra that ‘work pays’ (Cooper and Whyte 2017), the largest proportion of households with children living in relative poverty in the UK includes at least one employed adult (Hick and Lanau 2017).

Precarious employment, including zero-hour contracts, engenders considerable anxiety for workers about ‘making ends meet’ and providing reliably for their families (Newsome et al. 2018). Additionally, 10 years after the 2008 crisis, median real earnings were still below pre-crisis levels (Cribb and Johnson 2018). Together with high costs of living, particularly housing and childcare, these factors have led to high rates of ‘in-work poverty’. In fact, as Alston (2019) points out, growth of in-work poverty rates outstripped the growth in employment in 2018.

In this context, debt has become pervasive and normal, substituting for a living wage and sufficient welfare provisions (Ellis 2017).

Like Sandra, many low-income households use credit to pay for basic living costs and high levels of ‘problem debt’ are commonplace, causing distress and vulnerability to economic shocks (Mahony and Pople 2018). Around a quarter of the lowest-income households are struggling with arrears or high debt repayments (Hood et al. 2018).

Inadequate housing

Sandra’s council flat is cold, and it has no bath in which to wash the children.

Poor housing, lacking facilities such as a bath, and with cold, damp conditions, has detrimental effects on children’s health and life chances (Quilgars and Pleace 2016). In 2014, around a fifth of homes in England failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard (DCLG 2017). A general shortage of suitable housing and the reduction in social housing since the ‘right to buy’ policy introduced by the Thatcher government in 1980 (Tunstall 2015) have disproportionately affected low-income families with young children. In 2011/12, there were 110 excess winter child deaths. Living in a cold home – like the Davis family – may be leading to an increase in child mortality (Royston 2014; Mack 2017).

Local authorities in crisis

Sandra was referred to a children’s centre by a support worker for emergency help with food and baby equipment.

Children’s centres and local nurseries are a vital part of England’s ‘social infrastructure’, offering not only care and education but also spaces where children and parents can participate in their communities and form social networks (Klinenberg 2018). While early years settings can mitigate some of the effects of living in social and economic disadvantage (Sylva et al. 2004; Blanden 2006), many are currently in crisis. Real spending per child on early education, childcare and children’s centres fell by over a quarter between 2009–10 and 2012–13 (Stewart and Obolenskaya 2015). Over 1,000 Sure Start children’s centres may have closed since 2009 and others have reduced the number of services they offer (Smith et al. 2018). Recent research suggests the greatest decline in usage of children’s centres has been in England’s poorest areas (Action for Children 2019). This situation has arisen in the context of massive

cuts since 2010 to local authorities' funding allocations from central government (NAO 2018).

The rise of charity

Sandra applied to a charity to obtain floor coverings for her flat, to keep her disabled child warm. She has had to use a food bank to feed her children.

Families in circumstances like the Davises' 'get by' by borrowing money, juggling bills and, increasingly in the UK, being referred to charities and food banks (Lambie-Mumford 2017). In the past, extra financial support in the form of community care grants or crisis loans, under the Social Fund, would have met the family's needs for furnishings. But the UK government abolished the Social Fund in 2013 as part of the Welfare Reform Act. In its place, it introduced a new local welfare assistance scheme to provide emergency support. But the funding is £150 million less (in real terms) than that of the Social Fund (Children's Commissioner 2015) and it is not 'ring fenced'.

Households' food needs are increasingly met by charity. Between 2010/11 and 2016/17, the number of food parcels provided by the UK's largest single provider, the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network, grew from about 61,500 to over 1.18 million (Trussell Trust 2017). Research finds that welfare reform, benefits sanctions and delays are the most commonly cited reasons for food bank referral, alongside recent losses in earnings or changes in family circumstances (Perry et al. 2014); for example, like the Davis family whose inadequate income made them vulnerable to acute crises. However, only a small proportion of households who are struggling to feed themselves use food banks; people may not have access to food banks or do not want to receive charity (Loopstra and Tarasuk 2015). Resorting to food aid may further stigmatise and marginalise those who are already materially and socially excluded (Dowler 2014; Riches and Silvasti 2014).

Individualising poverty and shame

Sandra is a case of a mother who speaks about the shame of being unable to provide for her children.

In some respects, Sandra is an extreme example; she became so depressed that she was unable to turn even to her family for help in very difficult

circumstances. However, the widespread stigmatisation of people claiming benefits in the current context is reflected in the treatment and representation of people on low incomes in the media, which largely places the responsibility for poverty on individuals and shames those on benefits (Walker 2014). As studies of the largely right-wing media suggest, an othering blame culture dominates: those in poverty are seen as culpable for their plight; they are described as ‘scroungers’, ‘sponging’ off the state, ‘frauds’, unwilling to work and making the ‘wrong choices’ (Baillie 2011; Chase and Walker 2015; Patrick 2016).

Such discourse perpetuates a hegemonic narrative that links family dysfunction, worklessness and welfare dependency (Garrett 2015; Lister 2004; Sayer 2017). Significantly, it emphasises individual inadequacy, thereby dismissing the structural social inequality underlying poverty (Harkins and Lugo-Ocando 2016; Knight et al. 2018). No wonder, therefore, that Sandra’s sense of shame, and her fear that her children might be taken from her, had stopped her asking for help.

Towards transformative change

The UK is currently facing a very uncertain future. At the time of writing, the long and acrimonious battle to leave or remain in the European Union has concluded in favour of Brexit. In the meantime, poverty rates are rising and the plight of families with young children like Sandra’s is of great concern.

Although the Coalition and Conservative governments since 2010 have argued that austerity is necessary to reduce the country’s financial deficit, the figures tell a different story. A report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Bramley et al. 2016) has estimated that the total cost of poverty in the UK is around £78 billion per year, more than twice that of the £37 billion that has been taken from the social security budget since 2010. The additional cost for the state of the effects of poverty includes increased health-care costs (for example, additional use of primary care by people living in poverty), increased expenditure on education (for example, the pupil premium for children living on low incomes) and the extra costs related to crime (such as additional policing in poorer areas) (Bramley et al. 2016).

Despite mounting research evidence from both academic and non-governmental organisations, as well as an extremely damning report from the United Nations on extreme poverty in the UK, the current government remains in denial about the effects of its policies on the material living conditions of large numbers of its population. Its attack on those living in poverty since 2010 is sustained and deliberate.

The projected worsening of child poverty in the UK is not inevitable. But abolishing and preventing poverty requires fundamental change. First, it demands acknowledgement of the existence of poverty. Second, it requires agreement about the causes of poverty: a lack of individual and collective resources to enable access to what is generally regarded as a minimum adequate standard of living (Veit-Wilson 2019). Third, it requires political will, that is, agreement that poverty in one of the richest countries in the world is unacceptable. Defined in this way, those approaches that best tackle poverty then become ‘a matter of functional analysis and tactical judgement’ (Veit-Wilson 2019).

According to an influential report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Bramley et al. 2016), building political will to solve poverty demands telling a ‘new’ story about it, appealing to the values that people have across political perspectives. Maud Pember Reeves’s quotation at the start of this chapter – ‘It is to the collective interest of a nation that its children should flourish’ – is an example of such an approach (see also Nussbaum 1995). The plight of families living in poverty in the UK, such as the Davises, *can* be transformed. But an ideological shift is required that renews the social contract between people and the state and places human flourishing at its centre.

Further reading

Our book *Living Hand to Mouth: Children and food in low-income families* (CPAG, 2019), available free at <https://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/report/living-hand-mouth>, highlights the experiences of children and their families living on a low income in Britain, particularly focusing on the issue of food poverty. It outlines how food poverty is conceptualised and what it looks like in contemporary Britain. Using case studies and children’s first-hand accounts, it explores the ways in which living on a low income affects children and families at home, in school and in the neighbourhood.

Tess Ridge also uses children’s voices and accounts of living on a low income in her book *Childhood Poverty and Social Exclusion: From a child’s perspective* (Policy Press, 2002), to demonstrate the ways in which children experience poverty on an everyday basis. It particularly highlights the ways in which living in poverty affects children’s social participation in different domains, such as school and family life.

Tracy Shildrick, in her book *Poverty Propaganda: Exploring the myths* (Policy Press, 2018), explores and debunks popular discourses about poverty, its causes and consequences, such as the distinction often

made between the ‘deserving’ and the ‘undeserving’ and generations of worklessness. The way that these popular discourses and ‘poverty propaganda’ sustains class divisions and disadvantage is examined and highlighted and provides an important backdrop to understanding the experiences of families living in poverty and on low incomes.

Note

1. Pseudonyms have been used to protect identities.

References

- Action for Children (2019) *Closed Doors: Children’s centre usage between 2014/15 and 2017/18*. Watford: Action for Children. Online. <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/media/11680/0740-closed-doors-report-final.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Alston, P. (2019) ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights on his visit to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland’. United Nations General Assembly. Online. <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/41/39/Add.1> (accessed 10 March 2020).
- Baillie, R. (2011) ‘An examination of the public discourse on benefit claimants in the media’. *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 19 (1), 67–70.
- Beveridge, W.H. (1942) ‘Social insurance and allied services’. Cmd 6404. London: HMSO.
- Blanden, J. (2006) “‘Bucking the trend”: What enables those who are disadvantaged in childhood to succeed later in life?” Department for Work and Pensions Working Paper 31. Online. <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7729/1/WP31.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Bramley, G., Hirsch, D., Littlewood, M. and Watkins, D. (2016) *Counting the Cost of UK Poverty*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Brewer, M., Finch, D. and Tomlinson, D. (2017) *Universal Remedy: Ensuring Universal Credit is fit for purpose*. London: Resolution Foundation.
- Butler, P. (2018) ‘Welfare spending for UK’s poorest shrinks by £37bn’. *The Guardian*, 23 September 2018. Online. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/sep/23/welfare-spending-uk-poorest-austerity-frank-field> (accessed 19 February 2020).
- Cabinet Office (2017) *Race Disparity Audit*. London: Cabinet Office.
- Chase, E. and Walker, R. (2015) ‘Constructing reality? The “discursive truth” of poverty in Britain and how it frames the experience of shame’. In Chase, E. and Bantebya- Kyomuhendo, G. (eds) *Poverty and Shame: Global perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 256–69.
- Children’s Commissioner (2015) *Changing the Odds in the Early Years*. London: Children’s Commissioner for England.
- Cooper, V. and Whyte, D. (eds) (2017) *The Violence of Austerity*. London: Pluto Press.
- Corlett, A. (2019) *The Living Standards Outlook 2019*. London: Resolution Foundation.
- CPAG (Child Poverty Action Group) (2012) *Ending Child Poverty by 2020: Progress made and lessons learned*. London: Child Poverty Action Group.
- CPAG (Child Poverty Action Group) (2017) *The Austerity Generation: The impact of a decade of cuts on family income and child poverty*. London: Child Poverty Action Group.
- Cribb, J. and Johnson, P. (2018) *10 Years On: Have we recovered from the financial crisis?* London: Institute for Fiscal Studies.
- Dahlberg, G. and Moss, P. (2005) *Ethics and Politics in Early Childhood Education*. Abingdon: Routledge Falmer.
- DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) (2017) *Housing in England: Overview*. London: National Audit Office.
- Deacon, A. (2002) *Perspectives on Welfare: Ideas, ideologies, and policy*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

- Dowler, E. (2014) 'Food banks and food justice in "Austerity Britain"'. In Riches, G. and Silvasti, T. (eds) *First World Hunger Revisited: Food charity or the right to food?* 2nd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 160–75.
- Duncan, S. and Edwards, R. (1999) *Lone Mothers, Paid Work and Gendered Moral Rationalities*. London: Macmillan.
- DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) (2019) *Households below Average Income: 1994/5–2017/18*. London: Department for Work and Pensions.
- Ellis, D. (2017) 'The violence of the debtfare state'. In Cooper, V. and Whyte, D. (eds) *The Violence of Austerity*. London: Pluto Press, 110–16.
- Garrett, P. (2015) 'Words matter: Deconstructing "welfare dependency" in the UK'. *Critical and Radical Social Work*, 3 (3), 389–406.
- Giddens, A. (1998) *The Third Way: The renewal of social democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Goffman, E. (1974) *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. 2nd ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Harkins, S. and Lugo-Ocando, J. (2016) 'All people are equal, but some people are more equal than others'. In Servaes, J. and Oyedemi, T. (eds) *The Praxis of Social Inequality in Media: A global perspective*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 3–19.
- Hick, R. and Lanau, A. (2017) *In-work Poverty in the UK: Problem, policy analysis and platform for action*. London: Nuffield Foundation. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/y8cylxe8> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Hood, A., Joyce, R. and Sturrock, D. (2018) *Problem Debt and Low-income Households*. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies. Online. <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/10336> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Hood, A. and Waters, T. (2017) *Living Standards, Poverty and Inequality in the UK, 2017–18 to 2021–22*. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies. Online. <https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/publications/comms/R136.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2018) *Summary: How to build lasting support to solve UK poverty*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Kenway, P. and Palmer, G. (2007) *Poverty Among Ethnic Groups: How and why does it differ?* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation/New Policy Institute.
- Klinenberg, E. (2018) *Palaces for the People: How social infrastructure can help fight inequality, polarization, and the decline of civic life*. New York: Penguin Random House.
- Knight, A., Brannen, J., O'Connell, R. and Hamilton, L. (2018) 'How do children and their families experience food poverty according to UK newspaper media, 2006–15?' *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 26 (2), 207–23.
- Lambie-Mumford, H. (2017) *Hungry Britain: The rise of food charity*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Lister, R. (2004) *Poverty*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Loopstra, R. and Tarasuk, V. (2015) 'Food bank usage is a poor indicator of food insecurity: Insights from Canada'. *Social Policy and Society*, 14 (3), 443–55.
- Mack, J. (2017) 'Child maltreatment and child mortality'. In Cooper, V. and Whyte, D. (eds) *The Violence of Austerity*. London: Pluto Press, 85–93.
- Mahony, S. and Pople, L. (2018) *Life in the Debt Trap: Stories of children and families struggling with debt*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Marmot, M. (2019) 'A health crisis is a social crisis: Falling life expectancy and rising inequality are twin indicators of a society in trouble'. *British Medical Journal*, 365: 12278.
- NAO (National Audit Office) (2018) *Financial Sustainability of Local Authorities 2018*. London: National Audit Office.
- Newsome, K., Heyes, J., Moore, S., Smith, D. and Tomlinson, M. (2018) *Living on the Edge: Experiencing workplace insecurity in the UK*. London: Trades Union Congress.
- Nussbaum, M. (1995) 'Emotions and women's capabilities'. In Nussbaum, M. and Glover, J. (eds) *Women, Culture and Development*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 360–95.
- O'Connell, R., Owen, C., Padley, M., Simon, A. and Brannen, J. (2019) 'Which types of family are at risk of food poverty in the UK? A relative deprivation approach'. *Social Policy and Society*, 18 (1), 1–18.
- Patrick, R. (2016) 'Living with and responding to the "scrounger" narrative in the UK: Exploring everyday strategies of acceptance, resistance and deflection'. *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 24 (3), 245–59.
- Pember Reeves, M. (1913) *Round about a Pound a Week*. London: G. Bell and Sons. Online. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/58691/58691-h/58691-h.htm> (accessed 10 March 2020).

- Perry, J., Williams, M., Sefton, T. and Haddad, M. (2014) *Emergency Use Only: Understanding and reducing the use of food banks in the UK*. Child Poverty Action Group, Church of England, Oxfam GB and The Trussell Trust. Online. https://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/Foodbank%20Report_web.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Portes, J. and Reed, H. (2018) *The Cumulative Impact of Tax and Welfare Reforms*. Manchester: Equality and Human Rights Commission.
- Quilgars, D. and Pleace, N. (2016) 'Housing, living environments and life chances for children'. In Tucker, J. (ed.) *Improving Children's Life Chances*. London: CPAG.
- Riches, G. and Silvasti, T. (eds) (2014) *First World Hunger Revisited: Food charity or the right to food?* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Royston, S. (2014) *Behind Cold Doors: The chilling reality for children living in poverty*. London: The Children's Society. Online. https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/behind_cold_doors_-_final.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Sayer, A. (2017) 'Responding to the troubled families programme: Framing the injuries of inequality'. *Social Policy & Society*, 16 (1), 155–64.
- Smith, G., Sylva, K., Smith, T., Sammons, P. and Omonigho, A. (2018) *STOP START: Survival, decline or closure? Children's centres in England*. London: Sutton Trust.
- Social Metrics Commission (2019) *A New Measure of Poverty for the UK*. London: Social Metrics Commission.
- Stewart, K. and Obolenskaya, P. (2015) 'The coalition's record on the under fives: Policy, spending and outcomes, 2010–2015'. Social Policy in a Cold Climate Working Paper 12. London: CASE, LSE.
- Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Taggart, B. (2004) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Findings from the early primary years*. Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills.
- Taylor-Gooby, P. and Larsen, T.P. (2004) 'The UK – A test case for the liberal welfare state?' In Taylor-Gooby, P. (ed.) *New Risks, New Welfare: The transformation of the European welfare state*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 29–82.
- Townsend, P. (1979) *Poverty in the United Kingdom: A survey of household resources and standards of living*. London: Allen Lane and Penguin Books.
- Trussell Trust (2017) 'UK foodbank use continues to rise as new report highlights growing impact of Universal Credit rollout on foodbanks'. Online. <https://www.trusselltrust.org/2017/04/25/uk-foodbank-use-continues-rise> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Tunstall, R. (2015) 'The Coalition's record on housing: Policy, spending and outcomes, 2010–2015'. CASE Working Paper 18. London: CASE, LSE.
- Veit-Wilson, J. (2019) 'Causes, Not Consequences'. Fabian Society. Online. <https://www.fabians.org.uk/causes-not-consequences/> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Walker, R. (2014) *The Shame of Poverty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

3

Child health and homelessness

Diana Margot Rosenthal and Monica Lakhanpaul

The need for transformative change

The first thousand days of life – from conception to a child’s second birthday – is a critical period for the foundation of development potential, which is influenced by a variety of factors (Cusick and Georgieff n.d.; 1,000 Days 2019). However, many children in the UK do not realise this potential as a result of factors such as poverty and homelessness, requiring cross-sector interventions that address health and education needs together. Systems such as Sure Start were developed especially for this purpose, investment in early years of childhood being considered more likely to improve long-term outcomes compared to any other period in a child’s life (Cattan et al. 2019). But this has now been reduced in the wake of national budget cuts, which put at risk marginalised groups, including homeless children, at the bottom of the barrel in the national agenda setting (RCPCH 2017a).

At Christmas 2018, the charity Shelter UK estimated 131,000 children were homeless in England, Scotland and Wales (Reynolds 2018). The Children’s Commissioner’s estimate for England during that same time was 124,000 children, that is, children living in ‘temporary accommodation’, though a substantial minority were also estimated to spend more than six months in such accommodation. The same report also drew attention to another group of homeless families, with a further 92,000 children staying with friends or family, often in cramped conditions, so-called ‘sofa surfing’ (Children’s Commissioner 2019). The data, the Commissioner concludes, ‘suggests that there could be more than 210,000 homeless children in England’ and approximately 585,000 who either are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless (Children’s Commissioner 2019, 6).

Homelessness is on the rise, with a 62 per cent increase in homeless children between 2013 and 2018 (Reynolds 2018). It is particularly high in London: 87,310, or one child in every 23 children, with a 49 per cent increase over this five-year period. All these numbers are estimates, so the true numbers could be even higher, especially as many children are not registered until they reach school age (UNICEF 2017; Matthews et al. 2019). From an education standpoint, in England, there are five homeless children per school and, again, this rate is magnified in London, with 28 homeless children per school – nearly a whole class size (Reynolds 2018; Trust for London 2019).

There is no concrete, universal definition for being ‘homeless’ that all countries can agree on, especially since there is much hidden homelessness (Fazel et al. 2014), but the definition by Shelter UK provides the bare bones of what homelessness is. Although the public perception of homelessness is equated with rough sleepers, this definition is much wider and includes:

- temporary accommodation through a local authority or housing association
- staying with friends or family or sofa surfing
- staying in a hostel (including refuges), night shelter or bed and breakfast
- squatting
- living in poor conditions that affect health, as well as living apart from families because there is nowhere to live together
- homeless on the street at night. (Shelter 2016; Trust for London 2019)

So, even if children have a roof over their heads, homelessness is defined by the lack of a permanent home, with the high probability that they can be moved to a different location at very short notice (Reynolds 2018).

There is no one common cause for homelessness but, rather, a myriad of structural and individual factors that are interlinked. However, there are common pathways that lead people to become homeless, including:

- friends and family no longer willing/able to provide accommodation
- relationship breakdown, including around the birth of a child, and/or domestic violence
- ending of an assured shorthold tenancy
- mortgage or rent arrears
- loss of other rented or tied housing

- Section 21 ‘no fault’ evictions
- neighbourhood gentrification and rising rent costs
- insecure immigration status and/or no right to work
- individual or family health burdens. (Shelter 2016)

Child homelessness, often accompanied by child poverty, is an urgent public health crisis that raises the threat of increasing child morbidity and mortality. Alongside these health consequences, there are also impacts on education through lack of both school attendance and physical activity or the inability to focus in school due to inadequate sleep or meals (Shelter 2016). Furthermore, adverse or traumatic childhood experiences are shown to risk continuation of this cycle of social exclusion and health injustice (Luchenski et al. 2018).

Children’s services in the UK are at breaking point. In November 2018, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights visited the country and raised concerns about the changes in social support and the impact of Brexit on people living in poverty, and on the government’s intentional neglect, treating these issues as an ‘afterthought’ (Alston 2018). Recently, the Child at Heart campaign was formed by a coalition of over 120 organisations demanding that the chancellor and prime minister stop ‘ignoring children’ and put children at the heart of government spending plans. Evidence was provided to demonstrate the risk of up to 3 million children going hungry during school holidays; the number of children with special needs awaiting provision, which has more than doubled since 2010; and the high number, 90 children, being taken into care on a daily basis (Alston 2018; Darlington 2018).

As it stands, it is difficult to assess whether, and also to ensure that, homeless children are able to achieve optimal nutrition (for example, preventing micronutrient deficiency, faltering growth or obesity) as well as maintain overall good health and well-being, while not falling through the cracks of an eroding welfare state. Even so, the government seems to be making this even more impossible. Health, however, cannot be seen in isolation, since it is intertwined with child development, education and the environment. For example, children living in a dirty environment cannot be left to crawl on the floor due to risk of infection but this inadvertently may have an impact on their ability to reach their development milestones. Similarly, a child living in an environment with fungus on the walls may be at risk of breathing problems, such as asthma, which may ultimately have an impact on their physical activity levels and even on school attendance.

The aims of this chapter, having initially defined homelessness and determined the number of children who are homeless in England, are to:

- summarise current child health issues and health inequalities in the UK
- review studies on the health of homeless children to see what issues are amplified by homelessness
- evaluate interventions and programmes that exist for homeless children in developed countries
- make recommendations towards transformative change.

Child health and inequalities in the UK

Current morbidity and mortality rates in England, and in the UK as a whole, demonstrate the role of inequalities in child health. The UK child mortality rate compares unfavourably with other similarly wealthy member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In 1970, the UK was among the best 25 per cent of countries in terms of child mortality, but had dropped to the bottom quartile by 2008. In comparison with other OECD countries, the UK is now in the bottom third for the following indicators: children in workless households, low birth weight, self-reported health status, obesity, teenage birth rate, youth neither in employment nor education/training, education deprivation, students feeling a lot of pressure at school, and life satisfaction score (OECD 2016; RCPCH 2017b). Inequality and poverty are implicated in a number of health issues, including infant mortality, asthma, cancer, diabetes, obesity, disability, chronic health conditions and overall health of under 5s.

Infant mortality

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the infant mortality rate (IMR) declined from the 1990s due to advances in midwifery and neonatal intensive care, until 2015, when the rate began to increase. Infant mortality is strongly associated with socio-economic status, including levels of maternal deprivation; in 2015, IMRs in England were 5.9 per 1,000 live births in the most deprived areas, compared with 2.6 per 1,000 live births in the least deprived (ONS 2018).

Inequalities are also linked to increased risk of preterm delivery, poor maternal health during pregnancy and low uptake of recommended practices, such as breast-feeding and safe infant sleeping positions. Poor maternal health includes but is not limited to prenatal drug use, prenatal smoking, prenatal alcohol use, poor nutrition and mental health

difficulties (Park et al. 2011). Infant mortality is also significantly higher in very young mothers (age < 20 years), and it is more likely that mothers from more deprived groups and areas give birth at younger ages (ONS 2018). Furthermore, health inequalities are present by race and ethnicity: babies born in 2015 in the ‘White Other’ ethnic group had the lowest IMR, while Pakistani and Black African babies had the highest (ONS 2018).

Asthma

Asthma is the most common chronic health condition in the UK among children, placing a substantial care burden on families, communities and health services; the NHS spends approximately £1 billion a year on the treatment and care of people with asthma (Lakhanpaul et al. 2014; RCPCH 2017b; Asthma UK n.d.). The UK has among the highest prevalence of asthma worldwide and the highest mortality rates for children in Europe. One in every 11 children in the UK, 1.1 million altogether, has asthma; it is the leading cause of hospital admissions for children, and the number of admissions increases as deprivation increases, across all age groups from 1 to 19 years old (RCPCH 2017b). Most of these admissions are preventable, but many families and health professionals are not well equipped to manage asthma or deliver tailored early intervention, and the symptoms and causes are poorly understood, as are the triggers, including second-hand smoke, air pollution and cold weather (RCPCH 2017b, 2017c).

Diabetes

Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune condition controlled by daily insulin injections to manage high glucose levels in the blood (NICE 2014). It has increased in prevalence among children in the UK, with approximately 31,500 children living with Type 1 diabetes (Diabetes UK 2015). There has also been an increase since 2010–11 in poor management of the condition, with glucose levels in the blood above the recommended target (RCPCH 2017b). More deprived groups, in addition to minority ethnic groups, have demonstrated poorer diabetes management, which means increased risk of long-term complications, indicating once again the role of inequalities, inequities and social determinants on health (Viner et al. 2014; Roberts and Bell 2015; NICE 2016).

There is a similar social gradient among children with Type 2 diabetes, which is initially an insulin-resistant state that leads to glucose levels becoming too high. In contrast to Type 1 diabetes, obesity is the most common determinant for Type 2 diabetes in childhood, which can be treated by

diet modification and physical exercise, resulting in weight-loss. According to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), Type 2 diabetes is more common in ethnic minorities, including people of South Asian, Chinese, black African and African-Caribbean origin, and among the most deprived socio-economic groups who are two-and-a-half times more likely than average to have this illness at any given age. Despite the high prevalence of children and young people with either diabetes condition, NICE reports that fewer than 20 per cent of the affected population receive the basic care recommended in their guidelines (NICE 2016). Even though there is an obesity epidemic in the UK, data is inadequate; according to the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH 2017a), there are only two indicators used to measure obesity – healthy weight at the start of school and healthy weight at the end of primary school.

Disability

In the UK, between 14 and 23 per cent of children and young people have been identified as disabled, with higher prevalence among low-income families (RCPCH 2017b). Special educational needs and disability (SEND) is the indicator that provides a measure of the prevalence of children in the UK identified as having a learning difficulty and/or disability (SEND Code of Practice 2015). Once again, there is a strong association between low income and high rates of SEND in the population. A 2016 report identified SEND and social gradient as risk factors for poor educational outcomes and experience of poverty in adulthood (Parsons and Platt 2013; Shaw et al. 2016). In addition, raising children with disabilities is more costly; the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has estimated that a severely disabled child would cost parents at least three times as much as a child without a disability, ‘if the goods and services regarded as essential were all being purchased’ (Dobson and Middleton 1998, 2).

The health of homeless children

Homelessness is complex and multidimensional, with many dramatic health effects on homeless individuals, including higher rates of premature mortality, infectious diseases and mental health disorders compared to the general population (Lancet Public Health 2017). It also amplifies barriers, both individual and structural, to accessing health-care services and maintaining optimal health, ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’ (WHO 1948). However, there have been few studies that link homelessness specifically

with child health, and those that do exist have generally been of poor quality in terms of study design, selection bias and data collection methods. However, they still remain an important component in designing future evidence-based interventions (Fitzpatrick-Lewis et al. 2011). The remainder of this chapter will focus on studies and interventions that specifically address homeless children and their health, which will contribute to our recommendations for transformational change (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2).

Mental health, behaviour and cognitive development

Sandra Feodor Nilsson and her colleagues utilised the first nationwide register-based cohort study with data from more than 1 million children aged from birth to 16 years old in Denmark, to assess parental homelessness and its association with children's risk of psychiatric disorders. Five per cent of children were diagnosed with any psychiatric disorder during the study period, with an incidence of 15.1 cases per 1,000 person-years among children with at least one parent with a history of homelessness, compared with 6.0 among those whose parents had not been homeless. Furthermore, the risk was higher with maternal than paternal homelessness (Nilsson et al. 2017).

Other studies have compared the mental health of homeless children with a comparison group. A study in Los Angeles County of 169 children between 6 and 12 years old and their parents, living in 18 emergency homeless family shelters, found that 78 per cent of these children suffered from depression, a behavioural problem or severe educational delay. Even more so, the sample of sheltered homeless children was almost twenty times more likely to have depressive symptoms than children in the general population, one-and-a-half times more likely to have symptoms of a behavioural disorder and four times more likely to score at or below the tenth percentile in receptive vocabulary and reading. Despite the high level of children in the study with a problem, only one-third of the parents were aware of any problem, and few children had ever received mental health care and/or special education (Zima et al. 1994). Such studies demonstrate how there can be various risk factors that have a snowballing effect on a homeless child's health, including poverty, stress, family situation, frequent moves, missing school and lack of overall stability.

Two cross-sectional studies in Birmingham (UK) compared a group of homeless children and their families with a comparison group (Vostanis et al. 1997, 1998). In one of these studies, which was also longitudinal, 58 rehoused families with 103 children aged between 2 and 16 years were compared with a group of families of low socio-economic status with 54 children in stable housing. Mental health problems were

Table 3.1 Studies of homeless children

Author	Category	Study design	Country	Population description
Nilsson et al. (2017)	Mental Health, Behaviour, and Cognitive Development	Register-based cohort	Denmark	1,072,882 children, aged 0–16 years
Zima et al. (1994)	Mental Health, Behaviour, and Cognitive Development	Cross-sectional	USA, Los Angeles County	169 school-age children and their parents living in 18 emergency homeless family shelters
Vostanis et al. (1998)	Mental Health, Behaviour, and Cognitive Development	Cross-sectional Longitudinal	UK, Birmingham	58 rehoused families with 103 children aged 2–16 years and 21 comparison families of low socio-economic status in stable housing, with 54 children
Vostanis et al. (1997)	Mental Health, Behaviour, and Cognitive Development	Cross-sectional	UK, Birmingham	113 homeless families (249 children aged 2 through 16 years) and 29 comparison families (83 children)
Fantuzzo et al. (2013)	Mental Health, Behaviour, and Cognitive Development	Cohort	USA, Philadelphia	Third grade students in 2005–6 ($n = 10,639$)
Park et al. (2011)	Asthma	Prospective cohort	USA, 20 large cities	2,631 low-income children up to 5 years old: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless: ($n = 259$) • Doubled-up: ($n = 621$) • Housed low-income: ($n = 1,751$)
McLean et al. (2004)	Asthma	Cross-sectional	USA, New York City	740 children whose families entered 3 family shelters
Schwarz et al. (2008a)	Infectious Diseases	Cross-sectional	USA, Baltimore	336 children aged 2 years up to 18 years and 170 caregivers
Kerker et al. (2011)	Mortality	Retrospective	USA, New York City	102,771 family members (45,756 adults and 57,015 children) housed by the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) family shelter system for at least 1 night

significantly higher among rehoused mothers and their children than in the comparison group, and mothers with a history of abuse and poor social integration were more likely to have children with persistent mental health problems. Comparing the development of communication, homeless children remained more delayed than the comparison group, with homeless children's age-equivalent in communication (7.8 years) significantly lower than their chronological age (8.5 years).

In the second study, psychosocial characteristics were evaluated in a sample of 113 homeless families (249 children aged between 2 and 16 years) admitted to seven local hostels and compared with 29 housed families (83 children) matched for socio-economic status. Homeless children were more likely to have histories of abuse and be on the at-risk child protection register. In addition, the likelihood of homeless children attending early childhood centres and school decreased after admission to the hostel. In contrast to the comparison group, they had delayed communication and higher Child Behaviour Checklist scores. In both studies, there were also significant impacts of homelessness on maternal health, which is another area that needs to be addressed simultaneously.

In Philadelphia, children who had their first homeless episode when toddlers had a 60 per cent increase in odds of not meeting proficiency in mathematics compared with children who first experienced homelessness in elementary school. However, the timing of the first homeless episode was not significantly related to an increase in reading non-proficiency (Fantuzzo et al. 2013).

Asthma and disability

As previously mentioned, asthma is the most common chronic health condition among children in the UK. There have been studies that suggest homelessness amplifies the prevalence of asthma and its symptoms in children, but research is lacking in the UK, while the United States has produced a small archive of studies on the subject. In a prospective cohort study of 20 large US cities, there were three sample groups of 2,631 low-income children followed up to 5 years of age: 259 homeless, 621 doubled-up and 1,751 housed low-income. 'Homeless' was defined as living in temporary housing, in a group shelter, or on the street at the time of the interview, or in the 12 months before the interview the mother staying in a shelter, an abandoned building, an automobile, or any other place not meant for regular housing, even for one night; 'doubled-up' referred to having lived or currently living with family or friends but not paying rent, or if in the past 12 months the mother had moved in with other people because of financial problems.

Homeless children had a higher rate of physical disability than others: at 1 and 3 years old, 7 and 8 per cent of these children, respectively, had a physical disability, compared with 2 to 3 per cent of the housed low-income group. The rate of asthma was high across all three groups of children, ranging from 20 to 28 per cent at 5 years old. Scores from the Child Behaviour Checklist suggested that children who experienced homelessness or doubling-up are more likely than housed low-income children to have an emotional or behavioural problem in conjunction with a chronic illness such as asthma (Park et al. 2011).

In New York City, in a random sample of 740 homeless children, 39.8 per cent had asthma, which was more than six times the national rate for children in the late 1990s (McLean 2004; Myers 2000). In many deprived groups, what triggers asthma symptoms is not usually recognised and they are often undertreated, resulting in preventable hospital admissions. In the total sample, only 26.9 per cent had a prior physician diagnosis of asthma, while 12.9 per cent of the children did not have a prior physician diagnosis of asthma although they had previously reported symptoms consistent with moderate or severe persistent asthma. In addition, 48.6 per cent of children with severe persistent asthma had at least one emergency department visit in the past year as did 24.8 per cent of children with symptoms of mild intermittent asthma (McLean et al. 2004).

Infectious diseases

The prevalence and incidence of infectious diseases are higher in the homeless population, and are accompanied by poor vaccine coverage (Schwarz et al. 2008a). In Baltimore, a cross-sectional study investigated Hepatitis C virus (HCV) seroprevalence among 170 caregivers and 336 children (aged 2 to 18 years old) living in shelters and transitional housing; 19 per cent of caregivers were seropositive with 59 per cent previously unaware of their HCV serostatus, though none of the children were seropositive. The strongest predictor of HCV seropositive status in the caregivers (71 per cent) was a history of having ever injected drugs (Schwarz et al. 2008b). There have been studies and intervention programmes to improve vaccine coverage for infectious diseases among the homeless population, described later in the chapter.

Mortality

In the UK, more deprived groups of children are at greater risk of mortality. The same holds true for homeless children, often suffering poverty and unstable accommodation, as demonstrated in the United States.

There is evidence from New York City, dating back to 2001–3, that the mortality rate is nearly twice as high among homeless children compared with children citywide and in low-income neighbourhoods. These deaths of homeless children occurred outside the shelter system and were mostly attributed to external or unintentional injuries, while some were caused by assaults (Kerker et al. 2011).

Interventions and programmes for homeless children

Despite the evidence for the vulnerability of homeless children to poorer health outcomes, there have been few documented studies that principally address interventions for these children. Upon review, the common interventions were health advocacy, vaccine-uptake programmes, education and housing provisions (see Table 3.2). These studies can be seen as models for future intervention and programme implementation that can be tailored to homeless children in England, and in the UK as a whole.

A settings-based approach has been common in the context of implementing programmes in shelters, ‘settings-based’ meaning the focus on ‘health potentials inherent in the social and institutional settings of everyday life’ within settings as diverse as schools, workplaces, hospitals, prisons and markets, to geographic regions (Kickbusch 1996; Dooris 2006). In order to improve hepatitis B virus (HBV) vaccine coverage among homeless children and knowledge among caregivers, a shelter-based vaccine programme in Baltimore used a culturally appropriate, educational HBV video in a randomised control trial. In the whole group of children aged 2 to 18 years old, vaccine coverage increased from 68 to 85 per cent over the course of three visits (Schwarz et al. 2008a). In Florida, a shelter-based stress management intervention targeting elementary school-age children resulted in improved self-esteem and social competency and reduced maladaptive behaviour problems. The intervention consisted of four weekly training sessions with exercises for identifying their own symptoms of stress and managing their stress, including deep breathing and muscle relaxation. Homework was assigned and daily practice was encouraged by researchers and shelter staff (Davey and Neff 2001).

Table 3.2 Interventions and programmes for homeless children

Author	Intervention	Study design	Country (area/city)	Population description
Smith et al. (1995)	Substance abuse treatment programme	18-month follow-up	USA (St Louis)	149 homeless mothers with young children
Reilly et al. (2004)	Health advocacy intervention	Quasi-experimental, three-armed controlled trial	UK (Liverpool)	400 adults living in temporary accommodation and registered with the health centre
Graham-Jones et al. (2004)	Health advocacy intervention	Quasi-experimental, three-armed controlled trial	UK (Liverpool)	400 adults living in temporary accommodation and registered with the health centre
Schwarz et al. (2008a)	Shelter-based HBV vaccine programme	Randomised controlled trial	USA (Baltimore)	328 children and adolescents cared for by 170 caregivers
Davey and Neff (2001)	Shelter-based stress-reduction group intervention targeting self-esteem and behaviour problems	Randomised control trial: pre- and post-test	USA (Central Florida)	52 elementary-school-age children aged 6–11 living in one of two family-shelter facilities
Yousey et al. (2007)	Education programme: nutritional training developed by a registered dietician and taught to mothers and cafeteria staff	Programme evaluation: before and after measures	USA (North Carolina)	56 mothers with children aged 18 months to 6 years and 3 cafeteria staff

Poor nutrition can result in obesity, micronutrient deficiency and faltering growth among children, especially in those from more deprived backgrounds. Good nutrition improves immune function, cognition and brain and physical growth. However, there is a lack of studies on homeless children and potential nutrition interventions. In the United States, the Early Childhood Enhanced Health Program was also implemented in a shelter setting in North Carolina targeting children aged 18 months to 6 years. It consisted of nutrition training, with four classes taught to mothers by clinic nurses and three classes taught to cafeteria staff by a dietician; mothers demonstrated an improved nutritional knowledge (Yousey et al. 2007).

In 2017, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) and Child Poverty Action Group gathered valuable data on views of how poverty affects child health from an online survey of paediatricians throughout the UK; the qualitative data was consistent in reporting how food insecurity and the inability to afford basic essentials is detrimental to the health of a child. As a result of poverty or low income, paediatricians reported poorer nutrition and growth below expectation, dilution of milk due to inability to afford formula milk, reliance on food banks and acute care services, obese or overweight children due to inability to afford 'healthy food', and parents often reducing their food intake to provide for their children (RCPCH 2017c). However, there are no UK interventions to address this need.

The other studies to include homeless children or specifically address their caregivers have been health advocacy and substance-abuse treatment programmes. In the UK, a health advocacy intervention was assessed in two controlled trials, and found that when a health advocate intervened and supported the respondents earlier in their stay in temporary housing, their health-related quality of life outcomes improved greatly in comparison with the control group who received usual care and no advocacy. The key principles of the health advocacy approach were:

- the health advocate as an additional resource in an established mainstream service
- a flexible and holistic approach to health care with interventions tailored to the needs of the homeless individual and/or family
- the use of advocacy to help homeless people's voice to be heard and health needs met
- a collaborative, integrated approach, as health is closely aligned to social and housing needs.

In terms of implementation, the health advocate was to:

- give adequate information, both written and verbal, and not assume that people knew how to access primary health-care services
- provide health checks, family planning information and practical advice, act as a liaison and provide referrals to social services, child protection services, health visitors, and more. (Graham-Jones et al. 2004; Reilly et al. 2004)

An intervention that addressed homeless families focused on substance-abusing mothers of young children entering a therapeutic community. The intervention was a substance-abuse treatment programme, and engagement with the programme reduced alcohol and drug problems and improved housing stability. Researchers concluded that housing provisions in addition to participation in a therapeutic community could enable homeless mothers to successfully engage in substance-abuse programmes (Smith et al. 1995). Likewise, many systematic reviews have found that case management and supportive housing interventions have the greatest impact on reducing substance abuse (Hwang and Burns 2014).

Towards transformative change

Child homelessness is a complex issue requiring an integration of coordinated solutions, rather than simply placing a 'band-aid' over the issue. Poverty and homelessness are continuously threatening optimal nutrition, oral hygiene, mental health, vaccine uptake, and more. Evidence from international studies has demonstrated that this sub-population is particularly vulnerable to malnutrition and poor health outcomes, including mental health, which in turn have both short- and long-term impacts on learning and health. They are also vulnerable due to their mobility and ever-changing, disruptive circumstances, which contribute to not engaging with services such as primary care and an over-reliance on acute services, which represents both an economic drain and a failure of preventive action. There is a vital need to develop tailored, responsive interventions to meet the needs of this vulnerable group, to both optimise their health and well-being, and ensure they are able to learn and engage in other important activities. Given the importance of the first thousand days, it is also essential that we intervene early.

At present, many children are falling through the gaps in health care and early years services, which continue to bear the brunt of government budget cuts. According to the RCPCH (2017a), the government urgently needs to adopt a 'child health in all policies' approach to decision-making

and policy development. In the wake of government budget cuts, many public spaces that provided services and a safety net for marginalised groups have been dismantled, including children's centres, while the voluntary sector has been left the sole provider of some important services in the absence and inattention of government. Even schools and teachers are now relying on food banks and charities themselves to ensure that their students have food to eat and clean clothes (Alston 2018). Cuts are also being made with a lack of transparency and without consideration for their broader impact on child health.

Homeless children are future adults, and without proper support, are at risk of following the same cycle of homelessness and exclusion in adulthood. The government needs to take responsibility towards these young children to give them a better future; the burden should not be on the underfunded voluntary sector. There needs to be policy in place to target vulnerable groups with a predisposition to homelessness, in order to prevent homelessness from happening in the first place. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, addressing childhood poverty is paramount in prevention policy and practice (Bramley and Fitzpatrick 2018).

In addition, there needs to be better policy for tracking homeless children. We recommend a national register for under 5s so that they do not fall through the cracks of the fragmented early childhood education system. The current lack of this national register prevents referrals across early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, made worse by the constraints imposed by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. According to the Children's Society (2014), live birth data is not shared with children's centres, which creates another barrier and gap in the possibility of having coordinated care and accounting for all children born in suboptimal environments. Furthermore, homeless families in temporary accommodation can be moved several times from place to place without information from ECEC services previously used following them, creating further isolation and inaccessibility to services. ECEC services should work with social services to create a coordinated response for this vulnerable group, removing a major barrier to homeless children seeking regular or routine care. The introduction of case management could bridge the gap between health and social services and improve the delivery of these services.

Long-term chronic health conditions and child poverty are only expected to increase. According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur, the Equality and Human Rights Commission predicts that an additional 1.5 million children in the UK will fall into poverty between 2010 and 2021/22, which will have detrimental consequences on child health and well-being for future generations (Alston 2018). For example, analyses using the longitudinal British Cohort Study have demonstrated the social

distribution of homelessness and shown how adverse life experiences in childhood, including poverty, are predictors of homelessness in adulthood (Figure 3.1; Bramley and Fitzpatrick 2018).

Research is essential. The UK needs to fund research and controlled trials that specifically address child health and examine the impact of the individual, social, financial and structural factors associated with homelessness. Funding research will also help enable the government to develop evidence-based strategies and interventions to be coordinated and implemented in the UK to reach this vulnerable population.

In addition to research, there needs to be greater emphasis on data collection and tracking children. This will include better-quality data, including the introduction of more health indicators that are measured on a more regular basis, to reflect the age and growth periods of a child, which can then inform what areas of child services need more funding and what part of the government is accountable. The RCPC (2017a)

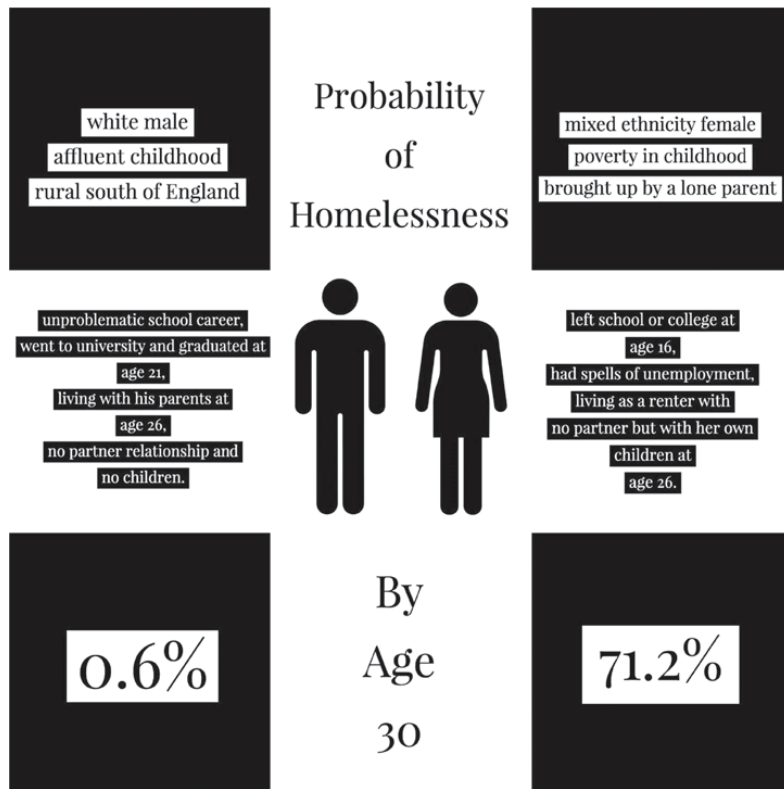


Figure 3.1 Probability of homelessness by age 30 (Source: based on an example by Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018)

recommends extending the National Child Measurement Programme to measure children after birth, before school and during adolescence, but the government has not made any significant changes based on this recommendation. Better measures and indicators of child health and well-being are vital because these will also be measures of inequalities and inequities.

The studies discussed in this chapter demonstrate a need for screening and health assessment of mothers or pregnant women who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. There should be a greater focus on community-based prevention measures in low-income areas and health promotion among high-risk children and their families. Maternal health needs to come to the foreground because healthy weight, breastfeeding, smoking cessation and mental health all have an impact on child health, too. Furthermore, there is a need for mental health and educational interventions for homeless children in shelter settings, which also need to include parental education in order to identify illness more efficiently and utilise the most appropriate, streamlined health-care service, instead of relying on accident and emergency departments. We also recommend interventions, and research to monitor the impact of these interventions, that support homeless mothers with child development; but at the same time, these interventions need to be sensitive to the environments that the children are living in and cannot be simply transferred from other environments where children have room to play.

Such measures could potentially prevent some homelessness or mitigate some of its effects, though not all. Much more is needed. The child's whole environment influences the child's health and development, and requires a cross-sector approach involving housing, health and education all working together; current complacency with an uncoordinated system inevitably results in exclusion. But the biggest detriment to homeless children is the indifference and austerity regime of the government, and the unreasonable burden this has placed on the voluntary sector. What is urgently needed is the provision of stable, suitable and genuinely affordable housing in communities; and to restore cuts in public funding, prioritising child health.

Further reading

We recommend three literature reviews due to the scarcity of primary evidence on this important issue of child health and homelessness. 'What works in inclusion health: Overview of effective interventions for marginalised and excluded populations' by Luchenski et al. (2018) is in *The Lancet*, and is available free at [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(17\)31959-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(17)31959-1). The authors conducted a systematic review of evidence for effective health interventions of socially excluded people (for example, people with a history

of substance abuse, sex work, imprisonment and homelessness) in high-income countries. However, from this review, the dearth of evidence on child homelessness or other childhood adverse life experiences is evident.

The other two reviews are by Hwang and Burns (2014) – ‘Health interventions for people who are homeless’, also in *The Lancet*, available free at [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(14\)61133–8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61133–8), and by Hwang et al. (2005) – ‘Interventions to improve the health of the homeless: A systematic review’ – in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, available at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2005.06.017>. These articles cover interventions intended to improve the health of the homeless; they categorised subpopulations of homeless people by health condition, gender, families with children and number of visits to acute health services such as emergency departments and hospital admissions. Both provide similar evidence and argument for transformative change on the research agenda.

References

- 1,000 Days (2019) ‘Why 1,000 Days?’ Online. <https://thousanddays.org/why-1000-days/> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Alston, P. (2018) ‘Statement on Visit to the United Kingdom, by Professor Philip Alston, United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights’. UN Poverty report. Online. <https://www.nxgtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/UN-poverty-report.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Asthma UK (n.d.) ‘Asthma facts and statistics’. Online. <https://www.asthma.org.uk/about/media/facts-and-statistics/> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Bramley, G. and Fitzpatrick, S. (2018) ‘Homelessness in the UK: Who is most at risk?’ *Housing Studies*, 33 (1), 96–116.
- Cattan, S., Conti, G., Farquharson, C. and Ginja, R. (2019) *The Health Effects of Sure Start*. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies. Online. <https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/R155-The-health-effects-of-Sure-Start.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Children’s Commissioner (2019) *Bleak Houses: Tackling the problem of family homelessness in England*. London: Children’s Commissioner for England. Online. <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/cco-bleak-houses-report-august-2019.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Children’s Society (2014) *The Right Start: How to support early intervention through initial contact with families*. Online. http://policyinpractice.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/live_birth_data_report_-_final.pdf (accessed 15 May 2020).
- Cusick, S. and Georgieff, M.K. (n.d.). ‘The first 1,000 days of life: The brain’s window of opportunity’. UNICEF. Online. <https://www.unicef-irc.org/article/958-the-first-1000-days-of-life-the-brains-window-of-opportunity.html> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Darlington, C. (2018) ‘More than 120 national organisations accuse Government of ‘ignoring children’. Children England. Online. https://www.childrenengland.org.uk/news/more-than-120-national-organisations-accuse-government-of-ignoring-children#_edn1 (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Davey, T.L. and Neff, J.A. (2001) ‘A shelter-based stress-reduction group intervention targeting self-esteem, social competence, and behavior problems among homeless children’. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, 10 (3), 279–91.
- Diabetes UK (2015) ‘Facts and Stats’. Online. [https://www.diabetes.org.uk/Documents/Position-statements/Diabetes UK Facts and Stats_Dec 2015.pdf](https://www.diabetes.org.uk/Documents/Position-statements/Diabetes%20UK%20Facts%20and%20Stats_Dec%202015.pdf) (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Dobson, B. and Middleton, S. (1998) ‘Paying to care: The cost of childhood disability’. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Online. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/paying-care-cost-childhood-disability> (accessed 10 January 2020).

- Dooris, M. (2006) 'Health promoting settings: Future directions'. *Promotion and Education*, 13 (1), 2–4.
- Fantuzzo, J., LeBoeuf, W., Brumley, B. and Perlman, S. (2013) 'A population-based inquiry of homeless episode characteristics and early educational well-being'. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35 (6), 966–72.
- Fazel, S., Geddes, J.R. and Kushel, M. (2014) 'The health of homeless people in high-income countries: Descriptive epidemiology, health consequences, and clinical and policy recommendations'. *The Lancet*, 384, (9953), 1529–40.
- Fitzpatrick-Lewis, D., Ganann, R., Krishnaratne, S., Ciliska, D., Kouyoumdjian, F. and Hwang, S.W. (2011) 'Effectiveness of interventions to improve the health and housing status of homeless people: A rapid systematic review'. *BMC Public Health*, 11, Article 638.
- Graham-Jones, S., Reilly, S. and Gaulton, E. (2004) 'Tackling the needs of the homeless: A controlled trial of health advocacy'. *Health and Social Care in the Community*, 12 (3), 221–32.
- Hwang, S.W. and Burns, T. (2014) 'Health interventions for people who are homeless'. *The Lancet*, 384 (9953), 1541–7.
- Hwang, S.W., Tolomiczenko, G., Kouyoumdjian, F.G. and Garner, R.E. (2005) 'Interventions to improve the health of the homeless: A systematic review'. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 29 (4). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2005.06.017>.
- Kerker, B.D., Bainbridge, J., Kennedy, J., Bennani, Y., Agerton, T., Marder, D., Forgioni, L., Faciano, A. and Thorpe, L.E. (2011) 'A population-based assessment of the health of homeless families in New York City, 2001–2003'. *American Journal of Public Health*, 101 (3), 546–53.
- Kickbusch, I. (1996) 'Tribute to Aaron Antonovsky – “what creates health”'. *Health Promotion International*, 11, 5–6.
- Lakhanpaul, M., Bird, D., Manikam, L., Culley, L., Perkins, G., Hudson, N., Wilson, J. and Johnson, M. (2014) 'A systematic review of explanatory factors of barriers and facilitators to improving asthma management in South Asian children'. *BMC Public Health*, 11, Article 403.
- Lancet Public Health (2017) 'Homeless people: their health and their children's health'. *The Lancet Public Health*, 2 (12), e529.
- Luchenski, S., Maguire, N., Aldridge, R.W., Hayward, A., Story, A., Perri, P., Fitzpatrick, S. and Hewett, N. (2018) 'What works in inclusion health: Overview of effective interventions for marginalised and excluded populations'. *The Lancet*, 391, 266–80.
- Matthews, E., Blair, P., Sisodiya, S., Jones, S., Sebire, N., Behr, E. and Fleming, P. (2019) 'National registry for sudden unexpected deaths of infants and children in England: Why do we need one and do families want one?' *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 104 (10), 989–93.
- McLean, D.E., Bowen, S., Drezner, K., Rowe, A., Sherman, P., Schroeder, S., Redlener, K. and Redlener, I. (2004) 'Asthma among homeless children: Undercounting and undertreating the underserved'. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 155 (3), 244–9.
- Myers, T.R. (2000) 'Pediatric asthma epidemiology: incidence, morbidity, mortality'. *Respiratory Care Clinics of North America*, 6, 1–14.
- NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) (2014) 'Diabetes in children and young people: Diagnosis and management of type 1 and type 2 diabetes in children and young people, final scope'. Online. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng18/documents/diabetes-in-children-and-young-people-final-scope2> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) (2016) 'Diabetes (type 1 and type 2) in children and young people: Diagnosis and management'. Online. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng18> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Nilsson, S.F., Laursen, T.M., Hjorthøj, C., Thorup, A. and Nordentoft, M. (2017) 'Risk of psychiatric disorders in offspring of parents with a history of homelessness during childhood and adolescence in Denmark: A nationwide, register-based, cohort study'. *The Lancet Public Health*, 2 (12), e541–e550.
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2016) 'How's Life in the United Kingdom?' Online. <https://www.oecd.org/unitedkingdom/Better-Life-Initiative-country-note-United-Kingdom.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- ONS (Office for National Statistics) (2018) 'Child and infant mortality in England and Wales: 2016. Stillbirths, infant and childhood deaths occurring annually in England and Wales, and associated risk factors'. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/y4we5d49> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Park, J.M., Fertig, A.R. and Allison, P.D. (2011) 'Physical and mental health, cognitive development, and health care use by housing status of low-income young children in 20 American cities: A prospective cohort study'. *American Journal of Public Health*, 101, 255–61.
- Parsons, S. and Platt, L. (2013) *Disability among Young Children: Prevalence, heterogeneity and socio-economic disadvantage*. London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies. Online. <https://cls.ucl>.

- ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/CLS-WP-2013-11-Disability-among-young-children-S-Parsons-L-Platt.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- RCPCH (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health) (2017a) *State of Child Health: England – two years on*. London: Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/y54rxac7> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- RCPCH (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health) (2017b) *State of Child Health 2017 – full report*. London: Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/ue2u72p> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- RCPCH (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health) (2017c) *Poverty and Child Health: Views from the frontline*. London: Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/v4ra2gk> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Relly, S., Graham-Jones, S., Gaulton, E. and Davidson, E. (2004) 'Can a health advocate for homeless families reduce workload for the primary healthcare team? A controlled trial'. *Health and Social Care in the Community*, 12 (1), 63–74.
- Reynolds, L. (2018) *The Housing Crisis Generation: How many children are homeless in Britain*. London: Shelter. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/vulwcqm> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Roberts, J. and Bell, R. (2015) *Social Inequalities in the Leading Causes of Early Death: A life course approach*. London: UCL Institute of Health Equity. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/sbfhpn> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Schwarz, K., Garrett, B., Lee, J., Thompson, D., Thiel, T., Alter, M.J. and Strathdee, S. (2008a) 'Positive impact of a shelter-based hepatitis B vaccine program in homeless Baltimore children and adolescents'. *Journal of Urban Health*, 85 (2), 228–38.
- Schwarz, K., Garrett, B., Alter, M.J., Thompson, D. and Strathdee, S. (2008b) 'Seroprevalence of HCV infection in homeless Baltimore families'. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 19 (2), 580–7.
- SEND Code of Practice (2015) 'Special educational needs and disability (SEND)'. Online. <https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/special-educational-needs-disabilities> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Shaw, B., Bernardes, E., Trethewey, A. and Menzies, L. (2016) 'Special educational needs and their links to poverty'. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Online. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/special-educational-needs-and-their-links-poverty> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Shelter (2016) *GreenBook – 50 Years On: The reality of homelessness for families today*. London: Shelter. Online. https://www.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1307361/GreenBook_-_A_report_on_homelessness.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Smith, E.M., North, C.S. and Fox, L.W. (1995) 'Eighteen-month follow-up data on a treatment program for homeless substance abusing mothers'. *Journal of Addictive Diseases*, 14 (4), 57–72.
- Trust for London (2019) 'London's Poverty Profile'. Online. <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/boroughs/overview-of-london-boroughs/> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) (2017) 'Birth registration'. Online. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/birth-registration/> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Viner, R.M., Hargreaves, D.S., Coffey, C., Patton, G.C. and Wolfe, I. (2014) 'Deaths in young people aged 0–24 years in the UK compared with the EU15+ countries, 1970–2008: Analysis of the WHO Mortality Database'. *The Lancet*, 384 (9946), 880–92.
- Vostanis, P., Grattan, E. and Cumella, S. (1998) 'Mental health problems of homeless children and families: Longitudinal study'. *BMJ*, 316 (7135), 899–902.
- Vostanis, P., Grattan, E., Cumella, S. and Winchester, C. (1997) 'Psychosocial functioning of homeless children'. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 36 (7), 881–9.
- West, A. and Noden, P. (2016) *Public Funding of Early Years Education in England: An historical perspective*. Clare Market Papers, 21. London: London School of Economics. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/venzr3q> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- WHO (World Health Organization) (1948) *Constitution of the World Health Organization*. Geneva: World Health Organization. Online. <http://apps.who.int/gb/bd/PDF/bd47/EN/constitution-en.pdf?ua=1> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Yousey, Y., Leake, J., Wdowik, M. and Janken, J. (2007) 'Education in a homeless shelter to improve the nutrition of young children'. *Public Health Nursing*, 24 (3), 249–55.
- Zima, B.T., Wells, K.B. and Freeman, H.E. (1994) 'Emotional and behavioral problems and severe academic delays among sheltered homeless children in Los Angeles County'. *American Journal of Public Health*, 84 (2), 260–4.

4

Towards a unified and unifying ECEC system from birth to 6 years

Peter Moss

The need for transformative change

From policy neglect ...

The Thomas Coram Research Unit (TCRU) at the UCL Institute of Education, University College London (IOE) was established in 1973, as a government-funded centre led by an inspirational social researcher, Jack Tizard. Among his previous work, Jack had demonstrated the necessity and feasibility of transformational change in the lives of children with severe learning disabilities (termed, in those days, ‘mentally subnormal’) who needed residential care. Rather than continuing incarceration in large impersonal institutions, so-called ‘subnormality hospitals’, under an impoverished medical regime, the Brooklands Project showed conclusively, with a controlled trial, that these children could not only survive but thrive if treated like any other children unable to live with their families, and if placed in a small children’s home with staff trained to take a developmental rather than a custodial approach (Tizard 1964).

Now with his new research centre, the TCRU, which as a young researcher I was fortunate to be part of, Jack turned his attention to what he considered another blatant failure of public policy towards children: early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. His analysis of this failure was forceful and wide-ranging. There was insufficient provision: ‘the shortfall of places for employed mothers ... is enormous’ (Tizard et al. 1976, 137), Jack taking the view that ‘working mothers’ (TCRU only later changed to talking about ‘working parents’) should be actively supported by public policy, not criticised or cold-shouldered.

But the problems went far deeper. The whole system, if it merited such a term, was rotten. Existing services were fragmented and divisive:

The present hotch-potch of pre-school provision (day nurseries, factory nurseries [today we would say ‘workplace nurseries’], nursery schools, nursery classes, reception classes, playgroups, minders) and the distribution of children among them, reflect a mixture of historical accident – the needs (of parents especially) for particular hours of care, the local availability of services and the criteria of admission. The needs of the child rarely figure. Each type of service has its own set of hours, not normally adjusted to the needs of parents and child ... Social segregation occurs when services are neither locally based nor multi-purpose. (Tizard et al. 1976, 215)

Fragmented provision was grafted on to a flawed structure, with government responsibility for services split between welfare and education, both nationally and locally. ‘The present division of responsibility between social services and education authorities makes little sense. Not only is the division difficult to justify, but it perpetuates anomalies of payment, availability and placement ... The present situation makes coordinated planning virtually impossible’ (Tizard et al. 1976, 214).

Last, but not least, Jack asked ‘why five?’, questioning the early age of compulsory schooling in England compared with most other European countries, and why so many children actually started primary school even earlier.

A system so flawed needed root-and-branch change; nothing else would do. Jack wanted a more integrated service, which would in turn ‘bring the question of “why five?” into even sharper focus’. Integration meant ‘the education and care of young children [should be] the responsibility of one authority at national and local levels ... [covering] education and care throughout the day and year – not just during school hours and terms’ (Tizard et al. 1976, 214). Jack also emphasised the centrality of health to an integrated early years service: ‘if nursery centres are to provide really adequate care for young children, they must have easy access to specialist health and psychological services which must be closely involved in what goes on in the centres’ (Tizard et al. 1976, 217).

At the heart of an integrated service, replacing the existing dysfunctional ‘hotch-potch’ of provision, was to be a new form of provision, the children’s centre: ‘Our criteria [for a transformed service] suggest that the basic form of service should be through multi-purpose children’s

centres offering part- and full-time care with medical and other services, to a very local catchment area, but there is much room for experimentation' (Tizard et al. 1976, 220). As well as being local (Jack wanted a children's centre within 'pram-pushing distance' for all families) and multi-purpose, this new form of service should be inclusive – open to all in its catchment area, responsive to family needs and free:

For a society that provides free education ... and a free child health service, a free pre-school service is a logical corollary ... The main aim of an integrated pre-school centre should be to offer high quality care for young children in its catchment area, at the age and, within reason, for the hours that their parents want. The service must therefore be available to all families, and not selective in its intake, and must be based on demand, not need. (Tizard et al. 1976, 214, 216)

This idea of the children's centre was more than a utopian vision. Working with local authorities and voluntary organisations, Jack Tizard initiated and developed two prototypes in London: the Thomas Coram Children's Centre in Camden and the Dorothy Gardner Children's Centre in Westminster. Sadly, though, governments of the day and subsequently, of both right and left, continued to pay little attention to children's centres in particular and to ECEC in general. At a time when, as we shall see, Sweden was starting on the long road to developing a fully integrated, universal early childhood service, England lacked the foresight to set out on a similar journey whose direction had so clearly been mapped out.

This scene of dysfunction and policy neglect lasted for many years after the end of the Second World War (when the need of wartime industries for women workers had led to a brief expansion of nursery provision), despite the efforts of reformers to set out alternatives. The rest of the chapter will examine what happened once ECEC belatedly became a policy priority and how movement to a fully integrated system stalled; show what a fully integrated ECEC system looks like in practice, taking the case of Sweden; and, finally, discuss steps that need to be taken if England is to grasp the nettle of transformative change and move at last to a unified and unifying system.

... to policy mainstream

The years passed by and little changed for ECEC in England. Come 1997, the system was still split between 'day care' or 'childcare' (nurseries, childminders, playgroups) and 'education' (school-based provision),

services were still fragmented and most children still started at primary school before the age of 5 years. The result was inconsistency, incoherence and inequality between services; unnecessary discontinuity for many children and inconvenience for many parents; services that were socially divisive, different types providing for different purposes and for different families; and a start to primary schooling that pitched children into formal education at an early age and left the early childhood sector truncated and weak. But that year held out the prospect of transformational change. Under a 'New Labour' government, ECEC moved out from the policy backwaters, where it had stagnated for so many years, into the policy mainstream, carried along on a surge of new-found political commitment, an outpouring of numerous policy initiatives and a surge of increased resources.

Yet despite this attention, the major problems, so clearly documented by Jack Tizard and others back in the 1970s, remained largely unresolved (for a detailed account and assessment of post-1997 reforms, see Cohen, Moss, Petrie and Wallace 2004, 2018). A study for UNESCO (Kaga et al. 2010) has argued that full integration requires action on seven structural dimensions. 'New Labour' began promisingly, taking action on three of these dimensions: moving *responsibility* for all early childhood services into one department – Education; and introducing an integrated *regulatory* system (led by Ofsted, the national schools inspectorate) and an early years *curriculum*, both covering all services and the whole early childhood period. But further progress towards a fully integrated early childhood system eradicating the early education/childcare divide stalled before tackling the remaining dimensions. These are the 'wicked' structural issues of *access*, *funding*, *workforce* and *type of provision* – 'wicked' because of the major and costly changes required to transform the deeply entrenched status quo.

In some key respects, the systemic problems of division and fragmentation deepened. Three- and four-year-old children gained an entitlement to part-time 'early education', while the needs of working parents for 'childcare' were acknowledged and supported. But the childcare/education division was accentuated by introducing different forms of public funding; services providing 'early education' were fully funded via direct government grants, 'childcare' was part funded by tax- or benefit-based subsidies paid to parents. A market in services, which had developed de facto before 1997 as private day nursery and childminder provision and grew rapidly from the late 1980s (DoH 1997), now became an explicit government goal; for example, the 2006 Childcare Act placed a duty on local authorities to manage their local 'childcare market'. Competition

between individual services became the order of the day, taking fragmentation to a new level.

Last but not least, children's centres were finally adopted as government policy, with 3,500 opened in a few years. But instead of marking the introduction of a universal system of integrated services, with children's centres becoming 'the basic form of service' in England, this new provision was simply added to the existing 'hotch-potch' of services, augmenting not reducing fragmentation. Moreover, not all provided education and care; only those centres serving the 30 per cent most deprived communities had to offer integrated early education and childcare places for a minimum of five days a week, 10 hours a day, 48 weeks a year. Jack Tizard's vision of a free, integrated and comprehensive service of children's centres available locally to all families, and responsive to demand, remained unfulfilled.

Today, more than two decades after the policy sea change of 1997, England still has a system that is only partly integrated, remaining deeply split between 'childcare' and 'education', with a continuing plethora of fragmented services. As already noted, successive governments have been unwilling or unable to tackle the structural divisions in access, funding, workforce and provision that leave 'childcare' services the poor relations of school-based provision (see Chapter 5, for example, for the inequalities between 'childcare workers' and school-based 'teachers').

Underlying this has been an inability to confront the conceptual divide, a way of thinking that underpins more structural divisions. Despite some lip service paid to the idea that 'education' and 'care' are inseparable, in practice policymakers, the media and the general public in England have clung to 'childcare' as a distinct concept defining one part of early childhood provision, expressed in a persistent public discourse of 'childcare services', 'childcare workers' and 'childcare costs'. It has proved impossible to get beyond childcare, to adopt and embody a genuinely integrative way of thinking and talking about all ECEC provision.

What might this integrative way involve? It would mean recognising that:

- 'Care', understood as an 'ethic of care' defining how children and adults should relate to each other in all services (Moss 2017), is an intrinsic part of *all* services for *all* children, irrespective of their parents' employment status.
- All early childhood services should as a matter of course recognise the needs of employed parents.

- Overall, to echo the goals of the Swedish preschool curriculum, early childhood services should be equally concerned with enhancing children’s care and security, self-esteem and well-being, and development and learning (Skolverket 2018).

Under this formulation, a broad and integrative concept of education (‘education-in-its-broadest-sense’) would become the basis for a unified and unifying early childhood system; while ‘childcare for working parents’ would be reduced to a necessary but not very interesting matter of opening hours, a detail of how early childhood education is organised.

Rather than moving towards the adoption of this broad and integrative concept of early childhood education, the divisive language of ‘childcare’, with its focus on ‘working parents’, has become increasingly prominent in England since 2010. Thus, for example, the titles of two major government policy papers from 2013 are *More Great Childcare* and *More Affordable Childcare* (DfE 2013a, 2013b). Or, to take an even more telling example, the government in England has recently amended its universal entitlement of 570 hours per year (approximately 15 hours per week) of free ‘early education’ for 3- and 4-year-olds. Now, this age group is offered 30 hours per week of free provision – but only for children whose parents are employed – and the offer is presented as ‘childcare’. A right to education for all children has, thus, morphed into ‘childcare’ for some children, a benefit dependent on parental employment status. ‘Childcare’ has, once again, been put forward as a defining feature of early childhood services, in contrast to ‘education’.

The whole of ECEC provision may have been placed under the Department for Education, for purposes of policymaking and administration. But a large part of it remains, both structurally and conceptually, apart from education, in a separate domain of ‘care’ services, a domain where ‘care’ is seen mainly as a commodity that some adults need to obtain to enable their working lives.

Towards transformative change

What it looks like in practice: The case of Sweden

The need for transformative change to create integrated early childhood services, in a unified and unifying system, remains as pressing today as it was when Jack Tizard was urging the need for such change in the 1970s. Indeed, it has arguably become more pressing, given the pre-1997

neglect of policy and the post-1997 exacerbation of existing problems as early childhood services became a policy priority. Finding itself in a hole, England has responded by digging deeper.

England is not alone in its failure to address such systemic problems and bring about transformative change. Based on a study of the ECEC workforce in the 28 member states of the European Union, plus Russia and Ukraine, Oberhuemer (2019) concludes that the most common ECEC system, in 12 countries, is a totally split one. Close behind, 11 countries have a partially integrated system; the 'UK' as a whole is included in this group (though, in fact, each of the four nations making up the UK has responsibility for its own ECEC system). That leaves seven countries described as having 'unitary systems (0–6/7)' – in other words, having fully integrated ECEC systems. These are Croatia, Estonia, Lithuania and Slovenia, as well as three Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland and Sweden. The other two Nordic countries (Iceland and Norway) have unitary systems but are not included, since they are not EU member states.

The unresolved situation in England would be brought into sharp relief by comparison with any of these countries with 'unitary systems', but for the purposes of this chapter I will take Sweden, which today has a fully integrated ECEC system, with responsibility residing in education, both locally and nationally. All children, irrespective of their parents' employment status, are entitled to a place in a publicly funded early childhood service from 12 months of age; before then, all children are at home being cared for by their parents taking well-paid parental leave (discussed further in Chapter 13). Swedish children do not enter primary school until the age of 6 years, and compulsory school age is 7 years; between the ages of 6 and 7, nearly all children attend a 'preschool class' in school on a voluntary basis.

While a few preschool children in Sweden attend family day care (referred to as 'childminding' in England), the great majority go to *förskolor* (literally, 'preschools'). These centres for children aged from 1 to 6 years are open for 10 hours a day throughout the year, and still mostly run by *kommuner* (local authorities). These integrated centres are funded directly by government, from taxation; attendance for 3- to 6-year-olds is free for 525 hours per year; and parental fees for remaining attendance, whether for longer hours or for younger children, is capped (the so-called '*måxtaxa*') at 1,260 Swedish kroner per month (approximately £107) for a first child at preschool, 840 kroner (approximately £71) for a second child and 420 kroner (approximately £36) for a third child. Preschools are staffed by an integrated workforce, based on

förskollärare, graduate teachers specialising in work with 1- to 7-year-olds, who account for over half of the workforce. There is a short, framework curriculum for preschools, which, as already noted, emphasises an integrative approach that encompasses care, security, well-being, learning and development. Most Swedish parents are employed, so it is obvious that preschools, like schools, must reflect this in their opening hours – but this is just taken for granted; Swedish preschools are defined as a type of school not a ‘childcare’ service.

Overall, therefore, Sweden has a fully unified early childhood system, a basically educational service that takes account of parents’ employment, offering seamless provision over a five-year period, integrated structurally and underpinned by an integrative concept. The system is also unifying if we look at attendance. With England and Sweden providing a free entitlement, it is unsurprising that both countries show high attendance rates for 3- to 5-year-olds, at around 94 per cent (the figures here, referring to 2016, are for the UK as a whole). The picture, however, is very different for children under 3 years old, with the UK lagging far behind Sweden, 32 per cent of UK children attending formal early childhood services compared with 47 per cent of Swedish children; but as virtually all Swedish children under 12 months are cared for at home by parents on parental leave, this means that in practice more than two-thirds of 1- and 2-year-olds attend preschool. The gap between the UK and Sweden is even greater when taking into account average weekly hours of attendance for children under 3 years old: 18 against 30 (OECD 2019, Charts PF3.2.A and PF3.2.D).

But the most striking difference between the UK and Sweden is equality of access. On measures of socio-economic background (mother’s education and household income), Sweden shows no statistically significant difference in levels of attendance for children under 3 years old. By contrast, differences in attendance are large and statistically significant for the UK, favouring children from more advantaged families (OECD 2019, Charts PF3.2B and PF3.2.C).

Towards an integrated system

The case of Sweden is not presented as a model that could be readily exported to and adopted in England; the national contexts are too different to permit a simple process of ‘policy borrowing’. I have used it, instead, for three reasons. First, to illustrate what a unified and unifying early childhood service can actually look like, and to show it is perfectly

feasible; it is a contribution to raising understanding and expectations – and poverty of both is a major impediment to transformative change. Second, to provoke critical questioning about the state we are in in England today. Since there are alternatives, why do we have what we have? For example, why start school at 5 or younger? Why don't or can't we do things differently? Third, because ECEC in Sweden was not always like it is today. The country made a political decision to take a new direction for early childhood services, and remained politically committed to seeing that decision through.

Let me explain. Back in the 1970s, Jack Tizard was aware that something was afoot in Sweden, driven by an economic boom in the 1960s, by increasing demand for women's employment and by the work of a national commission established in 1968, reporting in 1972. Sweden, Tizard et al. (1976, 118, 119) wrote, was:

working towards an integrated system of child centres where care and education are combined under the same ministerial responsibility ... In 1968 a Commission on Child Centres was set up with a very wide remit to consider the form and content of pre-school facilities, and how they should expand ... Day nurseries and nursery schools were all to be regarded as pre-school centres; all staff should have educational duties.

What had filtered through to Jack, as reflected in this quote, was the start in Sweden of a process of transformative change, including the expansion and integration of early childhood services. The National Commission referred to, on Nursery Provision (*Barnstugeutredning*), which worked from 1968 to 1972, 'mobilised expertise from every corner of the country to assist them in their work' (Korpi 2007, 24) of charting the future direction for early childhood services.

Like other countries in Europe, Sweden at that time had an early childhood system split between full-time day care institutions for children with working parents and kindergartens (later 'play schools') for children over 3 years old, offering half-day 'educational' services. The former had begun in the 1850s for the children of poor working mothers, the latter in the 1890s for children of middle-class families (Korpi 2007). The Commission recommended merging these services to create one institution – to be known as the *förskola* ('preschool'). This had major implications, not least for the divided early childhood workforce that would now need to merge into a single new profession, a process creating new tensions:

Half day and full day services differed greatly in staff training and working practices. The integration of the two would be rather painful for many teachers in half-day services, since their professional experience was not valued equally with that of the preschool teachers trained in the approaches recommended by the Commission. (Lenz Taguchi and Munkammar 2003, 12)

However, the reform proceeded, resulting in the present-day staffing structure of the preschool teacher as the core worker in the preschool, supported by assistants or *barnskötare*.

An integrated early childhood system and workforce began taking shape in the 1970s, though initially services were integrated within welfare rather than education. Over time, services expanded (from 1970 to 1995, the number of children in early childhood centres rose more than tenfold, from 33,000 to 365,000 (Korpi 2007)); entitlements to provision were introduced (initially confined to children with employed or studying parents); and the integrated service was moved from welfare to education, first locally and then, in 1996, nationally. All this was underpinned by sustained and rising public funding, until today Sweden has the second-highest public spend on ECEC services of OECD member states: 1.6 per cent of GDP, compared with the UK's 0.6 per cent and the OECD average of 0.7 per cent (OECD 2019, Chart PF3.1.A).

The contrast is stark. Both England and Sweden had inadequate and divided early childhood services in the late 1960s. The Swedes, through a process of public deliberation backed by political commitment, decided to act; 40 years later they had achieved an impressive integrated system. The English, by contrast, neglected the need for state-led expansion and reform, wasting decades when gradual evolution could have transformed the situation and created a functional system. By the time neglect suddenly turned to urgency, the flaws in the English system had worsened and become further embedded, there was a perceived need for more places quickly, and also an ideological but unquestioned sympathy for private and market solutions. Rather than a period of public deliberation to decide what course to take, in 1997, the government in England opted for more of the same (with the addition of a targeted early intervention programme, Sure Start), leaving systemic flaws untouched.

The point of this tale of two countries is obvious, though none the less important. Transformative change needs to start at some point; it needs to be guided by a clear answer to the question 'where to?', offering a widely understood and agreed goal; and it needs to be sustained by steady, incremental movement towards that goal. The alternative is a

constant struggle to make the best of a bad job, endless hole-digging with each fresh excavation dimming the prospects for transformative change.

So what might be done in England, more than 40 years after Jack Tizard's arguments for transformation and after 20 years of government activity on early childhood? A pessimist might say it is now too late; the hole is too deep to get out of and too many vested interests and ingrained attitudes are too deeply dug in. But let me play the optimist, and consider what steps might be necessary to achieve transformative change at long last. On this basis, I suggest eight steps, which I set out below in broad brush strokes. I recognise there is much detail to be added (some of which is discussed in Chapter 14), but at this stage it is more important to see the big picture – where we want to get to:

1. Start by agreeing a political commitment to a fully integrated ECEC system, with services provided as an entitlement for all children from birth to 6 years and their carers, and the service to be local, inclusive, responsive and democratic.
2. This commitment to include: recognition of birth to 6 years as the first stage of the education system and the span of the early childhood service (that is, put back compulsory school age and admission to primary school); clear statements on the meaning given to 'education' and 'care'; and services to be multi-purpose, with education as a central purpose alongside a variety of other purposes evolving in response to local needs and demands – services to be understood as 'public forums situated in civil society in which children and adults participate together in projects of social, cultural, political and economic significance' (Dahlberg et al. 2013, 78).
3. This commitment to be implemented over a specified transition period, say 10 to 15 years, and sustained across changes of government.
4. Integration to be based on the seven structural dimensions outlined earlier in the chapter, and on a clear conceptual understanding that education and care are inseparable and required for all children.
5. The integrated service to be based on children's centres, which will become 'the basic form of service' nationally, over the course of the transition period – a universal basic service just as primary and secondary schools are. As well as those children's centres that have survived recent austerity, some other existing services could convert into centres, while other centres will need to be built up from scratch.

6. Current fragmented and diverse forms of early childhood funding to be consolidated into a single ‘Transformation Fund’, which will increasingly be allocated to the direct funding of the growing number of children’s centres. Existing, separate funding streams (for example, the early education grant; and tax credit and other ‘child-care’ subsidies paid to parents) will be gradually phased out.
7. Democratically accountable local bodies (for example, local authorities) to regain a major role in the integrated early childhood service, overseeing and supporting the evolution of a unified and unifying system in their areas and the build-up of networks of children’s centres, including a duty to promote cooperation and experimentation. Such local bodies will also resume a provider role, alongside non-profit private organisations such as cooperatives.
8. Children’s centres to be available free of charge for a core period of children’s attendance (that is, a defined period of hours per year), and for other child, carer and community activities. A fee will be charged for additional attendance, but capped at a low level and not paid by lower-income families.

These eight steps would form the basis for transformative change towards a unified and unifying early childhood system for children from birth to 6 years and their carers. Central to achieving this goal, and a key structural reform, would be the creation of a unified workforce, commensurate in qualification and status to the new system. Chapter 5 considers why the present divided and devalued early childhood workforce, a ‘poor’ workforce in several meanings of the word, simply will not do, and how it might be re-conceptualised and re-formed as a ‘rich’ workforce for a ‘rich’ child and a ‘rich’ early childhood system.

Further reading

A report by Yoshie Kaga, John Bennett and Peter Moss, *Caring and Learning Together: A cross-national study on the integration of early childhood care and education within education* (UNESCO 2010, available free at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000187818>), examines the meaning of an integrated ECEC service and provides examples from countries that have achieved full or partial integration.

Barbara Martin Korpi, who worked for several decades in government on issues concerning ECEC and out-of-school services, provides a short and clear account of how Swedish ECEC evolved from a split to an

integrated system, and much else besides about early childhood services in that country (see Korpi 2017, available free at <https://tinyurl.com/y4udpe4b>).

The article by Bronwen Cohen and colleagues (Cohen et al. 2018, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2018.1504753>) compares how England, Scotland and Sweden responded after taking a similar policy step in the 1990s: transferring responsibility for all ECEC services into education.

References

- Cohen, B., Moss, P., Petrie, P. and Wallace, J. (2004) *A New Deal for Children? Re-forming education and care in England, Scotland and Sweden*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Cohen, B., Moss, P., Petrie, P. and Wallace, J. (2018): “‘A New Deal for Children?’ – what happened next: A cross-national study of transferring early childhood services into education’. *Early Years*. Online. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2018.1504753> (accessed 10 February 2020).
- Dahlberg, G., Moss, P. and Pence, A. (2013) *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Languages of evaluation*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge.
- DfE (Department for Education) (2013a) *More Great Childcare: Raising quality and giving parents more choice*. London: Department for Education. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/yaccaxmu> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2013b) *More Affordable Childcare*. Online. London: Department for Education. www.gov.uk/government/publications/more-affordable-childcare (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DoH (Department of Health) (1997) *Children’s Day Care Facilities at 31 March 1997*. London: Department of Health.
- Kaga, Y., Bennett, J. and Moss, P. (2010) *Caring and Learning Together: A cross-national study of integration of early childhood care and education within education*. Paris: UNESCO. Online. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001878/187818E.pdf> (accessed 10 July 2019).
- Korpi, B. (2007) *The Politics of Pre-school – Intentions and decisions underlying the emergence and growth of the Swedish pre-school*. 4th ed. Stockholm: Regeringskansliet. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/y4udpe4b> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Lenz Taguchi, H. and Munkammar, I. (2003) *Consolidating Governmental Early Childhood Education and Care Services under the Ministry of Education and Science: A Swedish case study*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Moss, P. (2017) ‘What place for “care” in early childhood policy?’ In Miller, L., Cameron, C., Dalli, C. and Barbour, N. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Early Childhood Policy*. London: SAGE, 256–67.
- Oberhuemer, P. (2019) ‘Professionalising early childhood education and care: Workforce equity issues in the European context’. Seminar presentation at Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education, London, 21 May.
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2019) ‘OECD Family Database’. Online. www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Skolverket (2018) *Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 18*. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/yd9sfu7q> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Tizard, J. (1964) *Community Services for the Mentally Handicapped*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tizard, J., Moss, P. and Perry, J. (1976) *All Our Children: Pre-school services in a changing society*. London: Temple Smith/New Society.

5

Towards a 'rich' ECEC workforce

Claire Cameron

The need for transformative change

A watershed moment?

In 2005, the government in England produced a Green Paper, the 'Children's Workforce Strategy', recognising the importance of the children's workforce in improving care and education services for children, young people and families. It aspired to have in place a 'world-class' children's workforce characterised by competent and confident practitioners who could build their skills and enjoy rewarding careers, and which held the trust and respect of parents, carers and children themselves (DfES 2005). The Green Paper was innovative in recognising the importance of adopting a holistic approach to the *children's workforce*, relevant to early years, schools, social care and youth services. It identified four key challenges to achieve this ambition:

1. recruitment into the children's workforce and making the work attractive
2. retention in the sector, through improving skills and the coherence of qualifications
3. strengthening inter-agency and multidisciplinary working to improve job satisfaction
4. promoting stronger leadership, management, and supervision including new workforce models.

The Green Paper put forward two models for early childhood education and care (ECEC) services: a 'new' teacher and a social pedagogue. But in the end, after a consultation period, the government plumped for neither.

High on ambition, this Green Paper was potentially a watershed moment in the development of a unified children's workforce, from which transformative change might have followed. Instead, 15 years on, profound problems with the organisation and conceptualisation of the children's workforce remain. The sense of a children's workforce has largely been lost, reverting, in the case of work with preschool-aged children, to a workforce mostly split around low-status childcare workers on the one hand and graduate teachers on the other. International studies have pointed out that integrated early childhood workforces, where care, education and upbringing are all part of what is expected of ECEC practitioners, have considerably better quality of employment than split workforces, and are associated with environments that are 'rich' in possibility for children and parents (Kaga et al. 2010).

This chapter will document the characteristics of the early childhood workforce in England today before examining a different approach that has been taken in both New Zealand and Denmark. In these countries, split workforces became integrated over time, with implications for the role, and conditions of employment, of the core ECEC worker. As an anglophone country, New Zealand offers a very good example of practical steps that might be taken to develop and unite the workforce around a 'teacher' model, while the Danish *paedagog* offers a different, perhaps uniquely holistic, perspective on young children and the role of the worker. We will use these examples to argue that such transformation could, under certain conditions, happen in England.

The ECEC workforce today

ECEC services are those supporting children on a part-time or full-time basis from birth to compulsory school age (5 years of age in England) for the purposes of care and education and where parents are not (usually) on the premises. They include childminders (family day care), preschools and playgroups, nurseries, nursery schools, nursery and reception classes in primary schools, and afterschool clubs for children up to 8 years old. Unfortunately, comprehensive information about the workforce of these diverse ECEC services is not available. The Labour Force Survey (LFS), a national quarterly survey of approximately 90,000 individuals, categorises ECEC practitioners into 'childminders and related' (including nannies and au-pairs), 'nursery nurses and assistants', and 'playworkers'. These are 'childcare workers' (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Numbers of childcare workers (England): 2012–14 and 2018

England	2012–14	2018
Childminders and related (including nannies and au-pairs)	100,916	91,000
Nursery nurses and assistants	149,522	184,000
Playworkers	23,404	28,000

Source: Cameron et al. 2017, Bonetti 2019.

In relation to ‘education’ occupations, the LFS does not separate out teachers in nursery schools (for children aged 2 to 4 years) from those in primary schools (for children aged 3 to 11 years), or those in ‘nursery classes’ and ‘reception classes’ from those working with older children; so not all those in the ‘education’ category are relevant to children under compulsory school age. Neither do government statistics on the school workforce collect this data (DfE 2018a). In 2018, there were 399 nursery schools and 16,766 primary schools, nearly all of which have a reception class for 4-year-olds and many of which also have a nursery class for 3-year-olds (DfE 2018b). So, on the basis of at least one teacher in a nursery school and one each for the reception and nursery classes, there are, at a minimum, 34,000 teachers working with children under compulsory school age (the LFS records a total of 357,000 primary and nursery school teachers). However, Lynch and McDonough (2018) claim there is a national shortfall of trained early years teachers. The LFS ‘education’ category also includes teaching assistants and educational support assistants but again not differentiated between early childhood education locations (nursery schools and classes, and reception classes) and those working in classes and settings for older children.

As a consequence of the way data is collected, we can say little about the characteristics of teachers or other education workers in nursery schools, nursery classes or reception classes, except that they are primarily female, and hold a degree-level qualification (Bonetti 2019). Childminders (96 per cent) and nursery nurses and assistants (98 per cent) – ‘childcare workers’ – are even more likely to be female (Bonetti 2019).

ECEC workers in childcare occupations, ‘childcare workers’, generally have low levels of qualification. Around one-quarter have a degree-level qualification as their highest level of qualification, compared with 42 per cent of all adults aged 21–64 years. While 21 per cent of the working population holds A Levels (or equivalent) as their highest qualification, this is the case for 36 per cent of childcare workers in the LFS (ONS 2017) (see Table 5.2). Efforts under the Labour government (1997–2010) to

raise the qualification profile in group settings by having a target of one graduate for every nursery, and two in areas of social deprivation, were removed by the Coalition government (2010–15).

Table 5.2 Highest level of qualification: Childcare workers (England) (2018) and all working-age population (2017)

	Childcare workers (%)	Working-age population (%)
Degree level or higher	25	42
Higher education	13	–
Post-school qualification/A Levels/equivalent	36	21
GCSE/equivalent	19	20
Other	4	9
None/Don't know	3	8

Source: Bonetti 2019. Includes Labour Force Survey (LFS) occupational categories: nursery nurses and assistants, childminders and related occupations, playworkers, teaching assistants and educational support assistants.

Pay for childcare workers in England, is very low, around the level of the national minimum wage. Bonetti (2019) reports that, in 2018, the mean gross hourly pay was £8.20, representing a reduction, since 2013, of 4.7 per cent in real terms. Nearly all childcare workers are employed in the private sector, while nearly all teachers and teaching assistants work in public sector schools. Pay is higher in the public sector (Simon et al. 2016), and for teachers (including nursery, primary, secondary and special needs teachers) who earned, in 2018, an average of £17.90 per hour (Bonetti 2019). Overall, Bonetti concludes, the childcare workforce is low qualified, low paid and showing signs of lack of sustainability. The age profile is getting older, with few young recruits, and recruitment difficulties are increasing, the latter likely to be exacerbated by the UK's planned departure from the European single market. Moreover, gender diversity has not improved over time. A sign of the impoverished state of the English childcare workforce is that nearly half (45 per cent) claim state benefits to support family income (Bonetti 2019). Membership of a trade union might provide a forum to address some of these characteristics of childcare work; but only around 10 per cent of childcare workers belong to one (Cameron et al. 2017).

This profile of workforce characteristics is matched by a somewhat precarious staffing situation in ECEC settings. Annual turnover among

childcare practitioners is about 20 per cent, although less in public sector school-based provision and among those with higher-level qualifications, suggesting that disruption for children in group provision could be reduced by improving the quality of employment. There is also, in group-based provision, a striking increase in the use of unpaid staff, mostly volunteers and students on placement: 60 per cent over the period 2008 to 2013. Unpaid, and low-paid, staff are an essential element of a system based on private provision. It is also notable that the proportion of staff who hold relevant qualifications in any one setting is decreasing, down from 83 to 75 per cent in just one year (Bonetti 2019).

Precarity has an impact on practitioners. Working in ECEC has long been associated with stress and burnout (Cameron et al. 2002); these issues have not gone away with the advent of policies and funding associated with a National Childcare Strategy (DfEE 1998). Recruits into early childhood work, particularly group-based provision, tend to be drawn from a narrow pool of young women with low levels of qualification who ‘always knew’ they wanted to work with children. This intrinsic motivation, and enjoyment, of working with young children, acts as a support in the face of what is often emotionally demanding, as well as unremunerative, work. But only up to a point.

Younger and less-experienced early childhood practitioners are more at risk of burnout through professional exhaustion than older and more experienced colleagues (Nislin et al. 2016). Work-related stress, depression and anxiety are nearly twice as common among young women (the main source for early childhood practitioners) as young men, and education is the industry with the highest rates of stress (HSE 2018). A survey of more than 2,000 early childhood practitioners and managers in England in 2018 found that three-quarters reported they had been regularly stressed by their work, particularly the amount of paperwork, the scarcity of funding both to support practice and in terms of staff pay, and working unpaid hours. Poor quality of work was reported to have an adverse impact on home lives, and on respondents’ own mental health. A quarter of respondents were considering leaving the sector. Only 6 per cent of respondents in this survey came from school-based and public sector services. It is possible that the adverse impact of employment in early years services on well-being and mental health may be less in the public, and education, sectors than in the private sector (PLA 2018).

While the data for some ECEC workers is scant, the overall message is that current conditions of employment in ECEC exploit the intrinsic motivation of early childhood practitioners. It is scandalous that hourly pay is not only so low but actually declining, and that no mechanisms

have been found to address highly gendered recruitment. An absence of men in the workforce not only depletes the rich variety of perspectives and practices on offer in settings but also reduces the options to address recruitment difficulties. Furthermore, efforts at workforce reform have been short-lived, with a demoralising impact on the workforce (Miller 2008). For example, efforts to unite childcare and early education across the age range led to the introduction of the graduate-level Early Years Professional (EYP). Under the Labour government (1997–2010), funding was allocated to support workforce reforms in the private and voluntary sector as part of the EYP initiative, with a graduate leader fund, and the EYP model achieved enhanced practice (Mathers et al. 2012). But no mechanisms were put in place to ensure these graduates earned a ‘graduate wage’ or had career progression – and the EYP was in any case to prove short-lived.

Under the following Coalition government (2010–15), two new roles were introduced: graduate-level Early Years Teachers (EYT), to replace EYPs and be ‘specialists in early childhood development’ (DfE 2013, 27), and Early Years Educators (EYE) qualifications, to be the ‘modern equivalent of the highly respected Nursery Nurse diploma’ (DfE 2013, 28). While standards exist for the EYE role (NCTL 2013), it does not have an established presence in the field. Instead there continues to be a muddle of occupational titles and training routes for working in group-based ECEC (McGillivray 2010).

Moreover, these reforms have not addressed the basic problems in the ECEC workforce. EYTs, like the preceding EYPs, may be graduates but they do not have parity with school teachers, including those working in nursery and reception classes, either in status or pay. They lack Qualified Teacher Status, and the Early Years Pay and Conditions Survey in 2016 found that the national average EYT salary was £10.01 per hour, considerably less than that paid to teachers (Bonetti 2019). Indeed, early years teaching has been recognised by the Low Pay Commission as being a low-paid sector, with 84.8 per cent of EYTs paid the national minimum wage (Hawthorne and Brown 2016). Despite the low pay of EYTs, as we have seen, there is no requirement on ‘childcare services’ to employ any graduate workers. Unsurprisingly, applications for training to become an EYT have declined – just 595 started in 2017–18, compared with 2,327 in 2013–14 (CREC 2019).

Attempts at reform, therefore, have been half-hearted and ineffective. The current ECEC workforce remains split and devalued, and is neither attractive nor sustainable, as young women seek employment better suited to their rising educational levels (Cameron and Moss 2007).

Towards transformative change

What it looks like in practice: The cases of New Zealand and Denmark

New Zealand

Twenty years of government policy initiatives to support parents' access to 'good quality, affordable, and accessible childcare' (DfEE 1998, 5) have not resulted in improvements in employment conditions for the ECEC workforce in England. Roughly in parallel, and starting from a rather similar position, New Zealand has taken a different approach (Cameron et al. 2017). In 1986, after years of lobbying, administrative responsibility for all ECEC services – 'kindergartens' under the education department, and childcare services under the social welfare department – was adopted by the Department of Education, and the terminology became 'early childhood education and care' services. An orientation around universally provided *education* rather than targeted welfare services was seen as the best way to achieve equitable funding (Cameron et al. 2017).

Then, in 1988, the main training pathways for work in kindergartens and childcare services were integrated into a single three-year diploma in early childhood education, undertaken in Colleges of Education; a new profession of early years teacher was created with shared conceptual understandings, reinforced by continuous professional development and exchange programmes and events. A new sense of sector unity emerged (Dalli 2010), underscored by the subsequent transfer of diploma training to universities, so that early childhood teaching became a graduate profession. The mobilisation of practitioners into professional organisations and trade unions that merged to become a strategic alliance across early childhood and primary school sectors in the 1990s helped to establish evidence of difference and similarity across work in group-based settings such as kindergartens and primary schools and led to campaigns for pay parity, eventually achieved in the 2000s (May 2007).

A major focus of policy work during this time was to upskill the existing workforce, who held very diverse training, qualifications and experience in ECEC. In the early 1990s, the government introduced a points system so that the New Zealand Qualifications Authority could assess any one individual's profile against training goals, and this process helped to articulate what a 'benchmark' qualification in ECEC would look like. It also launched a programme of financial incentives for providers to recruit practitioners holding a benchmark qualification of a post-school,

three-year undergraduate diploma or degree; in other words, enhanced qualifications were supported by enhanced government funding.

In 2002, the government launched a 10-year strategic plan for ECEC, *Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki*. ECEC services in New Zealand are ‘teacher-led’, such as kindergartens and education and care centres; ‘parent-led’, such as playcentres, Maori language nests and playgroups; or ‘home based’, such as childminders who are known as home-based educators and operate in networks supported by a coordinator, who is a qualified teacher. The goal of the 2002 strategic plan was that ‘by 2012 all staff in teacher-led early childhood services for 0 to 6-year-olds would be fully qualified and registered teachers with parity of pay with primary school teachers’ (Cameron et al. 2017, 586).

This hugely ambitious policy goal of a 100 per cent graduate teacher workforce for most ECEC centres was halted by an incoming government in 2008, but by then the model of a ‘new teacher’ was firmly established. Today, following another change of government, a new strategic plan (covering the period 2019–29) is near finalisation, and it includes ministerial action to provide incentives and regulations to restore the earlier goal that 100 per cent of the workforce should hold a benchmark, graduate qualification (Ministry of Education 2018). Already about three-quarters (76 per cent) of early childhood practitioners in licensed teacher-led services hold this qualification, making the New Zealand ECEC workforce the best qualified in the world.

This is a major success for both conceptual integration – a unified profession for working with children from birth to 5 years old – and the high level of qualification expected for practice. With a graduate workforce has come better pay. In 2013, over 60 per cent of the early childhood practitioners in New Zealand earned above NZ\$30,000 a year, compared with 20 per cent of childcare workers in England who earned above an equivalent £14,707 (converted using Purchasing Power Parity so as to achieve equivalence) (Cameron et al. 2017, Table 35.3). Moreover, the new strategic plan in New Zealand is still committed to equalising pay and conditions across the early childhood sector (Ministry of Education 2018).

About 22 per cent of New Zealand’s early childhood teachers are members of a trade union, more than twice as many as ‘childcare’ workers in England (Cameron et al. 2017). As with England, nearly all ECEC staff in New Zealand are women (97 per cent) and the work is still emotionally and physically demanding, but it does not appear to have the same adverse impact as in England. Although not strictly comparable data, an online survey in New Zealand of 900 early childhood teachers (791) and leaders (109) found that 46 per cent had had a work-related injury in the previous year,

which included both physical and mental health problems (ChildForum 2018), compared with 75 per cent reported in the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PLA) survey in England to be regularly stressed by work in the sector (for a further discussion of New Zealand and its early childhood education, see Chapter 8).

New Zealand's new 'early childhood teacher' was one of the options floated in the 'Children's Workforce Strategy' Green Paper in England in 2005. The second was the 'social pedagogue'. Social pedagogy is an approach common in continental Europe that has variants but is essentially a field of theory and practice that combines care, education and upbringing in an ethical framework of values-directed practice.

Denmark

Denmark is a good example of the social pedagogic approach to early childhood education and care services. Denmark passed legislation in 1964 that established universal early childhood provision and, following strong and continuous development of services, offered, in 2006, all children from the age of 6 months to 6 years entitlement to a full-time place in an early childhood centre. All children, from the very youngest, are believed to 'benefit from being in a public space for children' as all children are seen as able to 'participate in group life' (Jensen 2017a, 73). There is a broad view of the pedagogical task with children under school age, including socialisation, care, learning and formation, attention and development, individualism and community (BUPL 2006). On this basis, there is a holistic view of the child, reflecting the fact that ECEC centres are open long hours that enable parents to work, as well as including children with disabilities or otherwise in need of additional support. In essence, the aims are social, pedagogical and caring. ECEC centres are in many senses both democratic and solidaristic; they share the task of upbringing with parents.

The main occupation in Danish centres is a *paedagog* (or pedagogue), who holds a bachelor's degree. Around 60 per cent of staff in centres are pedagogues; the remainder are pedagogue co-helpers, who are often gaining experience before undertaking the bachelor degree programme. Centres are led by pedagogues and a relatively flat hierarchy operates, which promotes the idea of a jointly held mission. Pedagogues are not restricted to early childhood work, and may find employment in out-of-school facilities and services for young people and adults in a variety of settings. This helps to generate a common conceptual understanding of pedagogic work with people of all ages and the values that underpin it. The pedagogue bachelor programme is very popular, more

so than other 'people work' such as teaching or social work, and has a good representation of male students, although, as with New Zealand and England, few men actually work with the youngest children (around 5 per cent) (Jensen 2017a); working with young people and adults is a more popular option for male pedagogues.

Jensen (2017a) finds that pedagogues seek to create an environment that resembles civic society: centres are informal, homelike spaces; everyday care tasks are valued, alongside developing meaningful relationships between adults and children; and centres represent a space where child-initiated play and adult-organised activities are fluently intertwined. Outdoor life has a high priority; it is seen as an ideal context to promote children's skills as self-directed learners. This is a complex world where pedagogues (and co-helpers) must collaborate as members of a team, judge situations rapidly, using theory and experience to assess each individual child within the group and their well-being and possibilities for learning. They must also have aesthetic skills they actively practise, and become absorbed in, with children, and be able to work with intercultural competences and sensitivities (Jensen 2016). It is rather different from an instructional, manualised approach that is focused on tasks and prescribed goals, although Jensen (2017a, 84) notes the recent invasion of 'learning plans' and other cumbersome government requirements, as well as creeping resource constraints, which she refers to as a 'cultural battle'.

No studies reporting workplace stress, such as mental health difficulties, for Danish early childhood pedagogues could be found. There is a specific trade union for early childhood pedagogues called BUPL, with a broad remit around professional development. About 90 per cent of pedagogues are members of this union. In 2014, the annual salary for a qualified pedagogue was €45,000 (approximately £39,000), with public service benefits such as six weeks' holiday entitlement, a pension and parental leave included (Jensen 2017b).

Both occupational models, the New Zealand 'new teacher' and the Danish 'pedagogue', offer examples of graduate-level competence and employment as the norm in work with young children. In both cases, the integration of care and education within centre-based practice was achieved as a deliberate policy choice, and took place over time, although it has been accepted as a given in Denmark for over 50 years. In both cases, the value accorded early childhood work, and practitioners, is higher because it is attached to broadly based and universally accessible education or pedagogical services, rather than to 'childcare' services. Practitioners in both countries appear to have a 'rich' environment,

especially in contrast to the position for England's childcare workforce. What would it take for England to achieve a graduate professional as the core worker in centre-based provision, with parity of pay and employment conditions with primary school teachers?

Towards a new occupational model inspired by the social pedagogue

While England has one occupational model that is already 'world class' in the nursery teacher, she or he is trained to work with a restricted age group (usually starting at 3 years old) and is present in only a minority of ECEC settings. Sylva et al. (2010) concluded that the quality of early childhood provision was linked to the quality of staff, and in particular the qualifications of staff, and had a direct impact on the social and learning gains of children, particularly those who lived in disadvantaged circumstances. The most effective settings integrated care and education, were in the public sector, and employed graduate trained teachers, supported by nursery nurses, who were trained to a lower level and focused on care of very young children. ECEC workforce reform initiatives show there is an enormous appetite for training and development within the sector. In seven years, more than 13,000 EYPs qualified (Taylor 2014); at any one time, around 20,000 students are studying for an Early Childhood Studies degree. If funding and progression could be realised, there is every likelihood that the whole ECEC workforce could become as rich, or world class, as those in some other countries.

But moving to an early childhood teacher model in England, specifically, would be very likely to encounter elision with the image of the school teacher, a role that has become highly orientated to delivery of curricular goals and performance in national tests (see Chapter 11). While the role of *teacher* has more instant recognition, the performative schoolification trend is rather antithetical to the holistic care, education and upbringing role necessary for transformative change. A social pedagogue, or early childhood pedagogue, would be different, perhaps unique, and able to claim a territory free from the mainstream imagery of schools and teachers.

Moving towards or adopting a social pedagogic model for early childhood practice in England would be timely, given a recent upsurge of interest in social pedagogy, so far mainly around residential and foster care for children and young people. There is now a Social Pedagogy Professional Association (SPPA), which is the professional home of social

pedagogy in the UK and promotes network and exchange among members whose sector expertise is highly varied, through conferences and events, newsletters and social media. Embryonic infrastructure to support social pedagogues and those working within a social pedagogic framework builds on cross-national research and feasibility studies, much of which has been carried out at the Thomas Coram Research Unit (for example, Petrie et al. 2006; Cameron et al. 2011).

Adopting social pedagogy as the foundation for the core worker in ECEC services would be a long-term strategy over a decade or more. How would we get there? The first step would be to establish a core worker – the social pedagogue or, probably, the early childhood pedagogue – as the main profession working with young children and a policy commitment to train and upskill sufficient practitioners to make at least half the workforce in group provision catering for children from birth to 6 years old (for example, schools, nurseries, children’s centres and preschools) qualified at bachelor degree level. Cross-political party consensus on this policy commitment would clearly be essential.

A second step would be to introduce a qualifications framework. Cameron, McQuail and Petrie (2007) recommended a framework that builds on current requirements for training and aimed to provide clear routes from vocational awards at Level 2 (equivalent to GCSEs, taken at age 16) and Level 3 (equivalent to A Levels, usually taken at age 18) to generic ‘working with children and young people’ bachelor degree (Level 6) programmes that included specialisations in year three to enable students to explore interests in, for example, working with children in care or early childhood education in home-based or group settings. The framework included master’s (Level 7) programmes in social pedagogical leadership and continuous professional development courses. The rudiments of this approach exist, but it is not coherent or universally available and rarely unites educational theory and practice with care (more usually seen as social work, or therapeutic) theory and practice. There are some example of bachelor’s and master’s social pedagogy programmes, usually with origins in youth work or social work, but the existing and widespread Early Childhood Studies degree programmes are the obvious starting point for the core early childhood pedagogue role. These programmes were developed as a university-led, ‘coherent way of understanding the development, care, education, health, well-being and upbringing of babies and young children in a social, pedagogical and policy context’ (QAA 2014, 5).

Third, establishing a benchmark of a graduate social pedagogue also requires a way of recognising and upskilling the qualifications and learning of the current workforce to ensure career progression. We might learn from steps taken in New Zealand. There, a Qualifications Authority

ensures that accredited learning is valued as robust and credible, keeps competences under review, and publishes profiles of early childhood educators at varying levels. It provides a system of credits that enables prior learning to be recognised. Reviews of qualifications take place periodically with a high level of stakeholder involvement to build consensus around the final result. Bridging courses are available for those who are not yet ready to study at tertiary level (Ministry of Education 2017). Danish university colleges also offer 'building-bridge courses', aimed at those who need additional education before continuing to bachelor's degree programmes (Jensen 2016, 26).

Underpinning all training and qualifications would be a fourth step, which is to create a debate, and a consensus, on values inherent in early childhood education in a social pedagogical frame. The SPPA has developed a charter, which all members are expected to uphold. This details principles of professional and personal practice such as ethics and social justice, compassion and acting with integrity (SPPA-UK 2017). This charter might be reviewed and adopted by early childhood pedagogues, their representative organisations and education providers as underpinning the profession of early childhood pedagogue. In addition, and to support policy commitments, it would be important to assert that early childhood education is a public good and a child's right, in line with commitments made in other countries. In Denmark, virtually all children attend ECEC, starting at the point when parental leave finishes, and families can expect a place to be available for their child. This is in line with the General Comment on early childhood issued by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006).

Fifth, steps have to be taken to ensure the sustainability of the early childhood workforce over time, or the entire sector will be at risk of depletion. Given that there is a general shift towards higher levels of qualifications, making ECEC a graduate-based profession with a clear career trajectory would support gender equality and help recruitment. Pay would need to be elevated to make early childhood pedagogue practice as attractive as primary school teaching and linked to nationally agreed pay scales. Funding mechanisms would need to be in place so that the cost of higher salaries did not fall entirely to parents but was subsidised through general taxation. As Jensen noted, in Denmark, through similar measures, there is no problem with recruitment into the programmes to educate social pedagogues. Major efforts to diversify the workforce would ease recruitment difficulties, but could also open up ECEC practice to new, less gendered approaches to practice. Multiple cross-national efforts have been made to recruit more men, and most success has been made when the work is not defined as 'care' but as play, pedagogical practice or education; when men are employed as assistants who go on

to undertake bachelor degree programmes; when there is some age-integration, since men are usually more attracted to work with older age groups initially and subsequently discover work with younger children; and when there are managers who are male (Cameron 2014).

Transforming the ECEC workforce in England to one with a coherent underlying concept, a level of education commensurate with the responsibilities and complexities of the role, and creating an attractive profession to work in, was a government aspiration in 2005. We have not progressed towards this goal in the intervening period. Policies have continued to recognise the need for and benefits of ECEC but have woefully neglected the workforce, maintaining both a dysfunctional split between ‘childcare’ and ‘education’ workers and exploitative, unsustainable conditions. A recruitment crisis is building. Examples from New Zealand and Denmark show there are alternatives and ways out of this downward spiral; this chapter has argued for one of these alternatives – to re-envision the core worker as an early childhood pedagogue who has holistic responsibilities for children’s care, learning and upbringing, in inclusive and joyful settings, with ample space indoors and out; where children can exercise rights as members of civic societies, while workers earn enough, and are educated enough, to thrive themselves.

Further reading

The SPPA Charter brings together the values and principles of social pedagogy in the UK in one document that can be used as a general introduction and/or the focus of continuing enquiry into social pedagogy; it is available free at <http://sppa-uk.org/governance/social-pedagogy-charter/>

A concise introduction to the role of the Danish pedagogue can be found in a slim publication from the Danish early childhood trade union, *The Work of the Pedagogue: Roles and Tasks* (BUPL 2018), available free at https://bupl.dk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/publikationer-the_work_of_the_pedagogue.pdf

A useful summary of the development of the early childhood teacher in New Zealand can be found in a chapter by Claire Cameron, Carmen Dalli and Antonia Simon, ‘The development of a united ECEC workforce in New Zealand and England: A long, slow and fitful journey’, in *The SAGE Handbook of Early Childhood Policy*, edited by Linda Miller, Claire Cameron, Carmen Dalli and Nancy Barbour (SAGE 2017).

Detailed discussion of workforce profiles in systems of early childhood education and care in 30 European countries, and contextual country data, is available on the SEEPRO website, available free at www.seeepro.eu/English/Projekt.htm

References

- Bonetti, S. (2019) *The Early Years Workforce in England*. London: Education Policy Institute.
- BUPL (2006) *The Work of the Pedagogue: Roles and tasks*. Copenhagen: BUPL. Online. https://bupl.dk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/publikationer-the_work_of_the_pedagogue.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Cameron, C. (2014) 'Male workers in ECEC services: Changes in the debate?' *He Kupu*, 3 (3). Online. www.hekupu.ac.nz/article/male-workers-ecec-services-changes-debate (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Cameron, C., Dalli, C. and Simon, A. (2017) 'The development of a united ECEC workforce in New Zealand and England: A long, slow and fitful journey'. In Miller, L., Cameron, C., Dalli, C. and Barbour, N. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Early Childhood Policy*. London: SAGE, 584–604.
- Cameron, C., McQuail, S. and Petrie, P. (2007) *Implementing the Social Pedagogic Approach for Workforce Training and Education in England: A preliminary study*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.
- Cameron, C., Mooney, A. and Moss, P. (2002) 'The child care workforce: Current conditions and future directions'. *Critical Social Policy*, 22 (4), 572–95.
- Cameron, C. and Moss, P. (2007) *Care Work in Europe: Current understandings and future directions*. London: Routledge.
- Cameron, C., Petrie, P., Wigfall, V., Kleipoedszus, S. and Jasper, A. (2011) *Final Report of the Social Pedagogy Pilot Programme: Development and implementation*. London: Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.
- CREC (Centre for Research in Early Childhood) (2019) 'A Highly Qualified Workforce? Issues in professional development for the early years sector'. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/qvgyr45> (accessed 20 January 2020).
- ChildForum (2018) 'Staff Safety in Early Childhood Education Workplaces'. 2017 Survey Results. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/w7yrxf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Cumming, T. (2017) 'Early childhood educators' well-being: An updated review of the literature'. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 45 (5), 583–93.
- Dalli, C. (2010) 'Towards the re-emergence of a critical ecology of the early childhood profession in New Zealand'. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 11(1) 61–74.
- DfE (Department for Education) (2013) *More Great Childcare: Raising quality and giving parents more choice*. London: Department for Education. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/219660/More_20Great_20Childcare_20v2.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2018a) *School Workforce in England: November 2017*. London: Department for Education. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/719772/SWFC_MainText.pdf (accessed 10 July 2019).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2018b) 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2018'. London: Department for Education. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/719226/Schools_Pupils_and_their_Characteristics_2018_Main_Text.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfEE (Department for Education and Employment) (1998) 'Meeting the childcare challenge: A framework and consultation document'. (Green Paper), Cmnd 3959. Sudbury: DfEE Publications.
- DfES (Department for Education and Skills) (2005) *Children's Workforce Strategy: A strategy to build a world-class workforce for children and young people*. London: DfES Publication. Online. https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5456/7/5958-DfES-ECM_Redacted.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Hawthorne, S. and Brown, M. (2016) 'Early Years Pay and Conditions Survey 2019'. Nursery World. Online. <https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/article/early-years-pay-and-conditions-survey-2016> (accessed 13 March 2020).
- HSE (Health and Safety Executive) (2018) 'Work-related stress, depression or anxiety statistics in Great Britain, 2018'. London: Health and Safety Executive. Online. www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Jensen, J.J. (2016) 'The Danish pedagogue education'. In Vandenbroeck, M., Urban, M. and Peeters, J. (eds) *Pathways to Professionalism in Early Childhood Education and Care*. London: Routledge, 15–28.
- Jensen, J.J. (2017a) 'A Danish perspective on issues in early childhood education and care policy'. In Miller, L., Cameron, C., Dalli, C. and Barbour, N. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Early Childhood Policy*. London: SAGE, 141–57.

- Jensen, J.J. (2017b) 'Denmark: ECEC workforce profile'. In P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer (eds) *Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*. Online. www.seepro.eu/English/pdfs/DENMARK_ECEC_Workforce.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Kaga, Y., Bennett, J. and Moss, P. (2010) *Caring and Learning Together: A cross-national study on the integration of early childhood care and education within education*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Lynch, C. and McDonough, C. (2018) *It All Starts Here: Tackling the crisis in the early years teacher workforce*. Save the Children. Online. https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/content/dam/gb/reports/policy/it_all_starts_here.pdf (accessed 13 March 2020).
- Mathers, S., Ranns, H., Karemaker, A., Moody, A., Sylva, K., Graham, J. and Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2012) 'Evaluation of the Graduate Leader Fund'. Research Report DFE-RR144. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/181480/DFE-RR144.pdf (accessed 3 May 2020).
- May, H. (2007) "'Minding", "working", "teaching": Childcare in Aotearoa/New Zealand, 1940s–2000s'. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 8 (2), 133–43.
- McGillivray, G. (2010) 'Nannies, nursery nurses and early years professionals: Constructions of professional identity in the early years workforce in England'. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 16 (2), 242–54.
- Miller, L. (2008) 'Developing new professional roles in the early years'. In Miller, L. and Cable, C. (eds) *Professionalism in the Early Years*. London: Hodder Education, 20–31.
- Ministry of Education (2017) *Early Childhood Education: Teacher education qualifications*. Hamilton, New Zealand: Ministry of Education. Online. www.teachnz.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Thinking-of-Teaching/Qualifications/2017-ECE-Qualifications-Guide.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Ministry of Education (2018) 'Cabinet paper: Draft strategic plan for early learning 2019–29'. Briefing note. Online. <https://education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/Information-releases/EL-DSP/Briefing-Note-Cabinet-Paper-Draft-Strategic-Plan-for-Early-Learning-2019-29-Release-for-Consultation.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- NCTL (National College for Teaching and Leadership) (2013) *Early Years Educator (Level 3): Qualifications criteria*. Online. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-educator-level-3-qualifications-criteria/early-years-educator-level-3-qualifications-criteria> (accessed 27 January 2020).
- Nislin, M., Sajaniemi, N., Sims, M., Suhonen, E., Maldonado, E.F., Hyttinen, S. and Hirvonen, A. (2016) 'Occupational well-being and stress among early childhood professionals: The use of an innovative strategy to measure stress reactivity in the workplace'. *Open Review of Educational Research*, 3 (1), 1–17.
- ONS (Office for National Statistics) (2017) 'Graduates in the UK labour market: 2017'. Online. www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/graduatesintheuklabourmarket/2017 (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Petrie, P., Boddy, J., Cameron, C., Wigfall, V. and Simon, A. (2006) *Working with Children in Care: European perspectives*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- PLA (Pre-school Learning Alliance) (2018) *Minds Matter: The impact of working in the early years sector on practitioners' mental health and wellbeing*. London: Pre-school Learning Alliance. Online. www.eyalliance.org.uk/sites/default/files/minds_matter_report_pre_school_learning_alliance.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) (2014) *Subject Benchmark Statement: Early childhood studies*. Gloucester: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. Online. <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/21247/1/SBS-early-childhood-studies.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Simon, A., Owen, C. and Hollingworth, K. (2016) 'Is the "quality" of preschool childcare, measured by the qualifications and pay of the childcare workforce, improving in Britain?' *American Journal of Educational Research*, 4 (1), 11–17.
- SPPA-UK (Social Pedagogy Professional Association) (2017) SPPA Charter. Online. <http://sppa-uk.org/governance/social-pedagogy-charter/> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Taggart, B. (2010) *Early Childhood Matters: Evidence from the Effective Preschool and Primary Education Project*. London: Routledge.
- Taylor, C. (2014) 'Transforming the early years workforce: Leadership and improvement aspirations for the early years workforce of the future, the journey to get there and how to make early years a career of choice'. Speech given at National Day Nurseries Association Conference, 19 June. Online. www.gov.uk/government/speeches/transforming-the-early-years-workforce (accessed 10 January 2020).
- United Nations (2006) 'Implementing child rights in early childhood'. General Comment No. 7 2005. Online. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/460bc5a62.html> (accessed 10 January 2020).

6

Towards a public ECEC system

Eva Lloyd

The need for transformative change

The evolution of a marketised system

The notion of a public early childhood education and care (ECEC) system is defined differently across member states of the European Union (EU) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Such systems range across a continuum from high to low state involvement and vary in the social, legal, regulatory and financing conditions supporting them. This diversity is best explained with reference to the historical, cultural and institutional contexts of different countries (Scheiwe and Willekens 2009). At one end of the continuum, in countries like Sweden, the state plays the dominant role in the shaping, financing, delivery and regulation of a universal ECEC system and its infrastructure, including workforce training and remuneration (Naumann 2011).

Towards the other end we find England, where ECEC policy implementation is supported by a complex mix of demand- and supply-side subsidies for parents and providers, alongside some childcare-related parental state benefits (Lloyd 2017). Here the government's expressed ambition for a coherent, integrated and inclusive publicly supported ECEC system is thwarted by its reliance on private childcare markets as the primary service delivery model (Penn and Lloyd 2014). This chapter provides an overview of how England got into this state and some of the consequences that make transformative change so urgent; offers a definition of a public ECEC system; and, drawing on the case of Norway, considers what transformative change might mean for England, emphasising also the connections needed between formal ECEC services and other policy areas.

For the past 70 years, English childcare provision for the children of employed parents has largely been situated in the private-for-profit sector, and has only received state subsidisation from the 1990s onwards (Penn 2011). In contrast, early education has a much longer history of public support. Currently, ECEC in England features a complex mixed market economy of part-subsidised private sector and fully funded public sector provision. As already noted, such a private/public mix is not unusual; but, arguably, the English ECEC system manifests some of the most problematic contradictions between services and sectors and their underpinning rationales, reflecting neoliberal economic policies adopted by the 1997–2010 Labour government and continued by subsequent governments (Cameron 2003; Moss 2014a).

The Labour government of 1997 to 2010 introduced universal, free part-time early education in England for 3- and 4-year-olds; then free part-time early education was offered to disadvantaged 2-year-olds (Gibb et al. 2011). As well as nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools, private-for-profit and not-for-profit childcare businesses, including childminders, also became eligible for direct public subsidies to deliver this early education entitlement, provided certain quality and safeguarding criteria were met. This helped to fuel a rapid rise in private-for-profit childcare businesses, including corporate childcare chains with stock market listed shares. Further fuel for expansion was provided by childcare subsidies paid to parents in the form of tax credits and employer childcare vouchers, introduced with the express intention of stimulating competition and quality within local childcare markets and offering employed parents more choice.

The childcare market has come to dominate the English ECEC system. The country has one of the most marketised ECEC systems in the EU, and between 2000 and 2007 the UK private-for-profit ECEC sector (dominated by England) increased by 70 per cent (Penn 2007). The 2006 Childcare Act was responsible for a far-reaching reduction in the role of local government in England, by imposing a duty to ensure sufficient childcare to meet parental demand, while simultaneously removing its ability to fill gaps in provision by providing parallel ECEC services.

While statistics on the uptake of childcare and early education within this system are not aggregated in one place, the latest official statistics (DfE 2019) confirm that the majority of 2- and 3-year-olds eligible for free early education attend private provision, mostly for-profit services. Most 4-year-olds, by contrast, are in nursery and reception classes in primary schools.

The latest English ECEC policy is an extension to the early education entitlement from 15 to 30 hours weekly, but only for 3- and 4-year-olds whose parents meet certain employment criteria (Paull and La Valle 2018). This regressive policy, aimed at increasing affordable childcare for working parents rather than an education entitlement for all children, benefits higher-income parents the most.

System failures

A surprising amount of profound criticism has come English ECEC's way in recent reports from within government itself (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts 2016; House of Commons Treasury Committee 2018; House of Commons Education Committee 2019). Criticism has also come from independent agencies such as the National Audit Office (NAO 2016) and the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England (Kelly et al. 2018). These reports primarily focus on present policy designs and on unintended consequences of their implementation. In contrast, they largely pass over the most glaring weaknesses of the English ECEC system.

Disconnects between ECEC system elements

The awkward split between early education to promote children's development and childcare for the children of employed parents, with service delivery within both the state sector and the private market, and the discrepancies between their two workforces go back a long way (Penn 2009). The English ECEC system has never truly abandoned this 'path dependence' (Pierson 2004) in the shape and administration of its provision.

Responsibility for all aspects of early education and childcare in England remains shared between the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). While the devolved UK administrations (Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) determine their own early education policies, financing, other than the early education entitlement, is a UK-wide responsibility of the DWP, with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) responsible for administration. The English Department of Health and Social Care retains a specific role in relation to the programme of services for young children growing up with disadvantage, delivered in the rapidly dwindling number of children's centres (Bate and Foster 2017), as well as its general role in relation to maternal and child health.

The disparate policies emanating from separate departments tend to be contradictory, lack synergy and display awkward interfaces. This impedes their efficient implementation and positive impact on young children and their families (Stewart and Obolenskaya 2015).

Funding model deficiencies

The unhelpful discrepancies between ECEC funding streams is well illustrated by the contrast between ‘Tax-Free Childcare’ and the ‘childcare element of Universal Credit’. Since 2017, the Tax-Free Childcare policy offers a demand-side subsidy from birth to help with parental childcare costs up to a maximum of £2,000 per child annually (HM Government 2019). However, this is not a universal entitlement, as it is not available to low-income working parents claiming Universal Credit, a controversial and problematic reform of the UK social security system intended to integrate a number of benefits. Instead, parents in receipt of Universal Credit may be able to claim back up to 80 per cent of their childcare costs within the benefits system (Norris 2018).

Two-parent families where only one parent works are not entitled to Tax-Free Childcare. Their children only qualify for the early education entitlement, and the stay-at-home parent is not directly rewarded for their childrearing role. Finding a resolution to this issue within a public ECEC system is not simple. Even within the Nordic countries the concept of ‘cash for care’ (that is, payments to at-home parents) has remained controversial (Eydal et al. 2018); some argue that it increases choice, others that it subverts gender equality.

Parental – demand-side – subsidies involve cost reimbursements either through the tax or the benefits system, after parents have made payments to childcare services. These retrospective payments have been characterised as a ‘fundamental flaw’ by the House of Commons Treasury Committee (2018, 14). Such funding problems originate in the dual-track system of supply-side funding for early education versus demand-side funding for childcare components of the English ECEC system. As Stewart and Waldfogel (2017) argue, this contributes to the increasing social segregation characterising English ECEC and the difficulty of realising the system’s underpinning policy rationales of promoting children’s social mobility and families’ economic well-being. So, too, does intensifying marketisation, which according to one private research agency is responsible for private provision being increasingly concentrated and expanding in well-to-do areas, whereas in disadvantaged areas places are being lost (Ceeda 2018).

Marketisation consequences

Consolidation within the private ECEC market has resulted in 8 per cent of the market share now being held by two stock-market-listed childcare ‘super chains’, one British and one American, each owning over 300 nurseries. More than half of the private day nursery market is held by other major and minor childcare chains, while public sector settings, including children’s centres, account for a mere 7 per cent (LaingBuisson 2019).

Parental fees for private nurseries rose by about 6 per cent in 2018, well above inflation, and accessibility and affordability are becoming more problematic for middle- and low-income families in England. The average weekly cost of 25 hours of day nursery care for a child under 2 years old in 2018 was £129, and was £114 with a childminder (Coleman and Cottell 2019). Several studies evidence the negative impact of ECEC marketisation on disadvantaged children’s equitable access to good-quality provision (Blanden et al. 2016; Paull and Xu 2017; Campbell et al. 2018). Disaggregating ECEC access data shows that advantage is inextricably linked to ethnicity, mental and physical health issues affecting children or their parents, family housing status and family size (Gambaro et al. 2015).

The level of state financing of the system and its infrastructure, notably the ECEC workforce, helps determine whether an ECEC system can be defined as ‘public’. According to OECD (2017) calculations, the UK and Japan are the only OECD member states where half of early years spending derives from private sources. In many OECD member states, governments carry over 80 per cent of such spending; the 50 per cent of spending costs borne by the UK government is, therefore, well below the OECD average.

Levels of state spending on the English system, which is representative of the UK, justify describing it as at most partially public; particularly when compared with countries where ECEC is publicly funded and run, or else partially or wholly run with the involvement of the private sector but subject to tighter regulation and more generous funding.

SEND challenges

Inadequate provider subsidies largely account for the lack of access to publicly funded ECEC for 3- and 4-year-old children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). The flat-rate service provider subsidy calculated according to the Early Years National Funding Formula (ESFA 2018) takes no account of any additional costs of providing services to SEND children. Either parents must pay these, or the provider must apply for funding from separate local authority budgets, which have been drastically cut

during the last 10 years of austerity. These circumstances explain why only 5 per cent of the children whose parents in 2017/18 qualified for 30-hour childcare were recognised as having a special educational need or disability (Paull and La Valle 2018).

A recent government study illustrated the different hourly costs associated with delivering ECEC to children with a range of disabilities and special educational needs (Blainey and Paull 2017, Figure 18). Just over half the sample children received some additional funding from their local authority; moreover, most of this funding did not cover the actual costs of providing the early education entitlement for these children (Blainey and Paull 2017, 83). This situation persists despite policies designed to ensure equity for SEND children (Griggs and Bussard 2017).

ECEC workforce inequities

The early childhood workforce is an essential component of a public ECEC system's infrastructure. It is a key influence on provision quality and hence children's well-being, enjoyment and developmental outcomes. A transparent training and qualifications framework, adequate remuneration, continuous professional development and good employment conditions should reflect the value of the ECEC workforce. As we saw in Chapter 5, this is not the case in England. For example, pay and employment conditions for qualified teachers in publicly funded schools contrast starkly with those of early childhood practitioners working in the private 'childcare' sector (Hawthorne and Brown 2016; Bonetti 2019). The latest official survey of ECEC providers (DfE 2018a, 9) confirmed that 11 per cent of practitioners aged over 25 years working in group-based childcare settings earned hourly wages below the mandatory national living wage.

Policy implementation failures

A precondition for any public ECEC system should be that it fully implements its underlying policies; the current English ECEC system does not. For example, while the entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds to 15 hours per week of free early education during term time is universal, only a minority of children with special educational needs and disability access this (Blainey and Paull 2017). Similarly, the targeted offer of early education for 2-year-old children growing up with disadvantage currently fails to reach about a third of eligible children (Albakri et al. 2018). Implementation problems with both these universal and targeted policies can be directly traced to the marketised English system (Lloyd and Penn 2012).

Different parts of the system fail to connect during a child's early years. For instance, there is a 35-month gap between the end of the well-paid element of employed parents' statutory leave entitlements and the point at which their children qualify for publicly funded early education (discussed further in Chapter 13). This gap may be one reason for the limited impact of universal early education on English mothers' employment rates (Brewer et al. 2016).

The continuing decline of public nursery schools illustrates how market operations adversely influence ECEC accessibility, affordability and quality, actively undermining the viability of public provision. For a century, nursery schools have been delivering ECEC, primarily in disadvantaged areas and to children experiencing a range of disadvantages (Paull and Popov 2019), with the help of graduate Early Years Teachers enjoying adequate employment conditions. Among a sample of English nursery schools inspected in 2016/17 by Ofsted (the national inspection agency for early childhood education and care), 63 per cent were graded outstanding (Ofsted 2017). Yet their number across England has almost halved over the last 20 years, to 392, as cash-strapped local authorities have reallocated funding to cheaper private sector providers. Their sustainability is now seriously at risk.

Towards transformative change

The subject of this chapter is a 'public ECEC system', and several references have already been made to the term 'public'. So, what allows an ECEC system to be defined as public? What might a transformed public ECEC system look like?

This chapter makes two assumptions. First, in a public system provision need not be fully publicly funded and delivered; certain kinds of public-private ECEC partnerships are permissible, provided stringent regulatory criteria are met, intended outcomes for all children are rigorously monitored and the system is fully inclusive (Lloyd 2019). Second, a public system should not have profit as its driving force (Moss 2014b; Tronto 2013). This position is in line with the 2013 UN General Comment 16 on Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 2013, 5), which relates to business interests. It also chimes with the recommendation from an ECEC policy brief prepared for the 2019 G20 meeting in Osaka on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This recommends that nations should designate ECEC as a public good and public responsibility, consequently countering privatisation and

corporatisation and phasing out for-profit provision (Urban et al. 2019). Given the extent to which English ECEC relies on the private-for-profit sector, this poses a challenge.

What it looks like in practice: The case of Norway

Bearing in mind these assumptions, is there an example that could inform a public ECEC system for England? The case of Norway comes closest to demonstrating in practice the kind of strategies and policies that may deliver an equitable system that works for children, families, the workforce, communities and society. Since the 1960s, kindergartens (*Barnehage*) have been provided, regulated and subsidised by local authorities, which receive a block grant from the state to this end. From 2009, all Norwegian children aged 1 to 6 years old, the school starting age, have had a legal right to a full-time place in kindergarten, while the first year of life is covered by parental leave policies (see Chapter 13 for more details).

In 2004, the small proportion of private kindergartens, which charged high parental fees, became entitled to public subsidies, provided they met the same regulatory conditions as public provision (Jacobsen and Vollset 2012). A growing mixed market economy has resulted. More than 50 per cent of Norwegian kindergartens are currently run by private providers, mostly not-for-profit, while a debate continues about the role of for-profit businesses. About a third of kindergarten staff are educated to degree level and they are supported by assistants with lesser or different qualifications. The 2010 Kindergarten Act stipulates ratios of one graduate preschool teacher per seven to nine children under 3 years old and one per 14 to 18 older children. These ratios exclude unqualified assistants.

The system, therefore, is based on generous funding for both public and private provision in a mixed market economy, which is tied to strong regulation (Haug 2014). Local government plays a key role in both the distribution of grants, which are paid direct to providers, and provider regulation, including control over entry and exit from the market. Income-related parental fees are pegged at around 15 per cent of household income, while since 2004 fees are capped at 20 per cent of service costs. Under this regime, uptake of kindergarten by low-income families has increased sharply compared with other European countries (Ellingsaeter 2014).

This combination of measures and the equal subsidies available to all types of kindergarten provider make for a homogeneous, integrated and universally accessible market. Moreover, Norway spends more than other Nordic nations on cash benefits for parents, in recognition of their

childrearing role; Norwegian ECEC support is transparently linked to other family policies aimed at enabling mothers and fathers to combine work and care (Eydal et al. 2018). Arguably, Norway's ECEC system is truly public, given the way its public–private partnership operates.

Working towards a public ECEC system

The Norwegian case study could inform the remodelling of English ECEC, although Penn and Lloyd (2014, 34) warn that:

the story in Norway is of a strong state allowing private ECEC providers to contribute providing they meet the already well-established norms of the state sector. It is not an attempt to control or arbitrate in an already burgeoning private sector. Therefore, its transferability as a model may be limited.

Consequently, changing the ECEC system in England, with its 'already burgeoning private sector', could prove more difficult than in Norway.

What could such a public system look like in England? Here is a working definition:

A system that provides all young children from birth until compulsory school age within their communities with accessible, affordable, enjoyable and high-quality education and care provision that promotes their development and well-being, while simultaneously meeting their parents' childcare needs and facilitating an adequate work–life balance within their families by recognising the valuable role of childrearing within society.

This definition provides a vision to strive for, but it needs effective infrastructure elements to ensure quality across the system. Workforce conditions and financing models have already been highlighted. Systems theory explains their essential role.

A transformed public ECEC system should reflect systems theory's basic tenet that effective interactions between all system elements are a precondition for systems to function effectively (Kagan et al. 2016). Equity, quality and sustainability are the three macro-level outcomes of a well-functioning ECEC system that influences child and family outcomes. Equity covers equitable access to services, an equitable distribution of budgets and an equitable distribution and remuneration of personnel. Quality relates to pedagogical frameworks and standards and meaningful

professional preparation and development. While financing, data monitoring and accountability systems and political and public support all need to be geared to promoting sustainability. All these aspects are deficient in England today and these deficiencies are magnified by risks inherent in the system's marketised nature. How might such risks be addressed?

Mitigating childcare market risks

Several OECD member states have adopted policies and strategies aimed at mitigating the equity risks associated with marketised ECEC systems. Penn and Lloyd (2014) reviewed positive strategies employed in five countries – Australia, the Netherlands, the UK, Norway and New Zealand – to improve aspects of ECEC market operations. Different measures were shown to be effective in containing the growth of the private-for-profit market share in favour of not-for-profit and public sector provision. Improving variable quality and inequitable access could also be achieved, provided that strong regulations were enforced, including planning controls for entry to and exit from local markets (Penn and Lloyd 2014, 13).

Such improvements require substantial supply-side rather than demand-side public funding, subsidising services rather than parents, coupled with regulations such as fee-capping, to prevent the equity impact of greater public funding being undermined by price inflation and profit taking. Funding models are as important as funding levels in countering social stratification. Generous public funding is also required: to improve employment conditions of the early childhood workforce and their initial and continuous professional training; to increase local accountability; and to improve monitoring, research and policy evaluation. This set of conclusions and recommendations echoes those in earlier EU (Lindeboom and Buiskool 2013) and OECD (2006) reports.

ECEC's essential policy linkages

As was evident from the Norway case study, a well-functioning public ECEC system needs integration within wider family and public health policies. It also needs to take account of informal care and the value to communities, society and the economy of the parental caring role itself.

For the first year of a child's life a statutory entitlement to well-paid and flexible leave, including adoption leave, for employed mothers and fathers should be on offer (see Chapter 13 for a fuller discussion of leave policy). This position can be justified on public health grounds alone (Marmot Review 2010). Leave policies should connect seamlessly with a wider set of family-work policies that apply beyond the first year,

including flexible parental leave, leave to care for sick children, and a right to flexible working for parents with SEND children. For non-employed parents, these should be complemented by equivalent public health and welfare policies ensuring specific financial and practical support before birth, during infancy and later childhood. Since 2008, England has instead seen a substantial reduction in benefits for mothers around pregnancy, birth and the first year of a child's life (Stewart and Obolenskaya 2015, Figure 11; Lloyd 2014).

Recent ECEC policies are almost exclusively focused on increasing mothers' labour market participation. They fail to acknowledge a range of factors influencing parental employment decisions. One is that the time and effort required for childrearing need to be accommodated; another is parents' continuing desire for informal care. In the latest survey of English parents' ECEC use, 19 per cent of children under 2 years old with employed parents received informal care only, while 40 per cent were looked after exclusively by their parent(s) (DfE 2018b, Table 9.1).

The changing profile of the employment market also affects parental employment decisions, with more and more jobs involving irregular or atypical working hours (DfE 2018b, Table 8.6). Among the survey's sample of working mothers of children from birth to 14 years old, 31 per cent worked atypical hours, rising to 37 per cent among those employed full time. Informal childcare might have filled the gaps left by formal childcare; a recent survey of childcare costs found enough formal childcare to meet parental demand during atypical working hours in only 22 per cent of English local authorities (Coleman and Cottell 2019).

But should parents of young children need to work atypical hours at all? Should employers offer parents greater flexibility through more family-friendly employment policies? A public ECEC system would have an interface with a wide-ranging set of family-friendly policies. Yet the UK government appears reluctant to introduce mandatory policies regarding flexible working and taking unpaid time off; employed parents and carers merely have the right to request flexible working. The Netherlands (Akgunduz and Plantenga 2014) and Nordic countries (Brandt and Gisláson 2011) offer part-time and flexible work for both genders. As their average wages are higher than in England these work patterns disadvantage young families less financially. An English think tank (NEF 2014) imaginatively explored a better balance between parental work and care, which involved moving to a standard 30-hours working week alongside the introduction of free universal childcare of high quality. Parents, children and society, they argued, would be better off, while existing inequalities, notably those related to gender, would be reduced.

A public ECEC system needs an underpinning consensus on how the parental childrearing role can be valued more explicitly and recognised financially more generously than at present. To achieve the intended results this consensus needs translating into enforceable legislation.

Informal care, the economy and society

The issue of informal care by friends and family is complex. The English Department for Education (2018b) parent survey suggested that informal care, particularly kinship care by grandparents, was a positive choice for many parents, particularly for children under 2 years old. So was care by fathers and mothers themselves. The value of UK informal childcare, by parents, family members and friends, as a contribution to unpaid household services is second only to transport, according to the ONS (2018, Figure 1), and is considerably larger than the value of formal ECEC services (Belfield et al. 2018). For England, the time spent in formal childcare represented 12 per cent of total childcare hours per child, as opposed to 88 per cent in parental and informal childcare (ONS 2018, Figure 6).

ECEC policy documents barely acknowledge the value to the economy and society of parental time spent on childrearing and childcare. An innovative aspect of the recent Treasury Committee childcare report was therefore its inclusion of a note on the economic contribution of stay-at-home parents, although the Committee did not recommend this role should be financially recognised (House of Commons Treasury Committee 2018, 10)

Current levels of informal care might alter if ECEC complexity were reduced and the gap removed between well-paid parental leave and ECEC. Nordic parents' uptake of full-time ECEC suggests parents want to use such a generously subsidised formal system perceived as high quality, even though most have to make an income-related contribution (Eydal et al. 2018). This type of financing model, incorporating fee caps and free provision for disadvantaged children within a simplified ECEC system, might well prove acceptable to English parents. Findings from a study of ECEC policy evolution across 22 European countries suggest as much, demonstrating that parental support for public policies and systems and their assessment of quality co-varied with the level of public support (Chung and Meuleman 2017, 49).

This chapter's analysis of current deficiencies in England's ECEC system has demonstrated the need for its transformation into a public system and outlined pathways towards its realisation. Norway provides one model, offering a mixed economy of high-quality, accessible, affordable

and enjoyable ECEC that promotes the interests of children, families, the workforce and the state, while maintaining a balance between these interests. In addition, a variety of parental leave, family-friendly employment and ECEC workforce policies appear essential to a broad-based, effective, comprehensive, inclusive and equitable public ECEC system. Policies and strategies were identified that could prove helpful in realising the required transformation away from a heavily marketised system.

The state must retain ultimate accountability and provide essential financial, monitoring and regulatory support, although it need not provide services directly. A collective sense of responsibility for investing in ECEC and its infrastructure needs nurturing within English society, with the profit motive removed from the system and replaced by a public motive. This requires a new kind of civic solidarity that can turn back 30 years of marketisation.

Undeniably, transformative change in English ECEC needs to be politically driven. Globally, human rights are being challenged by the fast encroaching privatisation and marketisation of human and other public services (UNGA 2018). In a separate United Nations report on UK poverty, childcare and housing costs, alongside benefit cuts and Universal Credit, were identified as factors responsible for 20 per cent of the population, 14 million people, now living in poverty (UNGA 2019).

Official UK poverty figures confirm that families with children are bearing the brunt of rising poverty (DWP 2019). Across the UK, over 4 million children now live in poverty, almost one in three, with children under 5 years old making up 53 per cent of this total – meaning poverty affects over 2 million young children, jeopardising their present and future well-being, health, educational and socio-economic outcomes. Children growing up in Black, certain Asian and other ethnic minority communities and in families with three or more children are disproportionately represented. Clearly, structural problems with England's ECEC system add to the disadvantage these children experience: a transformed public system is long overdue.

Further reading

My article 'Early childhood education and care in England under the Coalition Government' (*London Review of Education*, 2015), available free at <https://repository.uel.ac.uk/item/8549y>, documents the ECEC policy turn that occurred when a Coalition government took office in 2010 after 13 years of a Labour government; its increased emphasis on marketised

ECEC operations continues today, and economic austerity has exacerbated their negative impact on service access, affordability and quality, particularly for the increasing numbers of children growing up in poverty.

Peder Haug's article 'The public–private partnership in ECEC provision in Norway' (*European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 2014), available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1350293X.2014.912899?journalCode=recr20>, examines the history and evolving nature and likely future of Norway's public/private ECEC partnerships, within the wider context of Norway's family and other social welfare policies.

Finally, *The SAGE Handbook of Early Childhood Policy*, edited by Linda Miller and colleagues (SAGE 2018), offers well-researched chapters on different aspects of ECEC systems and policies in a wide range of countries, many featuring marketised ECEC services.

References

- Akgunduz, Y.I. and Plantenga, J. (2014) 'Childcare in the Netherlands: Lessons in privatisation'. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 22 (3), 379–85.
- Albakri, M., Basi, T., Davies, M., Forsyth, E., Hopwood, V., Patel, R., Skipp, A. and Tanner, E. (2018) *Take-up of Free Early Education Entitlements: Research report*. London: Department for Education.
- Bate, A. and Foster, D. (2017) *Sure Start (England) (Briefing Paper 7257)*. London: House of Commons Library. Online. <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7257> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Belfield, C., Farquharson, C. and Sibieta, L. (2018) *2018 Annual Report on Education Spending in England*. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies.
- Blainey, S. and Paull, G. (2017) *Study of Early Education and Development (SEED): The cost of and funding of early education. Research report*. London: Department for Education.
- Blanden, J., Del Bono, E., McNally, S. and Rabe, B. (2016) 'Universal preschool education: The case of public funding with private provision'. *The Economic Journal*, 126 (May), 682–723.
- Bonetti, S. (2019) *The Early Years Workforce in England: A comparative analysis using the Labour Force Survey*. London: Education Policy Institute.
- Brandt, B. and Gislason, I.V. (2011) 'Family policies and the best interests of children'. In Gislason, I.V. (ed.) *Parental Leave, Childcare and Gender Equality in the Nordic Countries*. Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers. Online. http://fdd.ru/activity/attach/information/182/parental_leave_childcare_and_gender_equality_in_the_nordic_countries.pdf (accessed 10 February 2020).
- Brewer, M., Cattan, S., Crawford, C. and Rabe, B. (2016) 'Does more free childcare help parents work more?' IFS Working Paper W16/22. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies.
- Cameron, C. (2003) 'An historical perspective on changing child care policy'. In Brannen, J. and Moss, P. (eds) *Rethinking Children's Care*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 80–95.
- Campbell, T., Gambaro, L. and Stewart, K. (2018) "'Universal" early education: Who benefits? Patterns in take-up of the entitlement to free early education among three-year-olds in England'. *British Educational Research Journal*, 44 (3), 515–38.
- Ceeda (2018) *About Early Years: The Independent Sector Research Programme 2017/18 Annual Report*. Stockton on Tees: Ceeda.
- Chung, H. and Meuleman, B. (2017) 'European parents' attitudes towards public childcare provision: The role of current provisions, interests and ideologies'. *European Societies*, 19 (1), 49–68.
- Coleman, L. and Cottell, J. (2019) *Childcare Survey 2019*. London: Coram Family and Childcare.

- DfE (Department for Education) (2018a) *Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers: Main summary, England, 2018*. London: Department for Education. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/788753/Survey_of_Childcare_and_Early_Years_Providers_2018_Main_Summary.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2018b) *Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents in England, 2018*. London: Department for Education. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/766498/Childcare_and_Early_Years_Survey_of_Parents_in_England_2018.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2019) *Provision for Children under 5 Years of Age in England, January 2019*. London: Department for Education. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/811683/Provision_for_children_under_5_2019_-_text.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) (2019) 'Households below average income (HBAI) statistics'. London: Department for Work and Pensions.
- Ellingsaeter, A.L. (2014) 'Towards universal quality early childhood education and care: The Norwegian model'. In Gambaro, L., Stewart, K. and Waldfogel, J. (eds) *An Equal Start? Providing quality early education and care for disadvantaged children*. Bristol: Policy Press, 53–76.
- ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) (2018) *Early Years Entitlements: Local authority funding of providers – operational guide 2019–2020*. London: Education and Skills Funding Agency.
- Eydal, G., Rostgaard, T. and Hiilamo, H. (2018) 'Family policy in the Nordic countries: Aiming at equality'. In Eydal, G. and Rostgaard, T. (eds) (2018) *Handbook of Family Policy*. Cheltenham: Elgar Books, 195–208.
- Gambaro, L., Stewart, K. and Waldfogel, J. (2015) 'A question of quality: Do children from disadvantaged backgrounds receive lower quality early education and care?' *British Educational Research Journal*, 41 (4): 553–74.
- Gibb, J., Jellicic, H., La Valle, I., Gowland, S., Kinsella, R., Jessiman, P. and Ormston, R. (2011) *Rolling out Free Early Education for Disadvantaged Two Year Olds: An implementation study for local authorities and providers; Research report DFE-RR131*. London: Department for Education. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/181502/DFE-RR131.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Griggs, J. and Bussard, L. (2017) *Study of Early Education and Development (SEED): Meeting the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities in the early years; Research report*. London: Department for Education. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/y9sbbff7> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Haug, P. (2014) 'The public–private partnership in ECEC provision in Norway'. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 22 (3), 366–78.
- Hawthorne, S. and Brown, M. (2016) 'Early Years Pay and Conditions Survey 2016'. *Nursery World*. Online. www.nurseryworld.co.uk/nursery-world/news/1159248/early-years-pay-and-conditions-survey-2016 (accessed 10 January 2020).
- HM Government (2019) 'Help paying for your childcare'. *Childcare Choices*. Online. www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/ (accessed 10 January 2020).
- House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (2016) *Entitlement to Free Early Years Education and Childcare: Fourth report of session 2016–17*. Online. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmpubacc/224/224.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- House of Commons Education Committee (2019) *Tackling Disadvantage in the Early Years: Ninth report of session 2017–19*. Online. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/meduc/1006/1006.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- House of Commons Treasury Committee (2018) *Childcare: Ninth report of session 2017–19*. London: House of Commons Treasury Committee. Online. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmtreasy/757/757.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Jacobsen, K. and Vollset, G. (2012) 'Publicly available and supported early education and care for all in Norway'. In Lloyd, E. and Penn, H. (eds) *Childcare Markets: Can they deliver an equitable service?* Bristol: Policy Press, 115–30.
- Kagan, S.L., Araujo, M.C., Jaimovich, A. and Cruz Aguayo, Y. (2016) 'Understanding systems theory and thinking: Early childhood education in Latin America and the Caribbean'. In Farrell, A., Kagan, S.L. and Tisdall, E.K.M. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Early Childhood Research*. London: SAGE, 163–84.
- Kelly, E., Lee, T., Sibieta, L. and Waters, T. (2018) *Public Spending on Children in England: 2000 to 2020*. London: Office of the Children's Commissioner for England.

- LaingBuisson (2019) *Childcare UK Market Report*. 15th ed. London: LaingBuisson.
- Lindeboom, G.-J. and Buiskool, B.-J. (2013) *Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*. Brussels: Directorate-General for Internal Policies, European Parliament.
- Lloyd, E. (2014) 'Co-producing early years policy in England under the Coalition Government'. *Management in Education*, 28 (4), 130–7.
- Lloyd, E. (2015) 'Early childhood education and care in England under the Coalition Government'. *London Review of Education*, 33 (2), 144–56. <https://doi.org/10.18546/LRE.13.2.12>.
- Lloyd, E. (2017) 'Early childhood education and care: Poverty and access. Perspectives from England'. In Miller, L., Cameron, C., Dalli, C. and Barbour, N. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Early Childhood Policy*. London: SAGE, 268–86.
- Lloyd, E. (2019) 'Reshaping and reimagining marketised early childhood education and care systems: Challenges and possibilities'. *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik*, 65 (3), 89–106.
- Lloyd, E. and Penn, H. (eds) (2012) *Childcare Markets: Can they deliver an equitable service?* Bristol: Policy Press.
- Marmot Review (2010) *Fair Society, Healthy Lives: Strategic review of health inequalities in England post-2010*. London: The Marmot Review.
- Miller, L., Cameron, C., Dalli, C. and Barbour, N. (eds) (2017) *The SAGE Handbook of Early Childhood Policy*. London: SAGE.
- Moss, P. (2014a) 'Early childhood policy in England 1997–2013: Anatomy of a missed opportunity'. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 22 (4), 346–58.
- Moss, P. (2014b) *Transformative Change and Real Utopias in Early Childhood Education: A story of democracy, experimentation and potentiality*. London: Routledge.
- NAO (National Audit Office) (2016) *Entitlement to Free Early Education and Childcare*. Online. <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Entitlement-to-free-early-education-and-childcare.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Naumann, I. (2011) 'Towards the marketization of early childhood education and care? Recent developments in the United Kingdom and Sweden'. *Nordic Journal of Social Research*, 2 (special issue), 37–53.
- NEF (New Economics Foundation) (2014) *The Value of Childcare: Quality, cost and time*. London: New Economics Foundation.
- Norris, D. (2018) 'Help with childcare costs in universal credit'. *CPAG blog*, December 2018. London: Child Poverty Action Group.
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2006) *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Development*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2017) *Education at a Glance*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) (2017) *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2016/17*. Online. www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-annual-report-201617-education-childrens-services-and-skills (accessed 10 January 2020).
- ONS (Office for National Statistics) (2018) 'Household Satellite Account, UK: 2015 and 2016'. Online. www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/satelliteaccounts/articles/householdsatelliteaccounts/2015and2016estimates (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Paull, G. and La Valle, I. (2018) *Evaluation of the First Year of the National Rollout of 30 Hours Free Childcare: Research report*. London: Department for Education. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/740168/Evaluation_of_national_rollout_of_30_hours_free-childcare.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Paull, G. and Popov, D. (2019) *The Role and Contribution of Maintained Nursery Schools in the Early Years Sector in England: Research report*. London: Department for Education. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/827731/Frontier_Economics_MNS_report_REVISED_v2.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Paull, G. and Xu, X. (2017) *Study of Early Education and Development (SEED): The potential value for money of early education; Research report*. London: Department for Education. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/627095/Frontier_SEED_VfM_Report.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Penn, H. (2007) 'Childcare market management: How the United Kingdom Government has reshaped its role in developing early childhood education and care'. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 8 (3), 192–207.

- Penn, H. (2009) 'Public and private: The history of early education and care institutions in the United Kingdom'. In Scheiwe, K. and Willekens, H. (eds) *Child Care and Preschool Development in Europe: Institutional perspectives*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Penn, H. (2011) 'Gambling on the market: The role of for-profit provision in early childhood education and care'. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 9 (2), 150–61.
- Penn, H. and Lloyd, E. (2014) 'How can government ensure that early childhood care and education is of high quality? A review of the international evidence'. In Wolfe, T. (ed.) *Childcare: Business or profession?* Dublin: Start Strong, 13–52.
- Pierson, P. (2004) *Politics in Time: History, institutions, and social analysis*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Scheiwe, K. and Willekens, H. (eds) (2009) *Child Care and Preschool Development in Europe: Institutional perspectives*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Stewart, K. and Obolenskaya, P. (2015) 'The coalition's record on the under fives: Policy, spending and outcomes 2010–2015'. Working Paper 12. London: Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion. Online. <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/spcc/WP12.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Stewart, K. and Waldfogel, J. (2017) *Closing Gaps Early: The role of early years policy in promoting social mobility in England*. London: Sutton Trust. Online. www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Closing-Gaps-Early_FINAL.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Tronto, J.C. (2013) *Caring Democracy: Markets, equality, and justice*. New York: New York University Press.
- UNCRC (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child) (2013) 'General Comment No 16 on State Obligations Regarding the Impact of the Business Sector on Children's Rights'. Online. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/51ef9cd24.html> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- UNGA (United Nations General Assembly) (2018) *Extreme Poverty and Human Rights: Report by the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston*. New York: United Nations.
- UNGA (United Nations General Assembly) (2019) *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights on his Visit to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*. New York: United Nations. Online. <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/HRC/41/39/Add.1> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Urban, M., Cardini, A., Guevara, J., Okengo, L. and Floréz Romero, R. (2019) 'Early childhood development education and care: The future is what we build today'. In Morgan, P.J. and Kayashima, N. (eds) *Realizing Education for All in the Digital Age*. Tokyo: Asian Development Bank Institute, 9–16.

7

Towards a child-centred curriculum

Georgina Trevor, Amanda Ince and Lynn Ang

The need for transformative change

Between the landmark publication of the Plowden Report in 1967, which advocated a child-centred curriculum in primary schools and declared ‘at the heart of the educational process lies the child’, and the evolution of supra-national evidence on curriculum via the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and other international bodies in the mid-2000s, the idea of curriculum in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services achieved a new prominence in the lives of families with young children. For example, ECEC began to be seen as a means of ameliorating the impact of social disadvantage, and the advent of a formal curriculum, such as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), established under the Childcare Act 2006 and implemented in 2008, is one aspect of this shift in educational thinking. A curriculum was considered essential in expressing ideas of what children should learn and be able to do, whatever setting they attended. The EYFS was also seen as an integrating mechanism across a sector that was (and is) split by auspices and age groups (see Chapters 4 and 5). In this chapter, we briefly review the development of the curriculum in England’s ECEC sector and argue that its evolution has been marked by the competing agendas of, on the one hand, child-centredness and theories of learning, and, on the other, marketisation, ideas of school readiness, and neoliberal agendas that promote a standardised, one-size-fits-all approach.

The EYFS is the national curriculum framework in England on the standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old. It has seven ‘areas of learning’: communication and language; physical development; personal, social and emotional development; literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; and expressive arts and design.

It is mandatory for all registered ECEC providers, such as schools, nurseries, preschools (formerly playgroups) and childminders. The sheer diversity of childcare and education settings available in England presents challenges when implementing a universal curriculum. This is exacerbated by a pervasive neoliberal marketised sector (see Chapter 6) and a national inspection framework implemented by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), which regulates all providers against a uniform set of quality standards. We explore these challenges, tensions and contradictions in the implementation of the curriculum, propose alternative visions that recognise children's capacity to actively participate in the construction of a rich curriculum, and re-imagine the skills and knowledge that such a curriculum has the potential to develop.

The Plowden legacy

While the Plowden Report was focused on primary schools, it noted that 'the under fives [are] the only age group for whom no extra educational provision of any kind has been made since 1944' (Central Advisory Council for Education 1967, 291). The Playgroup Movement (providing private, non-profit, part-time provision for 3- and 4-year-olds, often organised by parents) was still in its infancy and Plowden highlighted nursery schools and classes as 'transitional' settings between home and primary school, desirable not only on educational but also on health, social and welfare grounds, and even went so far as to outline suggested levels of staff qualification, safeguarding, funding, staffing structure, child to adult ratios and inspection processes for settings (Central Advisory Council for Education 1967, 299, 311, 333, 343). The report thus set the tone not only for the curriculum but all early years provision for the next 50 years (Boyd and Hirst 2016; Palaiologou 2016).

In the years following the report, the possibility of tackling inequality in education to bring about social change (Halsey and Sylva 1987) was severely impacted by the austerity of the Thatcher years, and, by 1990, public investment in education and expenditure in relation to GDP had declined. There was, however, a sharp rise in private sector childcare to accommodate the needs of working mothers and the private sector was supported by national and, subsequently, local government's public sector reform agendas (Penn 2011). By 2001, parents in the UK were spending £3 billion on childcare (Palaiologou 2016); while by 2013–14, educational economists reported that the private childcare market in the UK was worth an estimated £4.9bn (Gyimah 2015, cited in Lewis and West 2017).

Investment in the curriculum

In 1997, a Labour government was elected with a commitment to education for young children and childcare for working parents. The National Childcare Strategy Green Paper 'Meeting the Childcare Challenge' (DfEE 1998) represented the 'first time in British history the government realised the need for a national childcare policy' (Palaiologou 2016, 15) and noted the absence of standards about what constituted 'good quality childcare' that could be applied across all settings. Sector integration was critical to the success of policy goals of expanding access, and standards were a means to achieve integration. Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage was issued in 2000 (QCA–DfEE 2000), aimed at providing support to practitioners in planning a curriculum for 3- to 5-year-olds, which enabled children to achieve the early learning goals (ELGs) via 'stepping stones' 'that show the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes that children need to learn' (QCA–DfEE 2000, 8), en route to the national curriculum's Key Stage 1. It had a series of areas for learning, endorsed parents as partners in learning, and emphasised the need for 'a well-planned and resourced curriculum to take ... learning forward and to provide opportunities for all children to succeed in an atmosphere of care and of feeling valued' (QCA–DfEE, 2000, 8). Practitioners should show planning, assessing and teaching skills.

The integrationist push continued and the EYFS framework came into being in 2008, covering children from birth to 5 years old. It was described as 'a radical innovation ... transforming early childhood education' (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2008) and was positioned within a wider policy context, responding to calls for a 'comprehensive, integrated and coherent early childhood service' (Moss and Penn 1996, 165). It replaced several existing policy documents: the non-statutory Birth to Three Matters guidance (Sure Start 2003), the National Standards for Day Care (DfEE 2003) and the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage curriculum for 3- to 5-year-olds (QCA–DfEE 2000). It also addressed Ball's Start Right report recommendation for the 'systematic public provision of high quality preschool education' (Ball 1994, 1), as well as responding to research evidence that children's intellectual, behavioural and social development is positively affected by 'high quality' preschool education (Effective Provision of Pre-school Education [EPPE] project: Sylva et al. 2004; Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years: Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002; High/Scope Perry Preschool Study: Schweinhart 1993; Millennium Cohort Study, Third Survey: Hansen and Joshi, 2008).

The EYFS was tied to the government's 'Every Child Matters' agenda, covering all services for children and young people, with its outcomes of staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving economic well-being. The EYFS sought to: set standards for the learning, development and care that young children should experience in ECEC; provide equality of opportunity and inclusive practices that did not disadvantage any child on grounds of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties or disabilities, gender or ability; create a framework for partnership working between parents and professionals; improve the quality and consistency of the early years sector through a universal set of standards that apply to all settings; and lay a secure foundation for future learning planned around the individual needs and interests of the child, and informed by the use of ongoing observational assessment (DCSF 2008). Alongside the seven 'areas of learning' (noted above), the EYFS had four 'guiding themes' for practice. These were:

1. All children are unique and competent learners from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
2. Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships with parents and/or a key person.
3. Enabling environments are those that support children's learning in multiple contexts.
4. Children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates, and all areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected.

The EYFS had a long list of 69 ELGs, against which children were assessed. For example, in relation to creative development, which should be supported through extending opportunities for play and exploration in a variety of mediums, practitioners were required to document the ways in which children met learning goals such as: (1) respond in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch and feel; and (2) express and communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings by using a widening range of materials, suitable tools, imaginative and role-play, movement, designing and making, and a variety of songs and musical instruments.

Overall, this early version of the EYFS was considered by many to promote a more spontaneous, natural, child-led and playful pedagogy (Boyd and Hirst 2016). But subsequent EYFS revisions (2012, 2014, 2017) increasingly shifted the focus to 'planned, purposeful play' (DfE 2012, 10) with positivist and universal objective standards of 'quality'

re-established through influential reports such as Ofsted's 'Getting it Right First Time' (2013). Later versions of the EYFS also began to incorporate the 'school readiness' agenda (DfE 2017) in which children must demonstrate progress towards predefined targets and 'goals' (Eke et al. 2009; Alexander 2010), rushing them through a 'hurry along curriculum' (Ang 2014) to meet developmental stages 'typical for their age' and ensuring they are 'adequately prepared for the start of their statutory schooling' (Sir Michael Wilshaw, Chief Inspector and head of Ofsted, 2012–15, cited by Jones 2015, 22).

The 2017 version of the EYFS has fewer ELGs than the 2008 version, 17 altogether, but more specificity about method. This latest version of the EYFS (the government is consulting on a further revision at the time of writing) has three 'prime areas' of learning (communication and language, physical development, and personal, social and emotional development) and four 'specific areas' (literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, expressive arts and design). Guidance states that 'the three prime areas reflect the key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively, and become ready for school' (DfE 2017, 9). Providers should offer children a mix of 'adult-led and child-initiated' activities, but as children 'grow older, and as their development allows, it is expected that the balance will gradually shift towards more activities led by adults, to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for Year 1' (DfE 2017, 9).

The EYFS includes a requirement for 'ongoing assessment' via observation and 'shaping learning experiences' accordingly, using only paperwork that is 'absolutely necessary' and in partnership with parents (DfE 2017, 13). Furthermore, children will be assessed via a progress check at age 2, with a 'short written summary of a child's development in the prime areas' (DfE 2017, 13); this report should identify any developmental delay or special needs. Before moving on to Year 1, an EYFS profile is completed, which shows practitioners' assessments about whether a child is meeting, exceeding or not yet reaching expected levels of development for each ELG.

Over time, the ECEC curriculum has been subject to growing tension between the proponents of the theoretical significance of varied, rich and complex free play inherent in a curriculum that recognises child-initiated activities and play as 'essential for children's development' (DfE 2017, 9), and the exigencies of a prescribed and structured curriculum with explicit intended outcomes in line with 'social investments with good rates of return' (Allen 2011, 11; Aubrey 2004). Successive governments' increasing concern regarding the impact of early years education on the UK's economic competitiveness within a global market (Roberts-Holmes 2012;

Dahlberg et al. 2013) saw a ‘unified conception of learning in childhood’ as being in a country’s interests and for the ‘public good’ (OECD 2006, 58–9). The dominant story of ‘quality and high returns’ (Moss 2014, 3) presupposes that investment in early childhood education will guarantee national success, and signifies a shift towards a politically motivated and results-driven approach to early years education and the ‘view of the child as future pupil’ (Soler and Miller 2003, 66).

The current curriculum landscape

The school readiness agenda is now apparently firmly established in the ECEC curriculum. Moss (2013) argued there seems to be a societal shift towards education as a meritocratic vehicle for boosting mobility aimed at economic success, with a focus on early childhood education readying children for the first stage in that journey. In response the EYFS framework can be read as a prescriptive and homogenous nationalised curriculum (Palaiologou 2016).

There are pressures for teachers to comply, despite disagreeing, with the school readiness agenda. They feel it is their responsibility to prepare children for the next stage in their education, fearing a failure to do so could result in their complicity in a growing gulf between what a child can measurably achieve and what they are expected to know. The increased documentation requirements of early years and primary education and the misalignment of reception outcomes and Year 1 targets significantly challenge practitioners’ and teachers’ ability to interact with children and listen to their perspectives (Bradbury 2013).

The formation of a national approach to learning has surfaced, which aims to achieve numerous and often conflicting outcomes as a means of measuring success and achieving ‘desirable’ results. Investment in ECEC thus reframes the social construction of the child as economic potential and perpetuates the Human Capital Theory of early investment leading to profitable returns, and education ensuring ‘economic success’ (Becker 2002). The result is the development of the curriculum as a technical practice that seeks to provide ‘high-quality’ education, thus enabling socio-economic child future-proofing. Responsive pedagogy is replaced by an approach that ‘privileges adults’ provision for play and only acknowledges their interpretation of children’s outcomes in line with predefined developmental indicators, curriculum goals and the school readiness agenda’ (Wood 2013, 48), creating a tension with efforts to maintain ‘quality’ within an early years framework that purports to be a reflective, holistic and context-specific curriculum.

Towards transformative change

Contextually appropriate practice

The certainty implied by offering the EYFS as ‘the right foundation’ (DfE 2017, 5) implies a value-laden reading of the curriculum as the sum total of all possible learning and development in the early years. The inherent danger is that we ‘focus our attention on the map, rather than the actual terrain’ (Dahlberg et al. 2013, 122), leading practitioners to believe, wrongly, that they must work only within the confines of the EYFS framework, or worse, through a checklist, gathering evidence of achievements and planning to fill the ‘gaps’. With goals and outcomes increasingly tightly defined, education becomes a transfer of knowledge relating to specific, measurable competencies, the acquisition of which are observed, assessed and tested at predetermined key stages in a child’s life. Rigid frameworks born of the hubristic notion that a single construction and measure of learning exists result in teaching to tests and will not suffice in an increasingly unpredictable and changeable present and future. The narrative has strayed from the ‘flexible approach to care and learning’ (DCSF 2008, 7) promised in the early iterations of the EYFS, into an understanding of curriculum that conflates (developmental) education with (instructional) training. Given the wide range of qualifications and professional backgrounds among ECEC practitioners, it is possible that less flexible and more instructional approaches that require fewer situated judgements will prevail. Despite recognising the need for change and successfully initiating it, the English education system appears to possess an inability to appropriately see it through (Burton and Brundrett 2005).

The sustained, progressive endeavour to formulate a collective approach to best address the complex and shifting learning and developmental needs of children positions the curriculum, a set of increasingly normalised statutory standards, programmes of study and attainment targets, as ‘one of the most important elements of education’ (Wyse et al. 2015, 57). There is, however, no comprehensive and agreed conception of curriculum. In the United Kingdom alone, the four nations (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) each have their own distinctive early years policy and curriculum. Curriculum frameworks thus reflect areas of knowledge deemed of value in the context of the wider society within which they operate, and offer sequenced models of learning to build skillsets children may need in the short, medium and long term. How the content of the curriculum is unpacked by the practitioner and

co-constructed with children is influenced by the children's diversities and interests, practitioner training, academic and pedagogical knowledge, practical experience or 'knowledge-in-practice' (Schön 1987) and 'funds of knowledge': a knowledge base of experience, social practices and social and emotional experiences of all parties (Moll et al. 1992; Wood 2013).

The importance of context as the site of curriculum co-construction transforms the interpretation of an immovable curriculum as 'universal' truth into potentially participatory, adaptable and reflexive approaches. The need for pluralistic and pragmatic local interpretation of any socially constructed framework highlights how 'context [is] inseparable from human actions in cognitive events or activities' (Rogoff 1990, 27). Teachers, practitioners and children must be afforded considerable pedagogical space to allow for complex interpretations to unfold and re-fold, establishing an interwoven web of relations that form the 'fabric of meaning' (Carr 2001, 82). When integrating a curriculum such as the EYFS into school and other settings, pedagogical approaches must constantly adjust themselves, through a culture of listening to the perspectives of the children, in order to create relevant and meaningful understandings of children's learning experiences (Clark and Moss 2011).

The EYFS, used in conjunction with guidance documents such as 'Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage' (Early Education 2012), allows for the English early years curriculum to be situated within a 'landscape of possibilities, not a road map' (Stewart 2016). Positioned within everyday practice, it relies on observation and interpretation embedded in participatory practice to deliver meaningful learning experiences, with practitioners continuously reviewing and evaluating the impact of the curriculum. But this requires that time must be given to carefully develop a 'transactional theory of knowledge' (Wyse et al. 2015, 67; Biesta 2014), which seeks to establish a curriculum of possibility rather than certainty. The EYFS is not, then, a standalone curriculum, but should ideally be approached as a tool to be used in conjunction with skilled practitioners and their judgements.

Curriculum as intent, implementation and impact

The EYFS has become orientated to data-based assessment as a way to measure the performance and effectiveness of provision, approaches to teaching, and the children themselves (see Chapter 11 for more on data-based assessment). Children's perception of the use and purpose of assessment can lead to increased anxiety and pressure (Carless and Lam 2014) as they learn to adapt to a culture of formal assessment by

developing their own understanding of what is being asked of them (Snyder 1971). This may lead to a surface approach to learning in which children ‘perform’ without actually comprehending or engaging with the intended learning or proposed teaching. A focus on outcomes also means practitioners may miss children’s inquiry cues and not extend their learning opportunities in spontaneous teaching.

Assessment, in all its guises, is inextricably linked with the construction of the learner, perspectives of the child, balance of power, roles of the players, ways in which it is conceived of and carried out and its intentions and end uses. The interplay of curriculum and assessment is ‘highly complex and sophisticated’ (Kelley 1992, 16) and crucial in determining how effective either has the potential to be (Dunphy 2008). Within the EYFS there exists a tension between the notion of an inclusive framework that recognises the child as ‘unique’ and the goal-orientated framework that champions ‘school readiness’ and echoes a Piagetian ages and stages approach. This is further complicated by contradictory guidance material – ‘Early Years Outcomes’ (DfE 2013), which trammels children into ‘typical’ age and stage requirements, and the more holistic, inter-connected ‘Development Matters’ (Early Education 2012).

Recent changes to the Ofsted Early Years Inspection Handbook see greater emphasis placed on curriculum, with the ‘quality of teaching, learning and assessment’ replaced with one overall ‘quality of education’ judgement, broken down into three components: ‘intent’, ‘implementation’ and ‘impact’ (Ofsted 2019). The new methodology, while considered by many to be more sensitive to the early years observation model of assessment, still aims to calculate quality through inconsistent ‘scrutiny’, which is not appropriately supported with sufficient time or resources to allow for apposite judgements. And while revisions to the EYFS and its accompanying guidance document ‘Development Matters’ are arguably needed to ensure they remain up to date with current thinking and professional knowledge, planned revision in 2020–21 follows on from proposed changes to the ELGs, published in June 2018, and the implementation of the revised Ofsted inspection framework in September 2019. The EYFS end goals, and the inspection framework through which successful delivery of the EYFS is assessed, will therefore have been revised *before* the curriculum framework itself has even been revisited.

The revised ELGs see the introduction of ever narrower language, with descriptive narratives replaced by bullet points read as a tick list of descriptors, aligning the goals with Year 1 of primary school, moving yet further away from the earlier holistic concept of the EYFS and its developmentally appropriate approach. The chronology of these changes,

following the government's consultation on primary school assessment in 2017, appears to support a top-down outcome-orientated agenda, with reception class being reframed as the waiting room to the national curriculum, and in which children are trained in formal approaches and behaviours, and starting points are recorded via the reintroduced baseline assessment (see Chapter 11).

Towards a new model of curriculum

When learning is mapped backwards from intended outcomes, it becomes independent from any meaningful context, with a child's skills or knowledge merely summed up using predetermined checklists as part of convergent assessment. This approach relies on assumptions regarding competence, deficit and the achievement of a 'hierarchy of skills', and objective observation for the purposes of obtaining approval of external agencies (Carr 1999, 2001). While the EYFS continues to signpost the 'unique child', who develops and learns in 'different ways ... and at different rates' (DfE 2017, 6), its foundations are built on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological domains, which have increasingly been criticised as situating the child as a passive recipient at the centre of its hierarchical 'nested structure', constraining the inner individual, with little agency or power (Boyd and Hirst 2016; Brock et al. 2013; Rogoff 1990, 2003). If we take Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory model as a starting point and then allow for intellectual space, both physically and conceptually, we can make a small but practical change, away from the existing construct, which sees homogenised determinism assume a linear exchange of information from micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chrono- systems to the individual, and towards a tapestry made up of the 'complexities of children's developing minds, bodies and emotions' (Nutbrown Review 2012, 19) and their environments.

This alternative approach recognises learning as dynamic interaction. Fragile intellectual space is reliant on respect, democracy and participatory practice. Pedagogical patterns are co-created across disciplines, and in response to the needs of the empowered child. The focus moves away from outcomes and is reframed using learning dispositions as 'an accumulated continuum of complexity', acknowledging the culture and context-specific nature of learning, pointing to a shift towards 'meaning-making' and 'relationships in the experienced world' (Carr 2001, 5). It strongly echoes Alison Clark's 'Mosaic' approach, which is concerned with 'creating meaning' and focusing on 'children's lived experiences', and recognises that a 'dispositional milieu' can be created when

learning dispositions ‘become attached to activities and places’ (see Chapter 9 for a fuller discussion of the Mosaic approach).

These patterns cannot be replicated or reapplied, hollowed out and reallocated; learning and education is fluid, discursive, contextualised and formative. The prescriptive, universal approach to curriculum is contrary to our own experiences in a local early childhood setting, which leads us to conclude that we must build relevant curriculum frameworks, situated in contextual processes of knowledge and culture construction (Rinaldi 2006), which do not deny a larger social responsibility, and which have the ability to fit within broader national approaches. An example of this can be seen in *Te Whāriki*, the national early childhood curriculum of New Zealand (Ministry of Education 2017) which, much like the early childhood education in Reggio Emilia, Italy, reflects the belief that many strands must be incorporated into early childhood education, to ‘weave’ together a context-specific pedagogy. Pragmatically, this can be achieved in practice through the reciprocal relationship between the learning environment and a teacher’s pedagogy; this space must be constantly challenged, de/re-constructed, adapted and transformed to reflect the changing needs of all participants and support a range of ways in which children may choose to engage or express themselves (Moss 2018; Clark 2005; Clark and Moss 2011; Koch 2017).

To further illustrate the possibility of an alternative model, we argue for a *culturally relevant assessment approach* in early childhood education that foregrounds an ecological, socio-cultural perspective in the way learning and achievement are situated. Rameka (2011) offers an exemplar of a bi-cultural curriculum and assessment framework that is shaped by and for Māori children and aligned with *Te Whāriki*. Titled *Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa* [Māori Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars] (Ministry of Education 2009), the framework offers a professional assessment resource based on Māori values, philosophies and cultural contexts, which practitioners use to explore understandings of children’s learning, cultural identity, what they value as important, what makes them Māori and how this could be reflected in the teaching, learning and assessment practices of an early years setting. In envisioning a new model, in any educational context, the question then is whether practitioners are afforded creative spaces that recognise alternative approaches to learning and assessment, even amidst the often-entrenched performative structures and expectations.

‘Learning dispositions’, interpreted as complex arrangements, skills, values, knowledge and attitudes, emphasise possible approaches to learning and participation in education (Carr 2014). This framework

exists within the context of Bourdieu's habitus as 'a system of dispositions acquired by implicit or explicit learning' (1984/1993, cited in Carr 2001, 10): dispositions such as 'taking an interest; being involved; persisting with difficulty or uncertainty; communicating with others; taking responsibility' (Carr 2001, 23). Such an approach is visible in the New Zealand early years curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, which emphasises how 'learning dispositions enable children to construct learner identities that travel with them into new contexts and across time, in this way supporting lifelong learning' (Carr 2001, 23).

There is a choice, therefore, especially in early years settings, to edge away from complete adherence to positivistic paradigms, universal and decontextualised, and engage with other perspectives and approaches. One does not deny the existence of the other – there is room to 'play the curriculum game', while also establishing a degree of autonomy. But the reality is one of balance and compromise and it requires the participation of all stakeholders, and the involvement of a transformational leadership team.

Towards a pedagogy of cooperation and participatory learning

In envisioning a new model, we are also contending for a stronger move towards a *pedagogy of cooperation and participatory learning* where early childhood education is valued first and foremost for supporting children's experience of agency, membership and belonging. Studies show that even within an attainment-driven education regime, children's self-efficacy and overall achievement are connected with positive emotional dispositions such as enjoyment, a sense of belonging, being valued and engaged in a social group (Pekrun et al. 2009; Venninen and Leinonen 2013). Prioritising a pedagogy that actively listens to children's opinions, promotes opportunities for self-initiated activities, and allows children to participate even in adult-initiated pedagogical decision-making is therefore essential.

As an exemplar, the High Scope pedagogy promotes children's choices through its emphasis on engaging children in an active 'plan, do, review' cycle (High Scope n.d.). A variation of this is the use of images of activities on an interactive whiteboard. Children then place their picture next to the activity they are going to try first. This encourages them to consider their learning and focus, making independent decisions about their own learning rather than just rushing from one activity to the next, as well as helping them understand expectations. At the end of a session, teacher and children come back together and the teacher chooses a few

children to talk about their chosen activity. When the children become a little older they question their peers directly, for example: 'What did you make in the construction zone?' or 'Who are you going to give your picture to?' (usually copying questions they have heard modelled previously).

In emphasising a pedagogy of cooperation and participatory learning, there is an ongoing need to maintain sight of practices that have been refined and adapted over many years to suit the context of a setting. That is not to say a static 'solution' or set of unchanging policies should be blindly adhered to, quite the opposite approach is needed; one that embraces diversity and fluidity and recognises 'curriculum and child are always already in conditions of becoming' (Sellers 2013, 33). With the increasing focus on early childhood education as a policy priority in England, countless 'well-meaning but misguided' programmes and policies have been introduced, some with little effect, others with serious consequences (Penn 2011, 152). Those who hold a privileged position of leadership must guard against ever-changing policy mandates that are at odds with a setting's unique practices and pedagogy.

'There is a constant relational reciprocity between those who educate and those who are educated' (Rinaldi 2006, 141) and the process of learning is not neutral. Everyday practice recognises 'curriculum as experiential' (Sellers 2013, 40) and practitioners must 'listen between the lines' (Lazear, 1999, 145) to better understand the perspectives of children. An innovative and adaptable curriculum that recognises the rights of all children, and that permits skilled, well-paid and trusted practitioners to engage in local democratic experimentations, should be a high priority. There is a pressing need for greater agency on the part of teachers and other practitioners in order to, in turn, recognise and support children's agency (Wyse et al. 2015, 57). Children have the right to express their views 'freely in all matters affecting [them]' (United Nations 1989, Article 12), and they need to be repositioned as protagonists, active participants in their own learning (Clark 2010), using methods such as the Mosaic approach as a framework for engaging with young children's experiences and perspectives as 'experts in their own lives' (Langsted 1994; Clark and Moss 2011, 8). The view of the 'unique child' in the English curriculum does not go far enough. In Denmark, the law stipulates children's views of day-to-day life in early years provision must be collected at least once a year and shared with both current and future parents, in order to make visible the child's perspective and give voice to their interests and concerns (Danish Ministry of Welfare, in Kragh-Müller and Isbell 2011).

Practical issues facing practitioners can be an obstacle to creating a culture of listening (Rinaldi 2005). Training and budgetary limitations, as well as a policy and target-driven culture, can impede reflexive approaches. Alternative local methods can be adapted to better suit a context or setting, and small changes that allow stakeholders to engage in participatory action research as an investigative methodology in ‘real-world problem-solving’ (Lawson et al. 2015) can help to identify and challenge complex issues facing practitioners in their own setting. Examples can be sought and critically examined, such as Dahlberg’s Stockholm project (Dahlberg et al. 2013), which helped to develop ‘the tool of pedagogical documentation as a tool for learning and change’ (Taguchi 2010, 9). Working collaboratively with children to produce knowledge and meaning allows preconceived ideas about learning to be challenged. A successful example from a Swedish preschool can be seen in the ‘Crow Project’ (Moss 2014), which opened the learning experience up to the possibility of multiple perspectives and dialogues in a respectful and democratic environment. If practitioners locate themselves as ‘activist professionals’ (Hughes and MacNaughton 1999), the possibility arises to embrace complexity and conflict as necessary for productive change (Fullan 1993).

In conclusion, we would argue that the Plowden Report is as relevant today as it was 50 years ago when it stated, “‘Finding out’ has proved to be better for children than “being told”. Children’s capacity to create in words, pictorially and through many other forms of expression, is astonishing’ (Central Advisory Council for Education 1967, 461). Transformative change can be brought about through engagement with ethical and political practice (Moss 2015), and approaches that have the courage to seek children’s points of view (Vecchi 2010) and promote pedagogic relationships that support both the agency of the practitioner and child. With calls for the government to enact legislation removing the English Secretary of State’s power over the national curriculum and statutory assessment, instead placing ‘power in the hands of schools, teachers and local regions’ (Wyse et al. 2015, 68), the debate surrounding the need for a drastically revised English curriculum is far from over.

‘The risk we face is not in exploring the unknown, but in retreating to the comfort of the “known”’ (Dahlberg et al. 2013, 196) and maintaining the dominant discourse’s focus on linearity and outcome. We must move away from a conception of education as transactional learning, recognise the richness of human capacity and trust our educators to support children in discovering ‘all life experiences are valued for their potential to inform and inspire learning’ (Sellers 2013, 29). The limitless possibility of technology to support and allow for international

collaboration brings with it immediacy, a multitude of perspectives and the opportunity of alternatives. It allows us to realise we are not alone in our experimentation.

What seems clear in much post-modern, socio-constructivist and contemporary research is the recognition of the child as capable and competent, able to construct their own meaning and through collaborative and participatory processes to engage with an effective curriculum. If we agree then we have a duty to educate and prepare children for 'responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin' (United Nations 1989, Article 29) – and we must find a way to do this in relation to the context of each child, in an earnest way to effect real 'transformative change'.

Further reading

Four resources for further reading and reflection offer a helpful balance between theory and practice, providing informed perspectives from leading experts in the field to practical examples and approaches for practitioners. A group of 12 early years sector organisations including Early Education, KEYU and BERA commissioned Professors Chris Pascal and Tony Bertram to carry out a literature review of the most recent research underpinning the EYFS. The report *Getting it Right in the Early Years Foundation Stage: A review of the evidence* (Pascal et al. 2019) questions the need for extensive proposed changes to the current EYFS framework, and is available free at www.early-education.org.uk/sites/default/files/Getting%20it%20right%20in%20the%20EYFS%20Literature%20Review.pdf.

Peter Moss's book *Alternative Narratives in Early Childhood: An introduction for students and practitioners* (Routledge, 2018) encourages anyone involved in the education of young children to critically reflect on and engage with the 'multitude of perspectives' in the field of early childhood education. It offers insight into thinking that challenges mainstream approaches and outlines ways in which change and contestation translate into practice. Crucially it discusses the importance of politics and ethics underpinning alternative narratives to the 'dominant discourse'.

Amanda Ince and Eleanor Kitto have written *A Practical Guide to Action Research and Teacher Enquiry: Making a difference in early years* (Routledge, 2020), which can be used in conjunction with professional training or as a standalone guide. This book introduces teacher enquiry and action research as a way to instigate positive and lasting change and

provides guidance that bridges the theory/practice divide to address issues faced by practitioners and leaders in a variety of early childhood settings.

Finally, the Crow Project is an example of pedagogical engagement, which highlights potential experiences that can unfold when children are trusted to lead their own learning and are afforded the time and space needed to observe, question and construct meaning. It is a significant example of the important partnership formed between children and educators and illustrates how actively listening and participating in process-orientated democratic experimentation can foster the growth of skills, knowledge and understanding. It is available in Moss (2014) or free at www.sightlines-initiative.com/images/Library/research/crows%20-%20a%20knowledge%20building%20project%20about%20birds%20by%20ann%20aberg.pdf.

References

- Alexander, R. (ed.) (2010) *Children, their World, their Education*. London: Routledge.
- Allen, G. (2011) *Early Intervention: Smart investment, massive savings*. London: Cabinet Office.
- Ang, L. (2014) *The Early Years Curriculum: The UK context and beyond*. London: Routledge.
- Aubrey, C. (2004) 'Implementing the foundation stage in reception classes'. *British Educational Research Journal*, 30 (5), 633–56.
- Ball, C. (1994) 'Start Right: The importance of early learning'. London: Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce.
- Becker, G. (2002) 'Human capital'. Paper presented at the University of Montevideo.
- Biesta, G. (2014) 'Pragmatising the curriculum: Bringing knowledge back into the curriculum conversation, but via pragmatism'. *Curriculum Journal*, 25 (1), 29–49.
- Boyd, D. and Hirst, N. (2016) *Understanding Early Years Education across the UK: Comparing practice in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales*. London: Routledge.
- Bradbury, A. (2013) *Understanding Early Years Inequality: Policy, assessment and young children's identities*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Brock, A., Dodds, S., Jarvis, P. and Olusoga, Y. (2013) *Perspectives on Play: Learning for life*. London: Routledge.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by design and nature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Burton, N. and Brundrett, M. (2005) *Leading the Curriculum in the Primary School*. London: SAGE.
- Carless, D. and Lam, R. (2014) 'The examined life: Perspectives of lower primary school students in Hong Kong'. *Education 3–13*, 42 (3), 313–29.
- Carr, M. (1999) 'Being a learner: Five learning dispositions for early childhood'. *Early Childhood Practice*, 1 (1), 81–99.
- Carr, M. (2001) *Assessment in Early Childhood Settings: Learning stories*. London: SAGE.
- Carr, M. (2014) 'Play and playfulness: Issues of assessment'. In Brooker, E., Blaise, M. and Edwards, S. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Play and Learning in Early Childhood*. London: SAGE, 264–75.
- Central Advisory Council for Education (1967) *The Plowden Report: Children and their primary schools*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- Clark, A. (2005) 'Listening to and involving young children: A review of research and practice'. *Early Child Development and Care*, 175 (6), 489–505.
- Clark, A. (2010) 'Young children as protagonists and the role of participatory, visual methods in engaging multiple perspectives'. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 46 (1–2), 115–23.
- Clark, A. and Moss, P. (2011) *Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic approach*. 2nd ed. London: National Children's Bureau.

- Dahlberg, G., Moss, P. and Pence, A.R. (2013) *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Languages of evaluation*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge.
- DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families) (2008) *Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage*. Nottingham: DCSF Publications.
- DfE (Department for Education) (2012) *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*. London: Department for Education. Online. www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2014/05/eyfs_statutory_framework_march_2012.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2013) *Early Years Outcomes: A non-statutory guide for practitioners and inspectors to help inform understanding of child development through the early years*. London: Department for Education. Online. www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Early_Years_Outcomes.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2014) *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*. Online. www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2014/07/EYFS_framework_from_1_September_2014_with_clarification_note.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2017) *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*. London: Department for Education. Online. www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2017/03/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfEE (Department for Education and Employment) (1998) *Meeting the Childcare Challenge: The national childcare strategy*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- DfEE (Department for Education and Employment) (2003) *Day Care: Guidance to the national standards*. London: DfEE Publications.
- DfEE (Department for Education and Employment) (2008) *Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage*. Nottingham: DCSF Publications.
- Dunphy, E. (2008) *Supporting Early Learning and Development through Formative Assessment*. Research paper. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.
- Early Education (2012) *Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage*. Watford: British Association for Early Childhood Education. Online. www.early-education.org.uk/development-matters-early-years-foundation-stage-eyfs-download (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Eke, R., Butcher, H. and Lee, M. (eds) (2009) *Whose Childhood Is It? The roles of children, adults and policy makers*. London: Continuum.
- Fullan, M. (1993) *Change Forces: Probing the depths of educational reform*. London: Falmer Press.
- Halsey, A.H. and Sylva, K. (1987) 'Plowden: History and prospect'. *Oxford Review of Education*, 13 (1), 3–11.
- Hansen, K. and Joshi, H. (eds) (2008) *Millennium Cohort Study: Third survey: A user's guide to initial findings*. London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Institute of Education, University of London.
- High Scope (n.d.) 'Our Approach'. Online. <https://highscope.org/our-approach/our-practice/> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Hughes, P. and MacNaughton, G. (1999) 'Who's the expert: Reconceptualising parent-staff relations in early education'. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 24 (4), 27–32.
- Ince, A. and Kitto, E. (2020) *A Practical Guide to Action Research and Teacher Enquiry: Making a difference in the early years*. London: Routledge.
- Jones, P. (2015) 'Childhoods and contemporary practices'. In Wyse, D., Davis, R., Jones, P. and Rogers, S. (eds) *Exploring Education and Childhood: From current certainties to new visions*. London: Routledge.
- Kelly, A.V. (1992) 'Concepts of assessment: An overview'. In Blenkin, G.M. and Kelly, A.V. (eds) *Assessment in Early Childhood Education*. London: Paul Chapman, 1–23.
- Koch, A.B. (2017) 'Children's perspectives on happiness and subjective well-being in preschool'. *Children & Society*, 32 (1), 73–83.
- Kragh-Müller, G. and Isbell, R. (2011) 'Children's perspectives on their everyday lives in child care in two cultures: Denmark and the United States'. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 39 (1), 17–27.
- Langsted, O. (1994) 'Looking at quality from the child's perspective'. In Moss, P. and Pence, A. (eds) *Valuing Quality in Early Childhood Services*. London: Paul Chapman, 28–42.
- Lawson, H.A., Carangi, J., Pyles, L., Bozlak, C. and Jurkowski, J. (2015) *Participatory Action Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lazear, D. (2004) *Multiple Intelligence Approaches to Assessment: Solving the assessment conundrum*. Tucson, AZ: Zephyr Press.
- Lewis, J. and West, A. (2017) 'Early childhood education and care in England under austerity: Continuity or change in political ideas, policy goals, availability, affordability and quality in a childcare market?' *Journal of Social Policy*, 46 (2), 331–48.

- Ministry of Education (2009) *Te Whatu Pōkeka. Kaupapa; Māori Assessment for Learning: Early childhood exemplars*. Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education (2017) *Te Whāriki: Early childhood curriculum*. Thordon, New Zealand: Ministry of Education. Online. <https://education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/ELS-Te-Whariki-Early-Childhood-Curriculum-ENG-Web.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Moll, L.C., Amanti, C., Neff, D. and Gonzalez, N. (1992) 'Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms'. *Theory into Practice*, 31 (2), 132–41.
- Moss, P. (2013) *Early Childhood and Compulsory Education: Reconceptualising the relationship*. New York: Routledge.
- Moss, P. (2014) *Transformative Change and Real Utopias in Early Childhood Education: A story of democracy, experimentation and potentiality*. London: Routledge.
- Moss, P. (2015) 'There are alternatives! Contestation and hope in early childhood education'. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 5 (3), 226–38.
- Moss, P. (2018) *Alternative Narratives in Early Childhood: An introduction for students and practitioners*. London: Routledge.
- Moss, P. and Penn, H. (1996) *Transforming Nursery Education*. London: SAGE.
- Nutbrown Review (2012) *Foundations for Quality: The independent review of early education and childcare qualifications; Final report*. Runcorn: Department for Education. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175463/Nutbrown-Review.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2006) *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) (2013) *Getting it Right First Time: Achieving and maintaining high-quality early years provision*. Manchester: Ofsted. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/418840/Getting_it_right_first_time.pdf (accessed 10 February 2020).
- Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) (2019) *Early Years Inspection Handbook for Ofsted Registered Provision*. Manchester: Ofsted. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/828465/Early_years_inspection_handbook.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Palaiologou, I. (2016) *The Early Years Foundation Stage: Theory and practice*. 3rd ed. London: SAGE.
- Pascal, C., Bertram, T. and Rouse, L. (2019) *Getting it Right in the Early Years Foundation Stage: A review of the evidence*. Birmingham: The British Association for Early Childhood Education.
- Pekrun, R., Elliot, A.J. and Maier, M.A. (2009) 'Achievement goals and achievement emotions: Testing a model of their joint relations with academic performance'. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 101, 115–35.
- Penn, H. (2011) 'Gambling on the market: The role of for-profit provision in early childhood education and care'. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 9 (2), 150–61.
- QCA–DfEE (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority–Department for Education and Employment) (2000) *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage*. London: QCA.
- Rameka, L.K. (2011) 'Being Māori: Culturally relevant assessment in early childhood education'. *Early Years*, 31 (3), 245–56.
- Rinaldi, C. (2005) 'Documentation and assessment: What is the relationship?' In Clark, A., Moss, P. and Kjørholt, A.T. (eds) *Beyond Listening: Children's perspectives on early childhood services*. Bristol: Policy Press, 17–28.
- Rinaldi, C. (2006) *In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, researching and learning*. New York: Routledge.
- Roberts-Holmes, G. (2012) "'It's the bread and butter of our practice": Experiencing the Early Years Foundation Stage'. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 20 (1), 30–42.
- Rogoff, B. (1990) *Apprenticeship in Thinking: Cognitive development in social context*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rogoff, B. (2003) *The Cultural Nature of Human Development*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schön, D.A. (1987) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Schweinhart, L.J. (1993) *Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry preschool study through age 27*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.
- Sellers, M. (2013) *Young Children Becoming Curriculum: Deleuze, Te Whāriki and curricular understandings*. London: Routledge.

- Siraj-Blatchford, I., Muttock, S., Sylva, K., Gilden, R. and Bell, D. (2002) *Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years*. Research Report 356. Online. www.327matters.org/docs/rr356.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B., Sylva, K., Sammons, P. and Melhuish, E. (2008) 'Towards the transformation of practice in early childhood education: The effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project'. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 38 (1), 23–36.
- Snyder, B. (1971) *The Hidden Curriculum*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Soler, J. and Miller, L. (2003) 'The struggle for early childhood curricula: A comparison of the English Foundation Stage Curriculum, *Te Whāriki* and Reggio Emilia'. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 11 (1), 57–68.
- Stewart, N. (2016) Development Matters: A landscape of possibilities, not a roadmap. Online. <https://eyfs.info/articles.html/teaching-and-learning/development-matters-a-landscape-of-possibilities-not-a-roadmap-r205/> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Sure Start (2003) *Birth to Three Matters: Framework to support children in their earliest years*. Online. www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Birth-to-Three-Matters-Booklet.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Taggart, B. (2004) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Effective pre-school education*. Annesley: DfES Publications. Online. <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10005309/1/sylva2004EPPEfinal.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Taguchi, H.L. (2010) *Going Beyond the Theory/Practice Divide in Early Childhood Education: Introducing an intra-active pedagogy*. London: Routledge.
- United Nations (1989) *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. London: UNICEF UK. Online. https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Vecchi, V. (2010) *Art and Creativity in Reggio Emilia: Exploring the role and potential of ateliers in early childhood education*. London: Routledge.
- Venninen, T. and Leinonen, J. (2013) 'Developing children's participation through research and reflective practices'. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education*, 7 (1), 31–49.
- Wood, E. (2013) *Play, Learning and the Early Childhood Curriculum*. 3rd ed. London: SAGE.
- Wyse, D., Davis R., Jones P., and Rogers S. (2015) *Education and Childhood: From current certainties to new visions*, London: Taylor and Francis.

8

Towards valuing children's signs of learning

Kate Cowan and Rosie Flewitt

The need for transformative change

Observation and documentation have a long and rich history in early childhood education and care (ECEC). The writing of Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852) includes many detailed, naturalistic observations of babies and young children, arguing that kindergarten teachers should be keen observers of children. He suggested that the most important observations about each child should be recorded, making Froebel the first educator to make the case for the importance of observation and documentation in early childhood education (Lilley 2010). This perspective is shared and demonstrated by many early childhood education pioneers, such as Margaret McMillan (1860–1931) in her records of children's holistic development at her open-air nursery in London, and Susan Isaacs (1885–1948) in her detailed observations of children's play at the experimental Malting House School in Cambridge. Educators such as Froebel, McMillan, Isaacs and their followers have built a strong case for the importance of observation and documentation for deepening understandings of children, for guiding teaching, and for enabling teachers to reflect on their own learning, and their influence endures to this day.

Early childhood education in England therefore has a rich heritage of observing and documenting young children's play. While such principles continue to have relevance today, the context, tools and practices for observation and documentation have changed dramatically. Increasingly, observation and documentation are driven by the demands of the accountability culture that has deeply permeated English early childhood education (see Chapter 11 on accountability). For instance,

the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework states that ‘observational assessment is central to understanding what children really know and can do’ (DfE 2017, 12), and positions observation and documentation as instruments to collect ‘evidence’ of ‘attainment’ for the EYFS profile, which frames the statutory assessment of each child in relation to narrowly defined age-related developmental stages (see Chapter 11 for more details of the EYFS profile). Appropriating observation and documentation as mechanisms to measure development against specific normative expectations reflects the trend in contemporary early childhood education towards the ‘schoolification’ and ‘datafication’ of young children’s learning (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes 2018). This approach reduces the complexity of children’s lives and learning to quantifiable measures, losing sight of the child in favour of their ‘data double’ (Bradbury 2019). The effect is that early childhood education practices are increasingly driven and shaped by the demands of the statutory assessment system, with observation and documentation increasingly being positioned as tools of measurement and standardisation, rather than as productive ways to value individual children’s capabilities and interests.

In recent years, observation and documentation practices in ECEC settings have also begun to be reshaped by the advent of digital technologies. Whereas observations have typically been documented in written forms, with some photographic records of children’s activity, the portability of new handheld digital technologies supports the recording of observations using audio and video recordings alongside photographs and written descriptions. Furthermore, there has been a dramatic rise in the use of commercial digital systems for documentation, such as digital learning journeys, e-portfolios and online learning journals. These systems present the possibility of creating digital records by combining still images, moving images, sound and writing in new ways. There are currently several digital systems being marketed as tools for observation and documentation in early childhood education, such as *Tapestry*, *EvidenceMe* and *Kinderly*, allowing observations to be linked directly and quickly to EYFS learning outcomes. These digital systems also enable observations of children to be shared, virtually, with parents, often in real time. Proposing to simplify and streamline the assessment process, digital systems have seen rapid and widespread uptake in ECEC settings, yet there is little research or research-informed guidance on their design and use. This risks observation and documentation practices being shaped by commercial drivers rather than by child-centred learning theories.

A further challenge for observing young children's learning in contemporary ECEC settings is the diversity of cohorts of children. Many children in urban and rural communities are living in environments marked by social and economic disadvantage, come from ethnic and linguistic minority backgrounds and/or, as recent immigrants, are in the early stages of adjusting to life in a new country. While these children add rich diversity to their classrooms, they also pose challenges for educators regarding how to recognise and value all children's often subtle and fleeting signs of learning. This task is particularly complex since learning is enacted and made evident in diverse ways and in multiple modes (Kress 1997; Flewitt 2005; Cowan 2014), such as combinations of visual, audible and tangible signs (for example, drawing, model-making, dance, storytelling, role-play), along with less tangible expressions of meaning-making (for example, children's often silent negotiation of social interaction, where visible signs of learning and decision-making may be expressed through and in action). In busy ECEC environments, young children's more ephemeral and subtle signs of learning may all too easily be overlooked or dismissed, rather than observed and documented in ways that value the diverse contributions and capacities of *all* learners.

Valuing signs of learning: A case study

We explored these issues through a research project funded by the Froebel Trust (Flewitt and Cowan 2019), which aimed to investigate contemporary practices of observation and documentation in ECEC settings located in areas with high levels of social and economic disadvantage, and high levels of ethnic diversity with multiple languages spoken. Adopting a participatory approach in our research design, we worked with early childhood educators as co-researchers to explore what gets valued as signs of learning in their classrooms, and the potentials and challenges of digital tools in the observation and documentation process. We sought to develop perspectives on observation and documentation based on the Froebelian principles of 'the holistic nature of development' and in recognition of 'every child's unique capacity and potential' (Froebel Trust 2019). We purposively selected settings to ensure that in some of these there was regular use of digital observation and documentation systems, while in others there was not.

Ethnographic case studies were carried out in three inner London ECEC settings including a nursery class in a primary school, a state-maintained nursery in a children's centre and a private nursery. The settings had varied approaches and used various means to document

children's learning. Two used scrapbook systems, sometimes called learning journeys or portfolios, which were A3-sized paper books for each child with written comments and photographs added throughout the child's time in the setting. In the primary school, comments written by educators made explicit links to the EYFS curriculum, and each child's book was shared with their family twice a term. In the children's centre, the children and their families were encouraged to add to their books themselves by taking and printing photographs, making marks, and having their comments transcribed by educators. The private nursery setting used *Tapestry*, a digital learning journey system that sets up an online profile for each child where written comments, photographs and video could be added by educators and linked to criteria from the EYFS curriculum. These records could also be viewed and contributed to online by the child's family. While all three settings valued systems for observing and documenting learning, they demonstrated distinctly different approaches to documenting children's signs of learning, such as who was able to contribute to the documentation, and how and when. These practices were influenced by each setting's unique ethos and values (see also Driscoll and Rudge 2005).

In addition to observing day-to-day practice and interviewing practitioners, the research included questionnaires with parents about their children's documentation, and video-recorded sessions where children showed us their documentation themselves. In this way, we aimed to elicit the perspectives of children and parents in addition to the views of practitioners. Quotes in this section come from transcribed interviews with the practitioners who participated in the study.

In each setting, the practitioners were asked to identify three children aged 3 to 4 years whose learning they found challenging to document, and we reflected with the practitioners about why this was the case. This related to our research aim to explore the ways in which certain signs of learning may be easier or harder to capture in classroom observations than others. Across the case study settings, the findings suggested that practitioners found it harder to observe and document children who were quiet, shy, and/or not confident in communicating in English. As one educator reflected, 'There seems to be a recurring theme that play that's not verbal is not as valued by the adult ... we are not good at looking at what they are telling us without verbal communication.'

During the course of the research, we found that in addition to the factors originally identified by practitioners, they also found it challenging to document the learning of children whose play was predominantly

physical, and/or who spent long periods playing ‘outside’. This was partly because of practical constraints related to observation outdoors (weather, the need to supervise risky play, not having equipment for documentation easily to hand), but also because of the dynamic and fast-paced nature of the play itself. As one educator said, ‘I think outside is harder, practically writing stuff down ... because you can’t really pin down what’s happening ... it’s over there and it’s over there and it’s over there.’

The practitioners tended to find it easier to observe children who communicated verbally, whose play was not highly physical, who joined adult-led activities and who created artefacts (such as paintings and drawings) that provided lasting traces of their activity (see Table 8.1). In this way, the research reveals ways in which educators have been socialised (through influences including training, curriculum guidance and more) to recognise certain signs of learning, and highlights that learning which is beyond these forms may become invisible or be judged negatively (see Cowan 2018).

Table 8.1 Practitioner reflections on observing and documenting learning

Children with fewer observations	Children with more observations
Quiet	Highly verbal
Shy	Outgoing
Not confident communicating in English	Speaks English fluently
Spends lots of time outdoors	Mainly plays inside
Runs a lot/highly physical	Likes quiet/still activities
Does not join group activities	Joins group activities
Does not produce ‘work’ (drawings, etc.)	Produces lots of ‘work’ (drawings, etc.)
Independent/does not come to adults often	Dependent on adults/seek adult attention
Many absences	Few absences

Our work echoes Bradbury’s (2013) research on observation in reception classes, which found that children were expected to provide evidence of their learning primarily through talking or producing artefacts (for example, drawings, models). Bradbury argues that practitioners’ observations are deeply influenced by the requirements of the EYFS profile, which implicitly defines desirable behavioural characteristics in an ‘ideal learner’, and in turn prescribes the skills and attributes a child needs to display in order to be recognisable as a learner. By narrowly prescribing ways in which children must evidence their learning, this approach systematically excludes all other children’s signs of learning from being valued.

Our findings provide empirical evidence about the characteristics of children's behaviour that are less likely to be recognised and valued as signs of learning. This suggests certain groups of children may be particularly disadvantaged by current observation and documentation practices in ECEC: for instance, children in the early stages of learning English, younger children who may be quieter or less confidently verbal, and boys who may be perceived as being more highly physical. For these children, current observation and documentation practices may constrain opportunities for their signs of learning in diverse modes to be recognised and nurtured.

In order to explore this finding further, we investigated the potentials and constraints of digital documentation for valuing signs of learning that may otherwise go unrecognised. Each of the three ECEC settings was given an iPad Mini and was asked to record examples of the case study children's play over several weeks. We then re-watched the video observations with the practitioners, and reflected with them on the process of making the recordings and what they noticed. While video was found to be time-consuming to record and re-watch, and was sometimes felt to be a barrier in interactions with children, the participating practitioners identified that it had rich potential for observing and documenting play, particularly for children whose signs of learning were at risk of being overlooked.

The practitioners stated that re-watching video focused their attention and that video offered greater detail than 'snapshot' written observations. For instance, one practitioner mentioned that re-watching video 'slows down your thinking' and highlighted aspects of play that she had overlooked in the moment. Another found that making and reviewing video recordings was particularly helpful for understanding children who did not communicate verbally, suggesting that 'for children who are much more quiet, the video shows you something you maybe wouldn't have observed'. The practitioners also identified the potential of video to provide different perspectives, through being re-watchable and sharable, allowing them to 'see [things] in a different way when you look later'. Re-watching the video observations prompted a shift in practitioners' perspectives and led them to reflect on their own roles in teaching and learning, making them more aware of the way they interacted with the children. Video was also seen as useful for sharing children's learning with parents and with children themselves. As one practitioner said, 'When they see that there's been put so much value in what they've done, I think they find it amazing.'

Overall, the study findings suggested that practitioners found video valuable for supporting their reflection on children's play, for letting

others know that play is valued, and for observing and documenting children's play that might otherwise be overlooked. However, the research revealed several shortcomings in the design of existing digital documentation systems. The practitioners valued observation and documentation as part of child-centred practice, yet felt this was sometimes in tension with the EYFS summative assessment requirements. Given that currently available digital documentation systems have been developed primarily as tools for collecting evidence to serve the EYFS profile and longer-term attainment tracking, practitioners expressed concern that their design might 'confine what you are looking at'.

Practitioners found that many of the most exciting moments of learning were difficult to link to EYFS assessment statements and felt uneasy about 'boxing the children' in developmental age bands. They were concerned that digital documentation systems that foregrounded assessment could serve to intensify the early years assessment agenda, rather than prioritise children's individual and collective achievements. In this way, the practitioners were experiencing conflict between their deep-rooted beliefs in play-based, child-centred learning theories and the demands of statutory EYFS assessment, and this tension was amplified when using existing digital documentation systems.

A further shortcoming of existing digital documentation systems was identified when we shared documentation with the children themselves. The children showed enjoyment in reviewing, sharing and reflecting on their documentation together, whether paper-based or digital, but the design of the digital documentation system did not support the children's independent access. Whereas paper scrapbooks could be stored at children's height and added to by the children themselves, the digital documentation tended to be used for communication from adult (practitioner) to adult (parent) without input from or involvement of the child. Devices for viewing the documentation (for example, iPads) tended to be stored out of children's reach in the educational settings, and the digital documentation design (for example, small icons, written instructions) meant the system diminished children's agency in the documentation process, both in terms of viewing and contributing to their own documentation.

The findings therefore suggest that while digital documentation such as video has the potential to give value to subtle and silent signs of learning, much can be done to improve the design of digital documentation, including incorporating the child's voice, redesigning the user interface to enable easy access by young children, and rethinking the centrality of summative assessment in the system's design. Such changes

might support greater attention to, and in turn greater recognition and valuing of, children's subtle signs of learning, made evident in multiple modes beyond language.

Towards transformative change

In seeking to develop observation and documentation practices that truly value all children's learning, in whatever form that learning is expressed, we can look both backwards and forwards. Revisiting the perspectives of early childhood education pioneers such as Froebel, McMillan and Isaacs highlights that observation and documentation should, most centrally, be about understanding young children's learning and sensitively using this understanding to inform practice. Simultaneously, we can look to the future by considering the potential of digital technologies to deepen these reflections and to broaden what gets recognised as learning.

Given the diverse nature of contemporary ECEC settings, and the recognition that children's learning is made apparent in a variety of ways beyond language, observation and documentation systems must be designed to value learning in its broadest sense. In order to consider alternatives to the verbally orientated, measurement-driven documentation practices that are currently common in early childhood education in England, we can look to alternative approaches to practice internationally that seek to make all kinds of learning visible, including thinking about the role digital technologies play in supporting such practice. In this way, we might build on the observation and documentation ethos of historical educationalists such as Froebel by ensuring that new digital tools for observation and documentation place parents and children alongside practitioners at the centre of their design, rather than prioritise practitioners' measurement of children's learning against the comparatively narrow and normative EYFS profile goals.

What it looks like in practice: The case of pedagogical documentation in Reggio Emilia, Italy

The infant-toddler centres and preschools of Reggio Emilia in northern Italy (for children under 3 years old and from 3 to 6 years old, respectively) have gained widespread recognition for their distinctive approach to early childhood education and care. Informed particularly by the work of Loris Malaguzzi (1920–94), Reggio Emilia's approach emphasises the rights and communicative potentials of all children (Malaguzzi 1993;

Cagliari et al. 2016). Central to their practice is the concept of the ‘hundred languages of children’, a theory that gives value to the many forms of expression children use to make meaning, beyond speech and writing (Edwards et al. 1998). They state that:

Children possess a hundred languages, a hundred ways of thinking, of expressing themselves, of understanding and encountering others, *with a way of thinking that creates connections between the various dimensions of experience rather than separating them ...* It is the responsibility of the infant-toddler centre and the preschool to give value and equal dignity to all the languages. (Reggio Children 2010, 10, emphasis added)

In order to ‘give value and equal dignity’ to the many ways children make meaning, Reggio educators describe their pedagogical approach as a ‘pedagogy of listening’, where ‘listening’ denotes active attention to all the means of expression children use to convey their thoughts, ideas and feelings (see Chapter 9 on listening). To enact this, Reggio educators seek to make children’s learning visible through pedagogical documentation, recording the ‘traces’ of children’s meaning-making so that it can be given value and be open to multiple and ongoing interpretations. Rinaldi describes this process as ‘visible listening, as the construction of traces (through notes, slides, videos and more) that not only testify to the children’s learning paths and processes, but also make them possible because they are visible’ (Rinaldi 2006, 68). From this perspective, pedagogical documentation is seen as a way of giving value and meaning to the things children do, by making learning visible to others, including to children themselves (Giudici and Barchi 2011).

In Reggio Emilia, pedagogical documentation is not driven by the demands of standardised assessment, but is instead seen as a form of ongoing research into children’s theories and fascinations. Practitioners’ own meaning-making is crucial, and so pedagogical documentation is not positioned as objective evidence but as a co-constructed, rigorously subjective interpretation (Dahlberg et al. 2013). Rather than simply recounting events already past, pedagogical documentation is seen as active, with value in the process, providing a sharable prompt for dialogue among educators. In this way, pedagogical documentation becomes a valuable tool for reflection, shaping the unfolding of children’s enquiries, and as a means for practitioners to become aware of their interpretations and so reflect on their own learning. Pedagogical documentation is therefore a highly complex, layered and dynamic part of Reggio’s approach.

For Reggio educators, pedagogical documentation involves close attention to children's thinking as expressed through a wide range of 'languages' such as drawing, sculpture, dance and music, in addition to speech and writing. In order to make children's complex multimodal learning visible, Reggio practitioners use a range of tools and materials in the documentation process, such as photographs, transcripts, artefacts, audio and video recordings. Just as they recognise that children have many ways of making meaning, so too do they recognise that many forms of representation are necessary in order to make all children's meaning-making visible. It is therefore not unusual for Reggio educators' notes to contain drawings and diagrams depicting children's gaze, gestures, facial expressions and use of materials (see, for example, Vecchi 2010).

Similarly, educators in Reggio have embraced the potentials of digital photography, video and animation as a means of documenting and sharing enquiries, for instance in exploring space, time, movement and dynamism (see, for example, Reggio Children 2012). They describe the potential of digital photography to support the close and focused attention of both children and adults through 'amplifying gazes' (Reggio Children 2019, 38). Similarly, Reggio educators celebrate video as a way of looking closely at complexity, with video-editing tools offering the possibility to 'manipulate, decode, dismantle and re-mount time' (Reggio Children 2019, 116). In this way, Reggio educators recognise that video can be used as a tool to either 'exaggerate or minimise', and it is crucial in shaping what is valued as learning (Reggio Children 2019, 116).

Reggio's approach to pedagogical documentation, while existing in its own particular cultural, geographical and historical context, provides a thoughtful provocation. Using a range of tools, including the digital, Reggio's approach illustrates observation and documentation that seeks to recognise and give value to the multiple ways in which young children make meaning by making learning visible and sharable.

What it looks like in practice: The case of 'learning stories' in New Zealand

The early childhood education curriculum of New Zealand, *Te Whāriki*, is based on a vision of children as competent, confident learners and communicators, highlighting the importance of supporting children's well-being and learning dispositions (Ministry of Education 1996) (see Chapter 7). Within this context, a distinctive approach to observing and documenting learning has developed that seeks to value each child's capabilities through 'learning stories'. Developed by Margaret Carr and

Wendy Lee (2012; see also Carr 2001), learning stories use a storytelling format, often written from the practitioner to the child. While functioning as a form of ongoing assessment, learning stories seek to position children as protagonists in their own learning, highlighting and celebrating what children *can* do, rather than being a document constructed to identify perceived deficiencies or gaps in children's learning.

As with Reggio's pedagogical documentation, learning stories value the practitioner's interpretation of the child's learning, recognising subjectivity and valuing adults' holistic understanding of the child as an individual. Rather than 'snapshot' documentation that might aim for a distanced, objective tone, the practitioner's own response and insight is seen as an important dimension for interpreting the significance of the child's learning. In this way, learning stories are recognised as a highly personal, reflective and relational means of documentation.

An important characteristic of learning stories is their identity as a document to be revisited and shared, with both children and families. Learning stories often include questions directed at the child and family, and parents are invited to add their own stories to the collection. Recording events in a narrative form allows children to see what they are learning from a different perspective, to reflect metacognitively on that learning, and to see that their learning while playing is valued by those around them.

While originally consisting of writing and photographs, Carr and Lee (2012, 112) have advocated diverse assessment formats and suggest that digital technologies offer rich potential to document 'new modes of meaning-making, conceptualising and representing learning', transforming the ways in which learning can be made visible. Increasingly, learning stories incorporate video and there are a number of digital documentation systems developed in New Zealand (for example, *Storypark*, *Educa*) designed to create digital versions of learning stories. The company Storypark (2019, 3) argue that digital learning stories benefit children because of their ability to 'revisit learning and interests via multimedia engaging children in meaningful multimodal literacy'. Similarly, they suggest digital learning stories benefit educators by enabling 'more effective sharing of expression, communication and movement including dance and song through video and audio' (Storypark 2019, 3). The developers of these systems argue that they support communication between practitioners and use a child-centred design to support children's own access to the stories, capturing more than is possible in paper-based portfolios. These designers, therefore, seem to be keen to harness the potential of digital

systems while retaining the original ethos of learning stories. (For a further discussion of New Zealand and its early childhood services, see Chapter 5.)

Towards recognising and valuing all learning

In this chapter we have considered contemporary practices for documenting young children's learning, and the potentials and constraints of digital documentation tools, such as digital video and digital documentation systems. While the means of documentation (digital or paper-based formats) offer different affordances that inevitably shape how children's learning is recorded, educators' beliefs and priorities about what counts as learning and where learning occurs determine where their gaze falls when they observe children at play – regardless of the technology they are using. Our research identified that many children's learning falls outside the current repertoire of what observation and documentation practices can easily capture, meaning that these children's signs of learning are likely to be missed and go unrecognised.

Alternative ways of looking at and listening to children necessarily require profound shifts in pedagogy, which can only be achieved through wider shifts in education policy, curriculum and training. These include, for example, a curriculum that values and supports *all* signs of learning, a reflective and agentive workforce, democratic systems of accountability and unified early years provision.

As this book illustrates, such profound change is necessary and possible at many levels. The examples of Reggio Emilia and New Zealand remind us that observation and documentation, as Froebel argued, are powerful means of deeply valuing children's learning in its many complex forms. While the alternatives for documentation that we have presented have been developed in particular social and cultural contexts, and within distinctive ECEC systems, they provide a prompt for reflection and an impetus for transformation of practice in England.

As other chapters in this book similarly argue, there is a need to move beyond 'languages of evaluation' relating to quality and measurement in early childhood education (Dahlberg et al. 2013). While in England the grip of accountability tightens, and a policy focus on data continues to dehumanise records of children's achievements (discussed further in Chapter 11), the alternative approaches to observation and documentation included in this chapter show that more child- and play-orientated approaches in ECEC are not only possible but arguably more effective in enabling educators to understand children's interests and capacities. These alternative approaches show that sensitive documentation of children's learning can

challenge ‘datafication’, showing the richness and complexity of learning rather than reducing records of learning to simplistic quantifiable metrics. Documentation – whether paper-based or digital – can and should enrich perspectives on learning rather than impoverish and dehumanise them.

Our research has highlighted that the lens of the EYFS and the pressures of assessment currently drive what gets recognised as learning in early childhood education in England. This runs the risk of many children’s capacities being overlooked and rendered invisible, while the learning of other children is more fully recognised – for example, those who seek adult attention, are more confident or tend to communicate verbally. However, children’s meaning-making goes far beyond speech, and is expressed in complex combinations of movement, gesture, gaze, facial expression, images and manipulations of objects. Froebel, McMillan and Isaacs all recognised this, as do many early childhood educators, yet in England, practitioners are swimming against the relentless tide of standardised assessment systems that prioritise children’s use of language. The findings of our research call for a raised awareness among practitioners of those children whose signs of learning may be harder to observe and document, and a need to find forms of observation and documentation that draw attention to the subtleties of children’s silent and embodied signs of learning, as well as their more tangible displays.

Using video has the potential to capture and make visible learning that is expressed in ephemeral, dynamic and fleeting ways (Flewitt 2006; Cowan and Kress 2017). Practices such as Reggio’s pedagogical documentation and New Zealand’s learning stories use video in order to make children’s meaning-making visible in multiple forms, and to make this meaning-making sharable with others including parents, other educators and children themselves. Our research found that video offers valuable potential for focusing practitioners’ attention on aspects of learning that they find challenging to document with traditional tools such as pen and paper.

Yet while digital tools bring new potentials for the observation and documentation of learning, we must consider their constraints. There is a need to carefully and critically consider the design of digital documentation systems to identify what they make possible and what they prohibit. Our research found that digital systems may all too easily privilege the voice of the adult (educator, parent, software designer, politician), and that the digital documentation systems currently available in England could be redesigned to be more accessible to the children themselves, and therefore more respectful and democratic. These findings call for collaboration between education researchers, educators and the designers of

digital documentation systems so that these comparatively new tools can support practice informed by sound child-centred theories of learning rather than by commercial drivers led by assessment-focused agendas.

Currently, very few academic studies have examined digital documentation systems and their uses in ECEC, and research has not explored how these systems differ from country to country (for example, how educators' use of digital devices in New Zealand and Reggio compares with educators in England). Further research is needed to examine the choices made in the design of digital documentation systems, and to consider how these design decisions shape how learning is, or is not, recognised, and whose views on learning are recorded.

If observation and documentation practices can be released from the grip of standardised assessment and accountability, it might be possible to return to the original Froebelian ethos of observation and documentation as a means of valuing learning in its richness and complexity. Simultaneously, if we can critically yet purposefully harness the potentials of new digital tools as part of documentation and assessment, we may be able to broaden and deepen the range of meaning-making that is given attention, ensuring that the learning of all children is valued, in all its many forms.

Further reading

This chapter draws on our research project *Valuing Young Children's Signs of Learning: Observation and digital documentation of play in early years classrooms*, funded by the Froebel Trust. The full report, offering a fuller discussion of the findings, is available free at <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/10069487/>.

Our research has been shaped by multimodal perspectives, particularly the work of Gunther Kress. His ground-breaking book *Before Writing* (Routledge, 1997) looks closely at some of the things young children make (drawings, models, collages, etc.) and argues for a radical decentring of language in educational theory and practice. In this chapter, we present two alternative approaches to documentation of children's learning that move beyond reliance on writing. Edited by Paola Barchi and Claudia Giudici, *Making Learning Visible*, (Reggio Children, 2011) is an account of how Reggio Emilia's theory of children's 'hundred languages' informs their pedagogical documentation. New Zealand's approach to documentation is discussed by Margaret Carr and Wendy Lee in *Learning Stories* (SAGE, 2012), including the philosophy underpinning their approach and examples from practice.

References

- Bradbury, A. (2013) 'Education policy and the "ideal learner": Producing recognisable learner-subjects through early years assessment'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 34 (1), 1–19.
- Bradbury, A. (2019) 'Datafied at four: The role of data in the "schoolification" of early childhood education in England'. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 44 (1), 7–21.
- Bradbury, A. and Roberts-Holmes, G. (2018) *The Datafication of Primary and Early Years Education: Playing with numbers*. London: Routledge.
- Cagliari, P., Castagnetti, M., Giudici, C., Rinaldi, C., Vecchi, V. and Moss, P. (eds) (2016) *Loris Malaguzzi and the Schools of Reggio Emilia: A selection of his writings and speeches 1945–1993*. London: Routledge.
- Carr, M. (2001) *Assessment in Early Childhood Settings: Learning stories*. London: SAGE.
- Carr, M. and Lee, W. (2012) *Learning Stories: Constructing learner identities in early education*. London: SAGE.
- Cowan, K. (2014) 'Multimodal transcription of video: Examining interaction in early years classrooms'. *Classroom Discourse*, 5 (1), 6–21.
- Cowan, K. (2018) 'Visualising Young Children's Play: Exploring multimodal transcription of video-recorded interaction'. PhD thesis, London, UCL Institute of Education.
- Cowan, K., and Kress, G. (2017) 'Documenting and transferring meaning in the multimodal world: Reconsidering "transcription"'. In Serafini, F. and Gee, E. (eds) *Remixing Multiliteracies: Theory and practice from New London to New Times*. New York: Teachers College Press, 50–61.
- Dahlberg, G., Moss, P. and Pence, A.R. (2013) *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Languages of evaluation*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge.
- DfE (Department for Education) (2017) *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage: Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five*. London: Department for Education.
- Driscoll, V. and Rudge, C. (2005) 'Channels for listening to young children and parents'. In Clark, A., Kjörholt, A.T. and Moss, P. (eds) *Beyond Listening: Children's perspectives on early childhood services*. Bristol: Policy Press, 91–110.
- Edwards, C.P., Gandini, L. and Forman, G.E. (eds) (1998) *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia approach*. 2nd ed. Westport, CT: Ablex.
- Flewitt, R. (2005) 'Is every child's voice heard? Researching the different ways 3-year-old children communicate and make meaning at home and in a pre-school playgroup'. *Early Years*, 25 (3), 207–22.
- Flewitt, R. (2006) 'Using video to investigate preschool classroom interaction: Education research assumptions and methodological practices'. *Visual Communication*, 5 (1), 25–50.
- Flewitt, R., and Cowan, K. (2019) *Valuing Young Children's Signs of Learning: Observation and digital documentation of play in early years classrooms*. London: The Froebel Trust. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/ru52lg9> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Froebel Trust (2019) 'Froebelian Principles'. Online. www.froebel.org.uk/froebelian-principles/ (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Giudici, C. and Barchi, P. (eds) (2011) *Making Learning Visible: Children as individual and group learners*. Reggio Emilia: Reggio Children.
- Kress, G. (1997) *Before Writing: Rethinking the paths to literacy*. London: Routledge.
- Lilley, I.M. (2010) *Friedrich Froebel: A selection from his writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Malaguzzi, L. (1993) 'A Charter of Rights'. In Filippini, T. and Vecchi, V. (eds) *The Hundred Languages of Children: Narrative of the possible*. Reggio Emilia: Reggio Children.
- Ministry of Education (1996) *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa – Early Childhood Curriculum*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.
- Reggio Children (2010) *Indications: Preschools and infant-toddler centres of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia*. Reggio Emilia: Reggio Children.
- Reggio Children (2012) *Shadow Stories: Poetics of an encounter between science and narration*. Reggio Emilia: Reggio Children.
- Reggio Children (2019) *Bordercrossings: Encounters with living things / digital landscapes*. Reggio Emilia: Reggio Children.
- Rinaldi, C. (2006) *In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia: 1, researching and learning*. London: Routledge.
- Storypark (2019) *Working Together to Extend Children's Learning*. Wellington: Storypark. Online. www.storypark.com (accessed 10 February 2020).
- Vecchi, V. (2010) *Art and Creativity in Reggio Emilia: Exploring the role and potential of ateliers in early childhood education*. London: Routledge.

9

Towards a listening ECEC system

Alison Clark

The need for transformative change

Listening's moment in the policy limelight

Pedagogy and listening are closely linked, especially when pedagogy is understood to be relational. The discourse of listening in early childhood education and care (ECEC) has moved in and out of the policy limelight over the past two decades in England. This chapter is a reflection on this change of emphasis, arguing that there is a need for transformative change as we have reached a point where listening has become counter-cultural in an ECEC system driven by measurement. Listening can be understood as an integral part of valuing the difficult to measure. I will explore how holding on to listening could be part of transformative change through attention to the temporal dimensions of learning involving the development of a slow pedagogy that incorporates alternative forms of knowledge.

Reflection on the need for change requires consideration of past, present and future possibilities. When I began my research with young children in the late 1990s there had been a decade of increasing policy and practice interest in children's participation, following the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and, at a national level, the Children Act 1989 in the UK. Pinkney (2000, 111) observed that 'children cut across all sites of welfare, education, health, housing, social care, income maintenance, youth justice and so on. Issues of children's "voice", visibility and participation are becoming increasingly important.'

Concepts of voice, visibility and participation are linked here. Central to this thinking has been the most influential and much-debated Article 12 of the UNCRC (2009), which emphasises children's right to

express their opinion about matters of importance to them. This focus on expression gave rise to the shorthand phrase for participation, the ‘voice of the child’ (for example, Davie et al. 1996). Gathering or listening to the ‘voice of the child’ in the context of ECEC has presented many methodological and ethical questions, particularly in terms of the youngest pre-verbal children (see Greene and Hill 2005; Alderson and Morrow 2011). One of the challenges, therefore, in pursuing this goal is that ‘listening must not wait until children are able to join in adult conversations. It should begin at birth, and be adapted to their developing capacities for communication and participation in their social world’ (Tolfree and Woodhead 1999, 20).

This emphasis on the capacities of very young children has been recognised in subsequent revisiting of the UNCRC (2005, para.14; see also UNCRC et al. 2006), as reported in General Comment 7 of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child:

Young children are acutely sensitive to their surroundings and very rapidly acquire understanding of the people, places and routines in their lives, along with awareness of their own unique identity. They make choices and communicate their feelings, ideas and wishes in numerous ways, long before they are able to communicate through the conventions of spoken or written language.

There was a brief period in the early 2000s in England, under the Labour government, when listening to children as a discourse was in the policy spotlight, including listening to young children. Interest at ministerial level was seen in the appointment of a Minister for Children, a post first occupied by Margaret Hodge between 2003 and 2005. The Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Unit, which became the Sure Start Unit of the Department for Education and Skills, commissioned a report *Exploring the Field of Listening to and Consulting with Young Children* (Clark et al. 2003). The objectives of the report were to examine:

- *Methodology*: different approaches used in research and consultations for listening to young children, including those which can operate alongside listening to practitioners and parents and tools which are open to young children with special needs.
- *Impact*: evidence gained of children’s experiences and priorities and subsequent changes to attitudes and practice. This includes evidence of the impact of listening on practitioners, parents and young children. (Clark et al. 2003, 4)

This policy interest also led to funding for the Early Childhood Unit of the National Children's Bureau to develop a Young Children's Voices Network to support practitioners to promote and share ideas about listening to young children's perspectives.

It is important though to remember that listening to children's perspectives has a long heritage in early childhood practice. Drummond (2000), for example, points to the in-depth listening central to the work of the early childhood pioneer and psychologist Susan Isaacs (1937/2013). This fine-grained listening has been characteristic of a succession of advocates for young children:

In Vivian Gussin Paley's work we see rich examples of the competences of young children carefully documented by an adult who started from the premise that there was always more to learn from children. Judy Miller's work has been as an advocate for listening to young children providing practical starting points for new ways of supporting children's agency. (Clark 2011, vii)

Listening becomes 'counter-cultural'

During a recent training day with UK early childhood practitioners about listening to young children, one of the participants remarked that this way of working is 'counter-cultural'. This observation reinforces my own sense that, today, listening has become marginalised by other policy agendas, in particular the desire to measure. Being counter-cultural indicates a way of being that is against the flow. As such, listening can be understood 'as more than just a tool or instrument: it can be understood as a culture or an ethic, a way of being and living that permeates all practice and relationships' (Moss et al. 2005, 5).

Listening understood in this way as a culture can be seen in day-to-day practices in ECEC and in the relationships that are established and nurtured between children and adults and between children and their peers. It is an ethic or 'ethic of an encounter' (Dahlberg and Moss 2005) that is characterised by a deep respect for the Other. Drawing on the philosopher Levinas, 'the ethics of an encounter emphasises the importance of relationships which respect alterity (the otherness of the Other) and resist attempting to make the Other into the same' (Dahlberg and Moss 2005, 6). This way of relating has implications for thinking about education and pedagogy. One dimension of this relational underpinning of learning is the need for time to listen.

When measurement is the dominant discourse, this can permeate practices and relationships within ECEC as described elsewhere in this book (Chapters 8, 10 and 11). It can become the fast-moving current that dictates the direction of travel. Two qualities that appear to be praised in a measurement culture are speed and visibility.

There is a temporal dimension to the easy to measure. Filling out a predefined checklist or baseline about what a child can do at any one moment in time can be far quicker to achieve than carrying out an in-depth observation or sitting and talking together. ‘Saving time’ can be an important factor in a professional culture where measurement dominates, especially when practitioners find themselves needing to collect a greater volume of standardised information about children, and at more frequent intervals. In a measurement culture what is measured matters (Volante 2018) and acquires increasing visibility. We begin to see only what we are being asked to measure: these measured characteristics, behaviours or achievements become more visible. Conversely, what is not being measured can begin to fade into the background. There is no room for the unexpected because it does not fit the predefined script. But engaging with young children is full of the unexpected. Play is by its very nature unscripted or else it will cease to be play. The open-ended nature of play can challenge a measurement culture.

The importance of play illustrates that not all that matters can easily be measured. As the poet and advocate Michael Rosen remarked:

People in power in education think if you turn knowledge into ‘that which can be tested’, demand teachers teach it, test children for their ability [to] do it right/wrong, and if scores go up = ‘raising standards’.

But

There

Are

Other

Kinds

Of

Knowledge. (Twitter, @MichaelRosenYes, 1:14 PM – 11 Dec 2018)

This is where listening to young children becomes counter-cultural. Research and practice that tunes into young children’s views and experiences can draw attention to the difficult to measure and bring other kinds of knowledge into focus.

This understanding underpins the ‘pedagogy of listening’, first articulated by Carlina Rinaldi in her work in the infant–toddler centres and preschools in Reggio Emilia in northern Italy, with its emphasis on multiple listening, drawing together different perspectives enabling a more ‘three-dimensional’ or open form of listening, and in its attention to ‘visible listening’ or pedagogical documentation (Rinaldi 2005). This work has been influential for me in developing and working with the Mosaic approach over the past 20 years, which has involved both the difficult to measure and valuing alternative forms of knowledge about children’s lives that are led by the children themselves (Clark and Moss 2001, 2005; Clark 2010a, 2017). This multi-method, poly-vocal approach brings together different perspectives in order to facilitate new understandings about young children’s everyday lives. These insights can be constructed with individual children or with small groups in order to create both personal and shared narratives. The underlying values are based on an active and inclusive view of the child. The research tools brought together in the Mosaic approach include a range of expressive arts-based languages in order to avoid reliance on verbal and written languages for listening to children’s perspectives.

The Mosaic approach has been taken up and adapted internationally by researchers and practitioners in ECEC, for example in Australia (Merewether and Fleet 2014); translated into Italian and Greek; and discussed in policy reviews on listening to children. For example, Dalli and Stephenson (2010, 19) commented in a report for the New Zealand government that the Mosaic ‘approach is seen to offer a framework that reflects the complexity of children’s everyday lives that is not easily captured in standard measures’. The approach has influenced active engagement with young children’s perspectives across a range of professions beyond ECEC and has been adapted for different contexts including nursing (Soanes et al. 2009; Randall 2012), museum studies (Kirk and Buckingham 2018) and educational psychology (Mercieca and Mercieca 2014).

Self-identity and belonging and feelings about places and things have been two of the consistent themes across the research studies I have carried out (Clark and Moss 2001, 2005; Clark 2010a, 2017). These themes illustrate how attention to listening can bring into focus significant and valuable aspects of young children’s experiences of ECEC that are difficult to quantify.

Self-identity and belonging

'What does it mean to be in this place?' was the central question that underpinned the Living Spaces study (Clark 2010a), a three-year longitudinal study using the Mosaic approach and involving young children between 3 and 5 years old in the planning, designing and reviewing process of early childhood environments. An essential starting point for this research was to give young children many different modes of expression, including walking, talking and photography, in which to explore their experience of their existing environment, both indoor and outdoor spaces. When asked to document what was important to them in their nursery, children repeatedly drew attention to any marker that they associated with themselves, including name cards for registration to signal they were in nursery that day, names on their pegs in the cloakroom, drawers for their own 'work' and artwork on the walls (Clark 2010a). These demonstrations of a sense of belonging have been echoed in other studies listening to young children using participatory, visual methods, for example in Einarsdottir's study (2005) carried out in Iceland and in Merewether and Fleet's account of young children's relationships with outdoor play spaces in Australia (2014).

Feelings about places and things

A second theme that emerged across the studies with the Mosaic approach has been the importance of imaginative spaces, revealing alternative knowledge about the difficult to measure. Some of the young children involved have been able to articulate this easily in words, while others have used photography and map-making to explore their ideas. Gary, one of the children involved in the first study using the Mosaic approach, was a confident child who was keen to take me to see different parts of the outdoor play space at his nursery. He photographed a curved bench on a patch of grass and told me it was his cave. He explained how his favourite place to be at nursery was 'in my cave listening to music. It's magic music on my magic radio' (Clark 2004, 142).

Jim was one of the participants in the Spaces to Play study (Clark and Moss 2005; Clark 2017) about involving young children in changes to an outdoor place space. His imaginative world was centred on the Thomas the Tank Engine series (Awdry and Dalby 1997).

Jim was fascinated by trains ... It was not until Jim sat down to talk about his photograph that the full extent of the personalised meanings he had given to the outdoor space became clear. His

photograph of the shed which was the first photograph he had taken (and I thought had been a mistake), became a picture of the shed where the engines live. The caterpillar was not a brightly coloured insect but a string of carriages related to the colours of his favourite Thomas the Tank Engine characters. (Clark 2017, 90–1)

These two examples offer glimpses of the transformative nature of children's play that are not easily quantified and may require a tuning in and changing of pace in order to notice and celebrate.

Towards transformative change

What might a transformed ECEC system look like that valued listening and alternative forms of knowledge, and kept in focus the difficult to measure? The discussion that follows explores the relationship between listening and time. I make the case that slow pedagogy and in particular the concept of slow knowledge pose a counter-cultural argument for change in early childhood education that has implications beyond the early years.

The slow movement has been gathering pace in recent decades, beginning with the Slow Food movement originating in Italy, set up in opposition to fast food (Tishman 2018, 4). Honoré's popular book *In Praise of Slow* (2004) documented the spread of ideas about alternatives to fast-paced living across different areas of everyday life, including food and education. Honoré describes the catalyst for his book as being a reflection on the time pressures on his relationship with his young child, in particular the lure of the 1-minute bedtime story. Early childhood education and care is not immune to such time pressures. Pacini-Ketchabaw (2012, 155) draws attention to this in her posthumanist account of clock-based practices: 'the clock is fundamental to how early childhood education is understood, organised and enacted'.

The term 'slow pedagogy' has gathered interest in environmental education. Payne and Wattchow discuss how slow pedagogy can be seen to be in opposition to 'take-away pedagogies': 'fast, take-away, virtual, globalized, downloadable uptake versions of electronic pedagogy – a technology or technics of increasingly abstracted experience' (Payne 2006, in Payne and Wattchow 2009, 17). Working with undergraduate students, Payne and Wattchow developed a module 'Experiencing the Australian Landscape', rooted in experiential education and intended to develop a 'slow pedagogy of place'. Key elements to this way of learning

include first-hand experience, giving students the opportunity to revisit in depth the same environment paying close attention to their feelings and senses.

Tishman (2018, 4), in her exploration of ‘slow looking’ and the place of art and the practice of learning through observation, refers to a slow education movement ‘that eschews a fast-food model of schooling designed to deliver what it calls “packages of test-shaped knowledge” and instead argues for schooling that encourages in depth learning and quality interactions between teachers and students’. Tishman draws widely from different disciplines and professions in order to illustrate what can constitute ‘slow looking’. One example is the Out of Eden Walk, an experiment in slow journalism by Paul Salopek (Tishman 2018, 28–47) whose long-distance trek involved slowing down to observe the world carefully and listening attentively to others, exchanging stories and observations and reflecting on how our lives connect to wider stories.

Tishman (2018, 46) emphasises that slow looking is not the same as mindfulness:

Slow looking, as I define it, is an epistemic virtue: its value has to do with gaining knowledge. Knowledge can be pursued mindfully or not and in terms of its epistemic value, it isn’t necessarily better for it ... Slow looking isn’t successful only when students achieve a mindful state. It is successful when young people are given the opportunity and tools to look at the world slowly, simply in order to see more what is around them. The mood and tempo with which they do so is up to them.

A slow pedagogy might be seen to value slow knowledge. So what might this slow knowledge look like, particularly in relation to research and practice with young children?

Listening, slow knowledge and the relationship with time

Slow knowledge can be understood as relating to the process of meaning-making. While reflecting on how knowledge is co-constructed with children when working with the Mosaic approach I was drawn to the relationship with time: ‘Perhaps this can be seen as a form of “slow knowledge” not retrievable in the same way through a questionnaire but with the possibility of more rewarding and surprising results’ (Clark 2010b, 122).

An ECEC system characterised by listening would be one in which slow knowledge is valued. Slow knowledge is not snatched in the moment. Knowledge constructed in this way can be understood as operating in ‘stretched time’ (Cuffaro 1995, 42) that is interested in moving beyond first thoughts and where lingering, revisiting and rethinking can happen. Pedagogical documentation is one practice that can enable this rethinking (for example Rinaldi 2006; Olsson 2009; Formosinho et al. 2019; see also Chapters 8 and 11). The principle of revisiting, drawing on pedagogical documentation, is inherent in the Mosaic approach: ‘documentation ... is then subject to review, reflection, discussion and interpretation by children and adults in a process of participant meaning making’ (Moss 2010, xi). Cook and Hess (2007, 42, emphasis added), discussing their own research with visual methods, describe how such a process of revisiting can change the pace of exchange with children: ‘This repeated engagement with the children *slowed down* the adult journey to deciding upon meanings. It gave time to think about what a child was saying, to listen again or differently, and offered the potential for new interpretations.’

It is this ‘slowing down the process of deciding upon meanings’ that is central here. This requires a researcher or practitioner to step back and wait before rushing to interpret young children’s ideas, actions and artefacts. Cook and Hess point to the need ‘to listen again or differently’. This suggests the creative responses that can be a characteristic of a listening culture that is attentive to materials and place.

Slow knowledge and the relationship with materials

Working in a playful, unscripted way with materials may enable listening to happen ‘differently’ and for slow knowledge to develop. Vecchi (2010) describes how establishing an early childhood studio, or *atelier*, and the role of an *atelierista* can create the possibilities for such encounters. Sylvia Kind, an *atelierista* and academic writing with ECEC practitioners Tahmina Shayan and Cheryl Cameron, identifies such a process as happening through the development of a studio in a partnership between a university children’s centre and ECEC department in Canada: ‘The studio is imagined as a space of collective inquiry that affords both children and educators time to dwell with materials, linger in artistic processes and work together on particular ideas and propositions’ (Kind et al. 2019, 67). Tahmina explains this different approach to time: ‘There is no clock in the studio and time is not lived in seconds and minutes but rather with children’s tempo and pace’ (Kind et al. 2019, 73).

The emphasis on the relationships between materials, the space and the children opens up a different temporal dimension for both children and adults. There is ‘time to dwell with materials’. The choice of the words ‘dwelling’ and ‘lingering’ suggests the opportunity to become familiar with materials, to explore and feel at ease and to slow the pace. Kind et al. (2019, 68) explain this form of listening as ‘an attunement generated through sustained and learned attention. By this we mean that sensitivity to children’s processes and to movements and encounters with materials is not something immediately attuned. It is cultivated over time.’

These encounters can demonstrate how materials carry different timescales (Lemke 2006); clay, for example, demands a longer process of engagement than a felt tip pen. Artists, whether children or adults, can experiment and play with these timescales to develop new knowledge. The Canadian early childhood studio is one example of how this type of listening can take place. There is a parallel here with the student-run ‘Room 13’ that started in 1994 in Caol Primary School, near Fort William in Scotland. This project has grown into an international network of studios led by children, with artists-in-residence, that places art and creativity centre stage in learning:

Room 13 allows a different kind of thinking to take place. Everything begins with an idea. In Room 13, young people have the creative freedom, resources and support to follow their ideas and interests through. Questioning, exploring and constructive criticism are actively encouraged! (<http://room13international.org/about/what-happens-in-room-13/>)

Room 13 Hareclive is a further example of an independent artists’ studio that is part of this network, run by children for children. This studio is situated on the same site as Hareclive Academy (a primary school) in Hartcliffe, South Bristol. Together with responsibilities for managing the enterprise, children are ‘engaging in making and doing art in any media of their choice in their timescale’ (Fawcett and Watson 2016, 172). Thus children have more control over not only the choice of subject matter and medium but also about the length of time they engage in a project and how often they choose to return to a particular piece they are creating. Making time for children to follow through their ideas can be an important ingredient in the co-construction of slow knowledge.

Slow knowledge and the relationship with place

How might building relationships with place be another way to develop slow knowledge with young children? This moves beyond the boundaries of an early childhood institution to consider ways of establishing extended contacts with other spaces and places. In turn these may become ‘storied’ or scripted by young children.

A ‘commonworld’ framework (Taylor and Guigni 2012; Common Worlds Research Collective 2019) is one example of a radical rethink about relationships with place and ‘the more-than-human’ in response to current environmental concerns about the future of the planet. These ‘more-than-human worlds ... include the plants and animals that constitute multispecies communities in the local places children inhabit’ (Iorio et al. 2017b, 123). The ‘Out and About’ research project, in the Australian state of Victoria, engages with these ideas to explore new respectful ways of engaging with a locality over time (Iorio et al. 2017a). One of the four sites in the project includes repeated visits to a beach with young children, educators and families, creating a common ground with which to listen ‘with’ place. This sense of developing a common experience together has been of particular value when working with children new to the country and to the region. Connections are built through shared experiences in a similar way that working with art materials can build connections. Iorio et al. (2017a) describe how these deep relationships with place and the more-than-human have led to the generation of new knowledge, including about sustainability and respect for the environment. Young children practise as citizens and public thinkers, deciding over time their own responses to what should be happening to protect their local area. The children decided, for example, to create a message in seaweed to leave on the beach: ‘Please don’t litter’.

The temporal dimension is important here. Thinking ‘with the beach’ requires a slowing down and a relationship that is established over repeated visits. Waller (2006, 76) highlights a similar relationship that young children developed with a local outdoor environment in the UK:

In the country park the children are given time and space to follow their own priorities, thus allowing practitioners and researchers opportunities to develop their knowledge of individual children through listening, interaction and observation.

The relationship with time is working in several ways. There is the regularity of visits to an engaging environment together with how time is viewed when young children and adults are there together. It is not time-bound in the same way as some highly structured ECEC timetable. This establishing of common ground, whether a beach, a country park or local garden, might be seen to create what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refer to as ‘smooth space’ where children are able to add their own scripts, in contrast to a heavily scripted ‘striated space’. Smooth space can give children freedom to act in unconstrained ways (Hansen et al. 2017; Clark 2019).

Training for slow pedagogy in ECEC

Developing slow pedagogy in ECEC and the valuing of slow knowledge raises questions about how such embodied learning can be taught to early childhood students. This could involve attention to tempo, to place and materials, and to the role of the adult. This attunement and ability to linger are not automatic processes and may be best taught by practical first-hand experience rather than desk-bound lecture or on screen (Clark and Nordtømme 2019).

This form of pedagogy could be explored with ECEC students through attention to relationships with place and with artefacts and materials. Drawing on the example from environmental education discussed earlier (Payne and Wattchow 2009), a revisiting and documenting of place could be an important element here. The following questions might emerge from exploring the link between materials and practices in relation to slow knowledge:

- How can we be together with children in a slow way with a book?
- How can we be together with children in a slow way with children’s photographs?
- How can we be together with children in a slow way with clay, water, leaves, stones?
- How can we be together with children in a slow way with digital technology?

Slow pedagogy is not sluggish or frozen. It is not intended to cast a spell, putting action into slow motion. There can be high levels of intensity when young children are able to explore in depth and are listened to in this way. Kind and colleagues (2019, 71), reflecting on their experiences of listening to children in the early childhood studio, comment that ‘time lived in the studio was intense and immersive and the processes were a

result of many connections and intersections. There was a surrender of control, extended moments of pause, and practices of shared creation.'

Tishman (2018, 5) makes a similar observation about slow looking and tempo: 'As I learned when I walked into that fifth-grade classroom, prolonged observation can be an energetic and lively affair.' Attention to tempo would require ECEC students to reflect on the relationship with time in their own learning as well as in young children's lives. Attention to observation could reveal changes in rhythm, including moments of speeding up as well as slowing down as children's ideas take off. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe such moments as 'lines of flight'. These new paths may be clearer to identify when listening is at the centre of early childhood practice. It points to the skills of the early childhood practitioner as craftsman: 'The skill, the trick of the craftsman is one who can hold the forward moving momentum of imagination with the slow movement of holding with materials' (Ingold 2012).

Training in slow pedagogy would also need to acknowledge how to support students and practitioners to become comfortable with the 'uncomfortableness' of uncertainty. This is the unfamiliarity of needing to hold back in engaging with young children and at the same time to sense the right moment to offer a new material or to demonstrate a different way of making. This surrender of control has been referred to in connection with listening to children with the Mosaic approach. Mercieca and Mercieca (2014, x), writing about their experience of working with the Mosaic approach as educational psychologists, observe that 'it is an exercise in engaging with uncertainty ... , where adults are released from the need to know with certainty'.

Aldo Fortunati (2006, 38) echoes this positive sentiment when he says that the role of the teacher is 'removed from the fallacy of certainties and [reassumes] the responsibility to choose, experiment, discuss, reflect, and change, focusing on the opportunities rather than the anxiousness to pursue outcomes, and maintaining in their work the pleasure of amazement and wonder'. Loris Malaguzzi also emphasised the importance of uncertainty in developing the pedagogical work in the preschools in Reggio Emilia, recognising how uncertainty could be 'a motor of knowledge' (Cagliari et al. 2016, 288).

This chapter has focused on the possibilities for transforming ECEC by paying renewed attention to listening and moving towards a slow pedagogy that values the accumulation of slow knowledge. The very nature of this counter-cultural argument poses what might seem insurmountable challenges to the status quo, not only in early childhood education but across all education, including higher education and the climate in which ECEC students are taught, where time is increasingly pressured for educators and

students and teaching and research targets dominate the culture. Here, too, there is a counter-movement where some academics in higher education are articulating a different pace and focus (Berg and Seeber 2016; Vostal 2016). Choosing to articulate alternatives is an important part of changing culture. Unless alternative ways of working and different knowledge are drawn attention to in ECEC, then the pace will continue to increase and the harder to measure will continue to fade from view.

Further reading

Two book chapters provide a springboard for thinking further about slow pedagogies with young children, each discussing the role of pedagogical documentation, focusing on in-depth engagement with children and materials in different contexts. In 'Practicing pedagogical documentation: Teachers making more-than-human relationships and sense of place visible', Jeanne Marie Iorio, a researcher, and Adam Coustley and Christine Grayland, teachers, reflect together and document the relations with place and the 'more than human' emerging from sustained engagement with a local environment; the chapter is in *Found in Translation: Connecting reconceptualist thinking with early childhood education practices*, edited by Nicola Yelland and Dana Frantz Bentley (Routledge, 2017).

In 'Lingering in artistic spaces: Becoming attuned to children's processes and perspectives through the early childhood studio', Sylvia Kind, a researcher and *atelierista*, and Tahmina Shayan and Cheryl Cameron, early childhood education undergraduate students, reflect together on the role of the early childhood studio as a thinking space where new possibilities emerge from listening and lingering. This chapter is in *Pedagogies for Children's Perspectives*, edited by Catherine Patterson and Laurie Kocher (Routledge, 2019).

Alison Clark provides an introduction to one way to listen to young children in *Listening to Young Children: A guide to understanding and using the Mosaic approach* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017).

References

- Alderson, P. and Morrow, V. (2011) *The Ethics of Research with Children and Young People: A practical handbook*. London: SAGE.
- Awdry, W. and Dalby, C. (1997) *Thomas the Tank Engine: The complete collection*. London: Random House.
- Berg, M. and Seeber, B. (2016) *The Slow Professor: Challenging the culture of speed in the academy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

- Cagliari, P., Castagnetti, M., Giudici, C., Rinaldi, C., Vecchi, V. and Moss, P. (eds) (2016) *Loris Malaguzzi and the Schools of Reggio Emilia: A selection of his writings and speeches, 1945–1993*. London: Routledge.
- Clark, A. (2004) 'The Mosaic approach and research with young children'. In Lewis, V., Kellett, M., Robinson, C., Fraser, S. and Ding, S. (eds) *The Reality of Research with Children and Young People*. London: SAGE, 142–61.
- Clark, A. (2010a) *Transforming Children's Spaces: Children's and adults' participation in designing learning environments*. London: Routledge.
- Clark, A. (2010b) 'Young children as protagonists and the role of participatory, visual methods in engaging multiple perspectives'. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 46 (1–2), 115–23.
- Clark, A. (2011) 'Preface'. In Clark, A. and Moss, P. (eds) *Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic approach*. 2nd ed. London: National Children's Bureau.
- Clark, A. (2017) *Listening to Young Children: A guide to understanding and using the Mosaic approach*. 3rd ed. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Clark, A. (2019) "'Quilting" with the Mosaic approach: Smooth and striated spaces in early childhood research'. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research*, 8 (2), 236–51.
- Clark, A., McQuail, S. and Moss, P. (2003) *Exploring the Field of Listening to and Consulting with Young Children: Research report 445*. London: Department for Education and Skills.
- Clark, A. and Moss, P. (2001) *Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic approach*. London: National Children's Bureau.
- Clark, A. and Moss, P. (2005) *Spaces to Play: More listening to young children using the Mosaic approach*. London: National Children's Bureau.
- Clark, A. and Nordtømme, S. (2019) 'Young children's perspectives on the material learning environment'. In Patterson, C. and Kocher, L. (eds) *Pedagogies for Children's Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 3–17.
- Common Worlds Research Collective (2019) *Commonworlds, Childhoods and Pedagogies*. Online. <http://commonworlds.net/about-the-collective/> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Cook, T. and Hess, E. (2007) 'What the camera sees and from whose perspective: Fun methodologies for engaging children and enlightening adults'. *Childhood*, 14 (1), 29–45.
- Cuffaro, H. (1995) *Experimenting with the World. John Dewey and the early childhood classroom*. New York: Teacher College Press.
- Dahlberg, G. and Moss, P. (2005) *Ethics and Politics in Early Childhood Education*. London: Routledge.
- Dalli, C. and Stephenson, A. (2010) 'Involving children in research in early childhood settings, opening up the issues'. In Loveridge, J. (ed.) *Involving Children and Young People in Research in Educational Settings*. Online. https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/80708/957_Involving-CYP-02092010.pdf (accessed 6 January 2020).
- Davie, R., Upton, G. and Varma, V. (eds) (1996) *The Voice of the Child: A handbook for professionals*. London: Falmer.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Drummond, M.J. (2000) 'Comparisons in early years education: History, fact and fiction'. *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, 2 (1). Online. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED439852> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Einarsdottir, J. (2005) 'Playschool in pictures: Children's photographs as a research method'. *Early Childhood Development and Care*, 175 (6), 523–41.
- Fawcett, M. and Watson, D. (2016) *Learning through Child Observation*. 3rd ed. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Formosinho, J., Oliveira-Formosinho, J. and Costa, H. (2019) 'Projectwork as a tool for intercultural pedagogy'. In Patterson, C. and Kocher, L. (eds) *Pedagogies for Children's Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 99–116.
- Fortunati, A. (2006) *The Education of Young Children as a Community Project: The experience of San Miniato*. Edinburgh: Children in Scotland.
- Greene, S. and Hill, M. (2005) 'Methods and methodological issues'. In Greene, S. and Hogan, D. (eds) *Researching Children's Experience: Approaches and methods*. London: SAGE, 1–21.
- Hansen, S.R., Hansen, M.W. and Kristensen, N.H. (2017) 'Striated agency and smooth regulation: Kindergarten mealtime as an ambiguous space for the construction of child and adult relations'. *Children's Geographies*, 15 (2), 237–48.

- Honoré, C. (2004) *In Praise of Slow: How a worldwide movement is challenging the cult of speed*. Toronto: Vintage Canada.
- Ingold, T. (2012) 'Thinking through Making'. Video presentation from the Institute for Northern Culture 'Tales from the North'. Online. www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ygne72-4zyo (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Iorio, J.M., Coustley, A. and Grayland, C. (2017a) 'Practicing pedagogical documentation: Teachers making more-than-human relationships and sense of place visible'. In Yelland, N. and Bentley, D.F. (eds) *Found in Translation: Connecting reconceptualist thinking with early childhood education practices*. New York: Routledge, 148–70.
- Iorio, J.M., Hamm, C., Parnell, W. and Quintero, E. (2017b) 'Place, matters of concern, and pedagogy: Making impactful connections with our planet'. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 38 (2), 121–35.
- Isaacs, S. (1937/2013) *The Educational Value of the Nursery School*. London: British Association for Early Childhood Education.
- Kind, S., Shayan, T. and Cameron, C. (2019) 'Lingering in artistic spaces: Becoming attuned to children's processes and perspectives through the early childhood studio'. In Patterson, C. and Kocher, L. (eds) *Pedagogies for Children's Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 67–80.
- Kirk, E. and Buckingham, W. (2018) *Snapshots of Museum Experience: Understanding child visitors through photography*. London: Routledge.
- Lemke, J. (2006) 'Towards a critical multimedia literacy: Technology, research and politics'. In Mckenna, M., Labbo, L., Kieffer, R. and Reinking, D. (eds) *International Handbook of Literacy and Technology*. Vol. 2. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 3–14.
- Mercieca, D. and Mercieca, D.P. (2014) 'EPS becoming ignorant: Questioning the assumption of listening and empowerment in young children'. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 31 (1), 22–30.
- Merewether, J. and Fleet, A. (2014) 'Seeking children's perspectives: A respectful, layered approach'. *Early Childhood Development and Care*, 184 (6), 897–914.
- Moss, P. (2010) 'Foreword' in Clark, A., *Transforming Children's Spaces: Children's and adults' participation in designing learning environments*. London: Routledge, xi–xiii.
- Moss, P., Clark, A. and Kjørholt, A.T. (2005) 'Introduction'. In Clark, A., Kjørholt, A.T. and Moss, P. (eds) *Beyond Listening: Children's perspectives in early childhood services*. Bristol: Policy Press, 1–16.
- Olsson, L.M. (2009) *Movement and Experimentation in Young Children's Learning: Deleuze and Guattari in early childhood education*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (2012) 'Acting with the clock: Clocking practices in early childhood'. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 13 (2), 154–60.
- Payne, P. (2006) 'The technics of environmental education'. *Environmental Education Research*, 12 (3–4), 487–502.
- Payne, P.G. and Wattachow, B. (2009) 'Phenomenological deconstruction, slow pedagogy and the corporeal turn in wild environmental/outdoor education'. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 14 (1), 15–32.
- Pinkney, S. (2000) 'Children as welfare subjects in reconstructed social policy'. In Lewis, G., Gerwitz, S. and Clarke, J. (eds) *Rethinking Social Policy*, London: SAGE, 111–26.
- Randall, D. (2012) 'Children's regard for nurses and nursing: A mosaic of children's views on community nursing'. *Journal of Child Health Care*, 16 (1), 91–104.
- Rinaldi, C. (2005) 'Documentation and assessment: What is the relationship?'. In Clark, A., Kjørholt, A.T. and Moss, P. (eds) *Beyond Listening: Children's perspectives on early childhood services*. Bristol: Policy Press, 17–28.
- Rinaldi, C. (2006) *In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, researching and learning*. London: Routledge.
- Soanes, L., Hargrave, D., Smith, L. and Gibson, F. (2009) 'What are the experiences of the child with a brain tumour and their parents?' *European Journal of Oncology Nursing*, 13 (4), 255–61.
- Taylor, A. and Guigni, M. (2012) 'Common Worlds: Reconceptualising inclusion in early childhood communities'. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 13 (2), 108–19.
- Tishman, S. (2018) *Slow Looking: The art and practice of learning through observation*. New York: Routledge.
- Tolfree, D. and Woodhead, M. (1999) 'Tapping into a key resource'. *Early Childhood Matters*, 91, 19–23.
- UNCRC (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child) (2005) *General Comment No. 7: Implementing child rights in early childhood*. Online. www.refworld.org/docid/460bc5a62.html (accessed 10 January 2020).

- UNCRC (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child)/UNICEF/UN Children's Fund/Bernard van Leer Foundation (2006) *A Guide to General Comment 7: 'Implementing child rights in early childhood'*. The Hague: Bernard van Leer Foundation.
- UNCRC (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child) (2009) *General Comment No. 12: The right of the child to be heard*. Online. www.refworld.org/docid/4ae562c52.html (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Vecchi, V. (2010) *Art and Creativity in Reggio Emilia: Exploring the role and potentiality of ateliers in early childhood education*. London: Routledge.
- Volante, L. (ed.) (2018) *The PISA Effect on Global Educational Governance*. New York: Routledge.
- Vostal, F. (2016) *Accelerating Academia: Changing the structure of academic time*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Waller, T. (2006) "Don't Come Too Close To My Octopus Tree": Recording and Evaluating Young Children's Perspectives on Outdoor Learning'. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 16 (2) 75–104.

Towards a democratic ECEC system

Diana Sousa

The need for transformative change

I start this chapter lost in the entanglement of my own thoughts. Where to begin when attempting to discuss democracy? As strange as this may sound, my relationship with democracy started before I existed. Perhaps imprinted somewhere in my DNA there are memories of marks left by undemocratic regimes. Both my grandparents and my parents were born during Salazar's *Estado Novo* ('New State') authoritarian regime in Portugal (1933–74), and possibly because of that, I strongly feel my privilege and my responsibility as a born democratic citizen, in the same country.

This chapter is an attempt to discuss democracy equally from both a public and a private perspective. I will use my lenses as a citizen, an educator, a researcher, a migrant and all the other complexities, intersectionalities and positionalities that constitute myself. I will bridge my personal and professional experiences in England (where I live) and Portugal (where I was born) to explore meanings and ambiguities of democratic relationships, with a focus on education, not as a tool to teach democracy but as a means of experiencing a democratic life.

For the purpose of this introductory overview, there are concepts and ideas that I will use throughout this chapter that need to be clarified. Many of these ideas are rooted in the philosophies of the pedagogues Célestin Freinet (1896–1966) and John Dewey (1859–1952), both pivotal in my education in Portugal as an early childhood educator. I will also use concepts that are central to the *Movimento da Escola Moderna Portuguesa* (MEM; Portuguese Modern School Movement, see www.movimentoescolamoderna.pt for further information), which I will later present as one of the most active and widespread democratic pedagogical approaches to be found in any country today.

As a visible expression of the hybridity of thoughts and experiences present in this chapter, Portuguese and English terms will be used. Below I start by broadly explaining how I understand ideas of both democracy and education, and what I mean when using these terms in the chapter. Other concepts will be explained as they emerge throughout the narrative.

Democracy and education

The first notion to clarify is that of democracy. Despite its frequent use, many different values and definitions have been associated with the term. When speaking of democracy in this chapter I am not simply referring to procedures compliant with the rule of law, electoral processes or party politics. I am using as a source of inspiration Walt Whitman's (1871) definition of democracy as the highest form of human interaction. In other words, following the thinking of both Freinet (1947) and Dewey (1897), I take democratic education in this chapter to mean a social process, which includes real-life experiences and relationships lived in the school as a form of community life.

Notwithstanding what Lee (1994) explains as the different starting points and different educational orientations of Freinet and Dewey, these two pedagogues have in common the idea of democratic education as a means of experiencing the world through communication, participation, information exchange and cooperation. Democracy is therefore conceptualised by them as a value, which generates conscious individuals who participate and live together in society. Or as Dewey describes it, as 'a mode of associated living of conjoint communicated experience' (1916, 87) where social relationships constitute the essence of educational institutions.

Such concepts construct an understanding of schools as spaces of relationships and socialisation, and of education for democratic citizenship, which is particularly significant for the evolution of children and young people. Democracy in these terms is construed as an essential condition in education to support and propel social progress, creating a space for adults and children to express their opinions and beliefs about themselves and society, and to voice concerns about matters that affect them (Moss 2007). In the same vein, Freinet (1947, cited in Lee 1994, 16) maintained that education and society could not exist without one another: 'one prepares the democracy of tomorrow by democracy in the school. An authoritarian regime at school does not know how to form democratic citizens.' He also emphasised democracy as a space for

valuing diversity and heterogeneity, as a form of participation and cooperation, and as a means to create innovative reflections and transformative practices in education and society.

It is important, then, to highlight that here I am talking about education in its broadest sense. Put another way, although the education of young children is the main focus of this chapter, I refer to democratic education as a unified journey, that is, without highlighting distinctions between different levels of schooling. Consequently, I use the term *escola* (school) to include educational establishments of every level of education from early childhood to higher education. Nevertheless, in addition to school, the term ECEC (early childhood education and care) is also used in the chapter to refer to all institutions that provide care, education and more, for children under compulsory school age (including but not limited to nurseries, kindergartens, children's centres and preschools).

The democratic deficit in contemporary English education

Dynamic political changes continually shake democracy. Cannella (2005, 25) maintains that prevailing political climates drive governments and institutions to devise legislative conditions in which they construe corporate capitalism as synonymous with democracy. With the rise of hyper-capitalism, populism and nationalism as potentially the most important political developments of the twenty-first century, now seems an apt time to discuss concerns about democracy in education.

Commentators have suggested that a new form of English nationalism has recently emerged (Calhoun 2017; Crouch 2017; Hearn 2017). According to these authors, after a referendum in 2016 resulted in a majority for withdrawing the UK from the European Union, the process branded as 'Brexit' swiftly led to some significant social manifestations of dangerous 'isms' (including populism, nationalism, racism, classism, elitism and so on). Considering that democratic citizenship education has a critical role to play in the mitigation of xenophobic and nationalist agendas (Starkey 2018), this referendum and its aftermath have publicly revealed some of the tensions between social and educational values in this particular national context. Starkey (2018, 156) argues that 'there is confusion between values such as democracy and symbols that have become associated with an essentialized and nostalgic view of Britain'. In education, this seems particularly visible in the Fundamental British Values (FBVs) agenda, where private and maintained schools have obligations to demonstrate, during their Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspections, that they are actively

promoting these values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs (DfE 2014).

Nevertheless, as Starkey goes on to point out ‘where schools simply attempt to meet obligations to follow FBVs, it is quite possible that they will not promote human rights or encourage students to develop multiple and cosmopolitan identities’ (Starkey 2018, 159). Following this logic, questions about mandated values can be raised. Since the motivation for the FBVs agenda did not emerge from a political desire to pursue democratic education but instead as a reaction to a political imperative to prevent terrorism (HM Government 2011), it can be argued that complying with Ofsted’s requirement to demonstrate the promotion of democracy is not the same as fostering democratic values in education, that is, a requirement is not a value. Mansfield (2019), for example, maintains that FBVs are ‘confusing, contradictory, and excluding’; while Richardson and Bolloten (2015, 2) stress that FBVs are constructed within conceptually unclear definitions, since terms such as “rule of law”, “liberty”, “democracy”, “tolerance” are open to conflicting interpretations, and over the years have had different meanings at different times and in different contexts. None of them refers to an absolute value’. Following the same line of argument, Apple (2009, xiii) also reminds us that ‘concepts such as freedom and democracy are sliding signifiers. Their meanings are struggled over, subject to various manipulations, hegemonic and counter-hegemonic interpretations and uses.’ The uncritical normative approval of so-called FBVs not only makes them vulnerable to assumptions, misuses and ambiguities, but also puts them at risk of becoming totally devoid of meaning (Wringe 1984).

Alongside the specific educational values represented by FBVs, other transformations in English education have been apparent in recent years. Auld and Morris (2014) explain how a new paradigm focused on measurements of educational outcomes contributes to a degree of curriculum narrowing and control (see also Chapters 7, 8 and 11). They have also noted the economic rationale behind a new emphasis on performance-driven, preparatory, and easily measurable workplace skills (Auld and Morris 2016, 2019a). The focus on controlling education by means of metrics arguably undermines adherence to democracy by drawing attention away from other educational traditions and possibilities.

In relation to ECEC, the use of a global language driven by metrics sends a powerful message about what is valued in the education of young children (Moss 2019). For example, England’s participation as one of the three countries in the first cycle of the International Early

Learning and Child Well-being Study (IELS), a cross-national assessment of the performance of 5-year-olds on certain standardised early learning outcomes conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), represents a strong statement favouring an image of the child as a unit of human capital (Auld and Morris 2019b; Moss 2019; Sousa et al. 2019; see also Chapter 11). This project led by a powerful international body reifies education as a measurable product, while actively negating concepts of education that do not fit the assumed model, including the multiple ways of viewing childhood and pedagogy within ECEC's diverse traditions such as socio-cultural and socio-pedagogic models, indigenous knowledge(s), and democratic traditions in the early years (Sousa et al. 2019).

There is also a level of 'creative ambiguity' within the British democratic culture, where 'conflict is avoided by not defining key concepts such as democracy or the constitution too carefully' (Starkey 2018, 154). Therefore, it will come as no surprise that in the English ECEC system, which is based on the 'dominant narratives' of privatised provision, marketisation and strong centralised managerial control (Moss 2019), the space for democratic debates is virtually non-existent; while as Moss (2014) explains, democracy as a value, ethics, practice and purpose has been largely absent. In such conditions, democracy is not explicitly acknowledged, either at the policy level or in mainstream practice, nor is it detailed in the curriculum.

Despite this deficit in England, democracy is still part of several active traditions in early childhood education across the world. It is at the centre of the ECEC curriculum in a variety of countries (for example, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Portugal). It is considered a fundamental value in local educational projects (for example, Reggio Emilia, in Italy). In an earlier manifestation, the OECD (2006, 218–19) argued the importance of democracy in ECEC, recommending that governments 'aspire to ECEC systems that support broad learning, participation and democracy', and arguing that 'in addition to learning and the acquisition of knowledge, an abiding purpose of public education is to enhance understanding of society and encourage democratic reflexes in children'.

In the next section, I present MEM as an active pedagogical tradition that embraces democracy as a fundamental value. As previously alluded to, MEM has been central to the development of my identity as an ECEC professional. I have encountered it throughout my *formação*¹ as an educator, in my practice and in my research in schools, and I discuss it here as a reflection about democratic transformation and potentiality in education.

It is important to clarify, however, that I am not suggesting that the democratic practices discussed in relation to MEM either could or should be exported to other education systems, as these result from distinct social, historical, cultural and political conditions within the Portuguese context. But what will hopefully come across is the potential for democratic alternatives in education and for thinking about doing things differently. For as Sousa Santos (2019) has argued, ‘alternatives are not lacking in the world. What is indeed missing is an alternative thinking of alternatives.’

Towards transformative change

What it looks like in practice: The case of Portugal and MEM

Alternative movements in education tend to be naturally connected to socio-political conditions, within particular contexts and historical periods of time (take, for example, the historical context behind the local cultural project of early childhood education in Reggio Emilia (see Edwards et al. 1998; Moss 2019)). MEM is no exception to this, and the experiences generated out of repression and consequent struggles for freedom in Portugal were critical in informing MEM’s pedagogical alignment with democratic ideals. To be clear, Portuguese modern history was marked by a dictatorial regime that lasted almost half a century (first there was a military dictatorship from 1926 to 1932 and then Salazar’s *Estado Novo* regime from 1933 to 1974). This oppressive rule, which ended with a democratic revolution, was pivotal in establishing democracy as a national aspiration for both education and society (Sousa 2017), and consequently, a political period that inspired those who were looking for progressive alternatives.

Defined by Nóvoa (2012, 17) as ‘the most important Portuguese pedagogical movement’, MEM quietly emerged in the mid-1960s from the activity of a small group of teachers (Niza 1998a). Between 1963 and 1966, Rui Grácio promoted and directed a series of professional development courses, which led, in 1965, to six teachers forming a working group for pedagogical improvement at the National Union of Teachers (Santana 1998; Niza 2009).

A year later, in 1966, MEM was founded with the aim of promoting the development of regular activities of *Autoformação Cooperada*² for educational professionals. The democratic revolution in 1974 allowed the legal institutionalisation of all political and cultural associations, with all the accompanying rights of expression and assembly. This included

MEM, which was legally established in 1976 as a ‘pedagogical association of teachers’ and other education professionals (Santana 1998).

Sérgio Niza (1998a), one of the most influential figures in the movement, explains that MEM emerged from a model strongly inspired by Freinet’s cooperative pedagogy. Niza claims the theoretical foundations supporting MEM are driven by the reflections of the Portuguese teachers who have been involved in developing the movement since its foundation. Further sources of inspiration are the civic education actions proposed by the pedagogue António Sérgio, the inclusive practices of children with ‘disabilities’ introduced by the Helen Keller Centre, the teacher education courses promoted by Rui Grácio, and the socio-cultural theories offered by Vygotsky and Bruner (Niza 1998a).

It is, therefore, not surprising to find that the objectives established by the first cooperative group of teachers are still part of MEM’s purpose today. Furthermore, just as in the first days of MEM (Niza 1965), educational professionals from *all* levels of education continue to organise regular encounters to reflect upon pedagogical practice, to share experience(s), exchange knowledge(s), reflect upon challenges, discuss new methodologies, and analyse experiences emerging from students’ work (Santana 1998). The reflections generated in this cooperative process are combined with readings of academic work and research, to support, develop and consolidate old and new theoretical understandings. Subsequently, from these interactions, new educational instruments to sustain pedagogical practice (known in MEM as ‘piloting tools’) are often produced (Niza 2009).

According to MEM’s website, the movement is currently organised in 14 regional centres spread across most of the country. It has a membership of more than 2,000 professionals committed to the integration of democratic values in the life of the school, across different educational levels (from early childhood to higher education). It is officially recognised by the government as a national ‘Collective of Public Utility’ and as an ‘Honorary Member of the Order of Public Instruction’.

MEM’s website also declares that the movement regularly collaborates with various municipalities, universities and other higher education institutions through protocols of educational cooperation, and annually creates a comprehensive plan of *formação*, which is promoted by MEM’s centre of *formação* and supported by MEM’s centre of educational resources. The *formação* on offer to education professionals is accredited and can either be incorporated in the structures of the movement’s *Autoformação Cooperada* or integrated into the framework of the ongoing teachers’ *formação* (which I will explain later in this chapter).

Values and principles

Following core principles of cooperation, solidarity, socio-cultural integration and initiation to democratic practices, MEM sees adults and children as having the right to participate actively in the construction of inclusive and democratic school culture (Vilhena 1998; Niza 1998c). The processes of learning and teaching are therefore focused on the socio-cultural development of sciences, techniques, arts and everyday life, within the spirit of communication and cooperation between all stakeholders in education (Niza 1998a). Vilhena (1998) explains that MEM is sustained by a deep belief in a 'democratic cooperative school' that is profoundly humanised by the participatory construction of knowledge that results from the relationship between adults, children and the community. MEM is, therefore, a pedagogical movement, which 'proposes to construct contemporary responses to a school education intrinsically orientated by democratic values of direct participation, through structures of educational cooperation' (Niza 2009, 602). It does so in a multitude of ways following systems and subsystems inspired, for example, by the democratic ideas of work and learning seen in Freinet's (1947) pedagogy.

The organisation of work and learning is based on a dialogic and cooperative system in which structures of educational cooperation, communication and democratic participation inform each other in a reciprocal relationship. Education is then defined as a shared journey towards active and democratic citizenship where everyone teaches and everyone learns (Niza 2009).

How it works in practice

Santana (1998) and Vilhena (1998) describe MEM as an educational model characterised by the *isomorfismo pedagógico* – a pedagogical isomorphism between teacher education (*formação*) and educational practice (*educação*). Niza (2009, 605–6) explains *pedagogical isomorphism* as:

the methodological strategy of experiencing, through the entire process of *formação*, the involvement and attitudes, methods and procedures, technical resources, and modes of organisation that are intended to be carried out in the effective professional practice of teachers.

In other words, MEM is strategically orientated towards a process of permanent dialogic action and reflection within a context of the interaction between the cooperative *formação* of teachers (from different educational levels) and their pedagogical practice (Santana 1998).

*Sistema de formação cooperada*³

Santana (1998) explains that, within MEM, teachers' *formação* is founded in both formal and informal situations of *Autoformação Cooperada*. MEM's teacher education system is structured from the local to the national level and organised into regional centres. Associate members of MEM, coming from different sectors of education, meet in their regional centres to reflect upon their educational practices. As previously mentioned, in these reflective encounters, new knowledge, ideas and piloting tools are created (Santana 1998). These are then integrated into the cooperative education projects carried out in the cooperative learning groups of *Autoformação Cooperada*:

1. *Grupos cooperativos* (cooperative groups). These are prime spaces for *formação* where groups of MEM associates: evaluate and plan their educational practices; construct and share pedagogical piloting tools; reflect upon their certainties and their doubts; and discuss the theoretical deepening of their practices in light of new contributions from educational research (Santana 1998).
2. *Sábados pedagógicos* (pedagogical Saturdays). Each regional centre coordinates a monthly Saturday of 'pedagogical animation'. These encounters are free of charge and promoted to the teachers and schools within each region (Santana 1998). These events can be organised as: thematic teaching days; simultaneous presentations of three pedagogical practices from all levels of education (that is, from early childhood to higher education), followed by discussions and debates; and plenary sessions, with presentations and discussions of either an academic work or a current subject in educational policy. Additionally, in September, the coordinating committees in some of the regional centres promote the organisation of 'pedagogical days'. These days resemble small regional congresses and aim to support the beginning of the school year.
3. *Congresso nacional* (national congress). The MEM national congress takes place in the second half of July and is one of the major events of the movement. It is organised by different regional centres, where MEM associates have an opportunity to display and evaluate the work completed by different educational institutions throughout the school year, including in schools, in teacher education, and in academic research. Several hundred teachers from all sectors of education (starting with ECEC) participate in the congress. At these events, approximately 80 *comunicações*⁴ and 'practice stories' are presented and discussed over three days. Teachers communicate

their professional practices while reflecting upon major themes related to education and *formação*. Additionally, in the plenary sessions, those who have conducted research studies about MEM's pedagogy communicate the findings of their investigations.

4. *Encontros de formação* (encounters of *formação*). There are three types of education encounters:

- i) Easter encounters. These are meetings organised by the governing board and the coordinating committees of the regional centres. In these encounters, members discuss issues related to the associative life of the movement (such as activities of *formação*, organisational strategy and so on). The purpose of these meetings is also to reflect on specific topics of professional relevance. These happen once a year for a day and a half, during the Easter break.
- ii) National encounters. These occur throughout the year and are organised by special committees – specialised either by educational sector or by themes – arising from the specific needs for pedagogical deepening of MEM's activity.
- iii) Inter-regional encounters. These are promoted by regional coordinating commissions, and serve as spaces for sharing relevant practices and supporting discussion panels for educational improvement and curricular innovation. These gatherings can also serve as work exchanges for regional centres that share close relationships and/or are in geographical proximity.

As explained in Santana (1998), it is challenging to select the most meaningful concepts and paradigms underpinning MEM's approach to *formação*. The conceptual richness that is behind the construction of MEM's work shows how this is an organic and dynamic democratic project, constantly evolving and changing. The dialogue in the encounters and activities of *formação*, explained above, constitutes only half of the isomorphic pedagogy that characterises MEM. The pedagogical model explained below represents the other half.

Pedagogical model

As a living pedagogy, MEM fosters the democratic character and the socio-moral development of children and adults by ensuring their full participation in the conjoint-cooperative management of the school curriculum (Niza 1999). In this context, 'the exercise of cooperation and

solidarity in the school community challenges both adults and children to construct themselves as democratic citizens' (Folque 2018, 9). In this logic, 'sharing knowledge, power, and its regulation with children is a difficult practice to start with, but it becomes essential when we realize that this creates a net that always cushions our falls' (Vilhena 1998, 44).

MEM's pedagogy is enacted through direct democracy. In other words, cooperative interactions between teachers and young people are lived in the form of direct participation and not in the form of representation or delegation. Democracy is experienced as an ethical dimension based on a moral interaction woven in mutual help, respect and solidarity (Niza 1998b). Consequently, young people, independently of their level of education, are responsible for actions such as collaborating with teachers in the planning of curricular activities; interacting in the learning that results from their study, their research and their participation in projects; and evaluating their own work.

In MEM schools, young people have daily and weekly meetings for planning, where they reflect about the intellectual and moral progress that is made between themselves, with the support of the teachers. Assessment is based on a cooperative negotiation of judgements; and in the monitoring of the objectives set out in the collective curricula, in the individual work plans, and in other maps and checklists of learning-work. These piloting tools assist in registering and monitoring the contracts made by the students in their council meetings.

MEM in early childhood education

According to Niza (1998a), MEM defines three specific starting conditions for educational activity in ECEC. The first condition is that, ideally, groups of children are not divided into age-grouped classrooms. MEM values cultural and generational heterogeneity as a means to respect individual differences. It is also believed that heterogeneity enables opportunities for interactive formative collaborations in a process of socio-cultural and cognitive enrichment. The second condition is the need, inspired by Freinet's pedagogy, to maintain an environment where children's free expression is respected, that is, where their life experiences, opinions and ideas, are publicly valued. The third condition is the importance of enabling time for inquiry through spaces for spontaneous and playful activities that explore ideas, materials, and documents; through such moments, children can develop their own investigations, and propose their projects alongside the provocations facilitated by the educator (Niza 1998a).

Niza describes MEM educators as advocates of participatory education and catalysts of cooperation. He continues by stating that these educators are civic and moral animators of democratic education; in other words, MEM educators are perceived to be active agents who provoke free expression and critical attitudes. As a result, a central part of educators' work in the MEM pedagogy is to stimulate and maintain the autonomy and responsibility of each child within the cooperative education group (Niza 1998a).

To facilitate the conditions above, among other features, in MEM schools particular attention is paid to (1) educational space; (2) distribution of activities; (3) cooperative formative assessment; and (4) interactions with families and communities. Within the educational space, the ECEC classroom is usually divided into six basic activity areas, also known as workshops or *ateliers*. Within these, there is a space for a library and documentation, a writing and printing workshop, a laboratory for sciences and experiments, a space for carpentry and constructions, a space for arts activities and an area for artistic expression (such as drama and music). There is also usually a central multi-purpose area for collective work, and in the settings where the kitchen is not accessible for the children, there is a specific area for culture and food education (Niza 1998a; Vilhena 1998).

Additionally, MEM classrooms are expected to be highly stimulating, while presenting continuous and permanent exhibitions of children's work. All the piloting tools are accessible and displayed on the walls, including the map of attendance where children register their presence every day; the day plan that children develop together with the educator in the morning council meeting; and the activities map that children complete throughout the day (Figure 10.1). Sometimes translated in English as 'activities chart', this piloting tool is a double-entry table with working areas/activities across the top horizontal row and children's names in the left-hand vertical column. Usually after the morning council meeting (although this could happen at other times), each child draws an empty circle in the planned activities columns, filling in the circle when the activity is completed. This is a tool for pupil self-regulation in choosing activities, reflecting upon those choices, respecting the choices made, taking responsibility for their own work individually and collaboratively, for engaging with planning and for progressive assessment.

Other piloting tools include: a weekly list of projects with the names and tasks of the children involved; the weekly task distribution chart where some children have responsibilities to ensure the management of life in the classroom; and the group diary where each week children



Figure 10.1 The activities map shows how children identify and choose activities from a range of possibilities within the classroom environment. As a ‘self-regulatory’ tool, this is where children plan, register and monitor their individual choices (Source: Folque 2008)

register likes, dislikes, what they did and what they would like to do (Niza 1998a; Vilhena 1998; see also Figure 10.2). The group diary is a weekly register of the life of the group and is available for everyone in the classroom to add their thoughts, suggestions and feelings every day. The children then discuss it every Friday in a council meeting where they reflect about their week. In this conversation, among other things, children engage in the creation of rules for living together, in cooperative reflection for resolution of conflicts and in the planning of future activities. This piloting tool not only makes children’s learning and experiences visible, but also helps with participation, planning, assessment and resolution of conflicts.

The diary has four columns: (1) ‘I liked’, (2) ‘I didn’t like’, (3) ‘We did’, (4) ‘We want to do’. Some examples of what children say in each column in Figure 10.2 are: ‘I liked that Hugo worked a lot to make a cape’, ‘I liked the drawings that Fernanda and Jessica did in the diary’, ‘I didn’t like that children forgot what we had agreed we could have in the pretend play workshop’, ‘I didn’t like that Filipa threw sand into my eyes’, ‘We wrote a text about our visit to Mr Marques’s farm’, ‘We played music with the musical instruments of our classroom’, ‘We want to arrange a party for the baby with Fernanda’s mum’ and ‘We want to learn things about whales and sharks’.

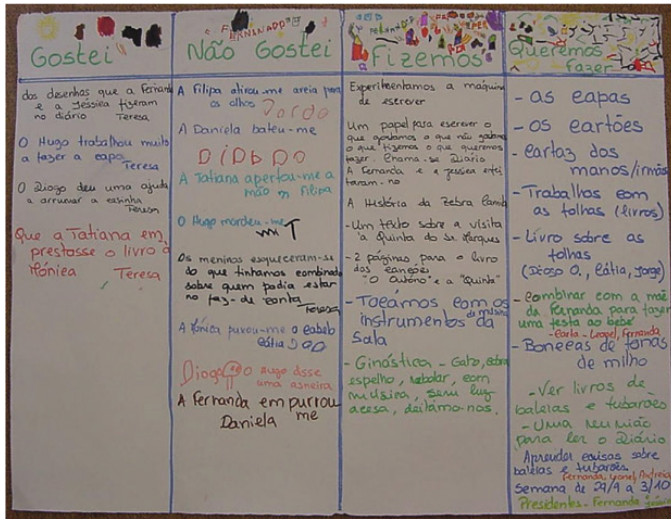


Figure 10.2 The group diary shows how children reflect on their group interactions throughout the week. In this tool, children express their likes, dislikes, what they did and what they want to do (Source: Folque 2008)

All piloting tools mentioned above are part of the classroom’s daily, weekly, monthly and yearly routines and serve as managers for the evaluation and distribution of children’s activities throughout their time in the setting.

In relation to evaluation, MEM considers assessment as a cooperative and dynamic process within the natural development of education. As such, cooperative assessment can develop through a myriad of interactions and relationships. For example, the documentation of children’s work and experiences, both individual and collective, in the piloting tools gives an indication of the activities and projects children have been involved with. The *comunicações* of projects, experiences or reflections that happen in the everyday life of the group (for example, in the morning and afternoon council meetings) also provide opportunities for self and group assessment. These evaluations are naturally present, too, in the daily discoveries that children share with the teacher and the group, in the significant events registered in the group diary, and in the debates and reflections that happen in the Friday council meeting (Figure 10.3).

Regarding the interaction with families and communities in MEM, the first principle is that ‘children are citizens with invaluable knowledge, capable not only of exchanging services, but also of questioning, studying



Figure 10.3 The council meeting is a whole group dialogic activity, which includes all children and adults in the classroom. It is a participatory tool of evaluation, planning and negotiation of the curriculum, the rules of co-living and individual and collaborative projects (Source: Folque 2008)

or intervening in the community’ (Vilhena 1998, 44–5). Children, in other words, are perceived as agents capable of finding new ways of resolving problems that affect themselves and others.

Alongside the acknowledgment of children as active and critical citizens in the community life, MEM values families, neighbours and organisations within the community as unique sources of knowledge and *formação*. Communities are, thus, indispensable for the democratic life experiences inside and outside the school (Niza 1998a; see also Figure 10.4).

Towards a democratic early childhood education

While MEM provides a sound example of the enactment of democracy in an education system, it is also clear that the practice of democracy is only viable in a system that enables it. In Portugal, democracy surfaced as a central focus of education policy following the revolution that established a democratic government in 1974. MEM began with the effort of six teachers who had a democratic political-pedagogical intention that eventually found favourable conditions for its practical enactment. This suggests that democracy evolves through space and time, and requires action; it needs political conditions, effort and willingness to become a reality in education and society.



Figure 10.4 Interaction with families and communities
(Source: Folque 2008)

Although I recognise that socio-political developments within the history of England are certainly different from those of Portugal, my objective in this chapter was to bring attention to MEM to signal that, indeed, there are challenges, but there are also alternatives. All of the developments explained throughout the chapter supported my earlier claim that MEM is one of the most active and extensive democratic pedagogical approaches to be found in any country. As stated by Santana (1998, 6), MEM is no longer a small group of friends fighting for the same pedagogical ideals but, rather, an institution with responsibilities towards the education system.

This chapter has only scratched the surface of the magnitude and significance of MEM's democratic work. It is clear, nonetheless, that this is an established pedagogical movement with meaningful expression. As emphasised by Nóvoa (1998), MEM has a past, a history and a culture all of which deserve to be known and celebrated.

MEM invests in the *formação* of education professionals, engages in social transformation and promotes the democratic development of young people and communities. Indeed, MEM's relevance emerges from the fact that this movement is as much about children as it is about teachers, as much about schools as it is about society, as much about *formação* as it is about pedagogy, and as much about early childhood as it is about higher education. Most importantly, MEM expresses a refreshing coherence between what is said and what is done. And as elucidated by Freire (1998), this coherence is one of the fundamental conditions for democratic education.

Considering that MEM emerged under the most challenging circumstances (as a secret association during a dictatorship), it shows the level of resilience needed for systemic transformative change towards a democratic education. As a 'movement', MEM keeps evolving in an organic manner where the transformation of the individual contributes to the transformation of the community. MEM shows how a pedagogical model with a past can be focused in the construction of the future (Nóvoa 1998).

Further reading

The writings of Dewey and Freinet on democracy and education remain essential. *The Schools of Tomorrow*, by John and Evelyn Dewey (E.P. Dutton and Company, 1915), is available free to download at <https://archive.org/details/schoolsoftomorro005826mbp/page/n10>. Selected writings of Célestin Freinet, *Cooperative Learning and Social Change* (Our Schools/Our Selves, 1995) can be found at http://documents.asso-amis-de-freinet.org/docs_adf/cooperative-learning.pdf.

A book chapter by Maria Assunção Folque – 'Yes we can! Young children learning to contribute to an enabling society' – addresses the possibility and the relevance of young children learning to participate in society based on an image of children as citizens and active contributors to the common good of communities. This chapter appears in *Early Childhood Care and Education for Sustainability: International perspectives*, edited by Valerie Huggins and David Evans (Routledge, 2018).

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the Movimento da Escola Moderna Portuguesa for the information and photographs they have supplied.

Notes

1. *Formação* (literally translated as ‘formation’) is a concept commonly misrepresented as ‘training’. *Formação* is a Portuguese word routinely used to refer to the process of education of teachers. It has a multitude of overlapping meanings, including education, constitution, preparation, composition, guidance, instruction, all depicting a perspective of the construction/building/formation of the individual within a continuous personal and professional lifelong journey.
2. *Autoformação cooperada* (literally translated as ‘cooperated self-formation’) is a concept intended here to represent the processes that educational professionals and pupils undertake to construct themselves (as individuals) in relationship with others. This journey develops following processes of cooperation/partnership action with others, often following dialogic processes of communication, exchanges of practices/experiences, and engaging in project work.
3. *Formação cooperada* (loosely translated here as a ‘system of cooperative education of teachers and other education professionals’) will be used to represent MEM’s participatory approach to the education of teachers.
4. *Comunicações* (literally translated as ‘communications’) is intrinsically connected with the democratic act of communicating in a dialogic way with a critical spirit rooted in respecting learning and valuing difference. MEM teachers and pupils communicate/present/share their ideas, opinions, thoughts, beliefs, feelings with/to each other, embracing every interaction as a democratic encounter.

References

- Apple, M. (2009) ‘Foreword’. In Lall, M. and Vickers, E. (eds) *Education as a Political Tool in Asia*. London: Routledge, xi–xiii.
- Auld, E. and Morris, P. (2014) ‘Comparative education, the “New Paradigm” and policy borrowing: Constructing knowledge for educational reform’. *Comparative Education*, 50 (2), 129–55.
- Auld, E. and Morris, P. (2016) ‘PISA, policy and persuasion: Translating complex conditions into education “best practice”’. *Comparative Education*, 52 (2), 202–29.
- Auld, E. and Morris, P. (2019a) ‘Science by streetlight and the OECD’s measure of global competence: A new yardstick for internationalisation?’ *Policy Futures in Education*, 17 (6), 677–98.
- Auld, E. and Morris, P. (2019b) ‘The OECD and IELS: Redefining early childhood education for the 21st century’. *Policy Futures in Education*, 17 (1), 11–26.
- Calhoun, C. (2017) ‘Populism, Nationalism and Brexit’. In Outhwaite, W. (ed.) *Brexit: Sociological responses*. London: Anthem Press, 57–76.
- Cannella, G. (2005) ‘Reconceptualising the field (of early care and education): If “western” child development is a problem, then what do we do?’ In Yelland, Y. (ed.) *Critical Issues in Early Childhood Education*. Berkshire: Open University Press, 17–39.
- Crouch, C. (2017) ‘Globalisation, Nationalism and the Changing Axes of Political Identity’. In Outhwaite, W. (ed.) *Brexit: Sociological responses*. London: Anthem Press, 101–10.
- DfE (Department for Education) (2014) *Promoting Fundamental British Values as Part of SMSC in Schools: Departmental advice for maintained schools*. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380595/SMSC_Guidance_Maintained_Schools.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Dewey, J. (1897) ‘My pedagogic creed’. *School Journal*, 54, 77–80. Online. <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Dewey, J. (1916) *Democracy and Education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York: Macmillan.
- Dewey, J. and Dewey E. (1915) *The Schools of Tomorrow*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company.
- Edwards, C., Gandini, L. and Forman, G. (1998) *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education*. 2nd ed. Westport, CT: Ablex.
- Folque, M.A. (2008) ‘An investigation of the Movimento da Escola Moderna (MEM) pedagogy and its contribution to learning to learn in Portuguese Pre-Schools’. PhD Thesis, Institute of Education, University of London.
- Folque, M.A. (2018) ‘Yes we can! Young children learning to contribute to an enabling society’. In Huggins, V. and Evans, D. (eds) *Early Childhood Care and Education for Sustainability: International perspectives*. London: Routledge, 67–81.
- Freinet, C. (1947) *L’éducation du travail*. Cannes: FeniXX réédition numérique (Ophrys).
- Freinet, C. (1995) *Cooperative Learning and Social Change. Selected Writings of Célestin Freinet* (eds. Clandfield, D. and Sivell J.) Toronto: Our Schools/OurSelves OISE Publishing.

- Freire, P. (1998) *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Hearn, J. (2017) 'Vox Populi: Nationalism, globalisation and the balance of power in the making of Brexit'. In Outhwaite, W. (ed.) *Brexit: Sociological responses*. London: Anthem Press, 19–30.
- HM Government (2011) *Prevent Strategy*. London: TSO.
- Lee, W. (1994) 'John Dewey and Célestin Freinet: A closer look'. In Sivell, J. (ed.) *Freinet Pedagogy: Theory and practice*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 11–26.
- Mansfield, A. (2019) 'Confusion, contradiction and exclusion: The promotion of British values in the teaching of history in schools'. *The Curriculum Journal*, 30 (1), 40–50.
- Moss, P. (2007) 'Bringing politics into the nursery: Early childhood education as a democratic practice'. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 15 (1), 5–20.
- Moss, P. (2014) *Transformative Change and Real Utopias in Early Childhood Education: A story of democracy, experimentation and potentiality*. London: Routledge.
- Moss, P. (2019) *Alternative Narratives in Early Childhood: An introduction for students and practitioners*. London: Routledge.
- Niza, S. (1965) 'O diálogo e o aperfeiçoamento pedagógico: nota sobre uma experiência' ['Dialogue and pedagogical improvement: note on an experience']. *Boletim do Sindicato Nacional de Professores*, 3.
- Niza, S. (1998a) 'O Modelo Curricular de Educação Pre-Escolar da Escola Moderna Portuguesa' ['The Curricular Model of Pre-School Education of the Portuguese Modern School']. In Formosinho, J. (ed.) *Modelos Curriculares para a Educação de Infância [Curricular Models for Early Childhood Education]*. Porto: Porto Editora, 137–59.
- Niza, S. (1998b) 'A organização social do trabalho de aprendizagem no 1. Ciclo do Ensino Básico' ['The social organization of learning work in the 1st cycle of basic education']. In Nóvoa, A., Marcelino, F. and Ramos Do Ó, J. (eds) *Sérgio Niza. Escritos sobre educação [Sérgio Niza. Writings about education]*. Lisboa: Tinta da China, 353–79.
- Niza, S. (1998c) 'No 50. Aniversário da declaração universal dos direitos humanos' [At the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights]. In Nóvoa, A., Marcelino, F. and Ramos Do Ó, J. (eds) *Sérgio Niza escritos sobre educação [Sérgio Niza writings about education]*. Lisboa: Tinta da China, 382.
- Niza, S. (1999) 'Para quando uma educação para a cidadania democrática nas escolas?' [For when education for democratic citizenship in schools?]. In Nóvoa, A., Marcelino, F. and Ramos Do Ó, J. (eds) *Sérgio Niza. Escritos sobre educação [Sérgio Niza. Writings about education]*. Lisboa: Tinta da China, 384.
- Niza, S. (2009) 'Contextos cooperativos e aprendizagem profissional. A formação no Movimento da Escola Moderna' [Cooperative contexts and professional learning. Formation in the Modern School Movement]. In Nóvoa, A., Marcelino, F. and Ramos Do Ó, J. (eds) *Sérgio Niza escritos sobre educação [Sérgio Niza writings about education]*. Lisboa: Tinta da China, 599–616.
- Nóvoa, A. (1998) 'Nos 30 Anos do Movimento da Escola Moderna' [In the 30 Years of the Modern School Movement]. *Escola Moderna – Revista do Movimento da Escola Moderna, N.3 5a Série*.
- Nóvoa, A. (2012) 'Ética, pedagogia e democracia são exatamente a mesma coisa' [Ethics, Pedagogy and Democracy are exactly the same thing]. In Nóvoa, A., Marcelino, F. and Ramos Do Ó, J. (eds) *Sérgio Niza escritos sobre educação*. [Sérgio Niza writings about education]. Lisboa: Tinta da China, 17–21.
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2006). *Starting Strong II: Early childhood education and care*. Paris: OECD Publications.
- Richardson, R. and Bolloten, B. (2015) "Fundamental British Values" – Origins, Controversy, Ways Forward: A symposium'. *Race Equality Teaching*, 32 (3), 9–20.
- Santana, I. (1998) 'Estruturas da Autoformação Cooperada no Movimento da Escola Moderna Portuguesa' [Structures of Cooperative Self-Training in the Modern Portuguese School Movement]. *Escola Moderna – Revista do Movimento da Escola Moderna, N.3 5a Série*.
- Sousa, D. (2017) "Revolution", Democracy and Education: An investigation of early childhood education in Portugal'. PhD thesis, London, UCL Institute of Education.
- Sousa, D., Grey, S. and Oxley, L. (2019) 'Comparative international testing of early childhood education: The democratic deficit and the case of Portugal'. *Policy Futures in Education*, 17 (1), 41–58.
- Sousa Santos, B. (2019) *ALICE: Espelhos estranhos, lições imprevistas* [Strange mirrors, unsuspected lessons]. Online. <http://alice.ces.uc.pt/en/?lang=en> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Starkey, H. (2018) 'Fundamental British Values and citizenship education: Tensions between national and global perspectives'. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 100 (2), 149–62.
- Vilhena, G. (1998) 'Uma educação para a democracia no jardim de infância' [An education for democracy in the kindergarten]. *Escola Moderna – Revista do Movimento da Escola Moderna, N.3 5a Série*.
- Whitman, W. (1871) *Democratic Vistas*. New York: J.S. Redfield.
- Wringe, C. (1984) *Democracy, Schooling and Political Education*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Towards a pluralist and participatory accountability

Guy Roberts-Holmes

The need for transformative change

Most 3- and 4-year-old children in England attend mainstream nursery classes or schools or reception classes in primary schools led by qualified early childhood teachers; 5- and 6-year-olds attend Year 1 classes in primary schools. This chapter will argue that what happens in those schools and classes (referred to here as ‘early years’) is changing, largely due to neoliberalism. Neoliberalism attempts to reduce early years education into a ‘school readiness’ factory that prepares young children for success in primary school tests. Managerial accountability, the government argues, is required to hold early years teachers and the schools they work in, to account through achieving prespecified ‘standards’ and school-readiness performance measures. Tight managerial control of early years teachers is necessary because neoliberalism is distrustful of what it sees as early years teachers’ inefficient and self-seeking professionalism. In short, neoliberalism treats early years teachers with ‘derision’ (Ball 1999) and ‘contempt’ (Giroux 2019, 508) and requires their strict control and governance through the imposition of explicit standards and performance measures.

The chapter begins by exploring this regime of managerial control and governance, critically examining the growing plethora of English national standardised and prescribed early years education ‘outcomes’, ‘tests’ and ‘progress measures’. Performance measures in early years settings are inspected and judged by a national inspection regime, the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted), with severe consequences if performance as measured is not judged adequate.

The chapter goes on to consider the unintended consequences of this harsh disciplinary regime.

The government frames its arguments for tight managerial control of all early years settings within a discourse of educational equality of opportunity for all. This is because it is argued that early years teachers and other staff need to identify children's needs as early as possible so that they can make the necessary interventions to prevent disadvantaged children from falling behind more advantaged groups. This performance management regime of truth redefines the purpose of early years education as one of raising standards to reduce the attainment gap between socio-economic groups so that all young children are school-ready. However, in the process, democratic alternatives to this regime of truth are ignored, as are wider questions about the impact of poverty upon the attainment gap.

The chapter proposes that there is an urgent need for neoliberalism's managerial accountability to be replaced with a participatory and democratic approach that trusts early years teachers' professional judgements. Using examples from Italy and New Zealand, pedagogical documentation and learning stories, both based on relational pedagogies, it is argued that there are such alternatives to authoritarian managerial control. Lastly, small-scale political activism within a broader early years resistance movement is explored as a possible route to a more equitable, trusting and democratic practice in England.

Managerial control through standards and performance measures

The English state system of education attempts to ensure that early years teachers and the children attending its schools comply with its centralised requirements through a process of tight managerial control. This is achieved, first, through the setting of explicit national 'standards' and measuring performance with an array of tests. Second, managerial control makes those performance measures visible and public through issuing school inspection reports and other information. Early years settings that do not achieve the required performance measures are humiliated through a harsh and public grading system (while those that do well advertise the fact to potential parents, for instance on large banners outside school gates). Third, control is achieved by means of ensuring that nursery and primary school teachers, children and families internalise government standards and performance measures.

Managerial control has led to a formalised and reduced early years curriculum to prepare young children ‘for the rigour of the Year 1 curriculum and achieving improved outcomes in mathematics and literacy’ (Kay 2018, 331). Through this process, early years education is reimagined, reconfigured and repurposed as the first stage in a ‘delivery chain’ (Ball et al. 2012, 514) to prepare and ‘ready’ children for the test-based culture of compulsory schooling. The policy of standards and performance measures steers and governs early years practice towards formalised early numeracy and literacy and away from local professional judgements and child-led play (Wood 2019).

EYFS, ELGs and the EYFS profile

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) was first introduced in 2008 and set the standards in England for the development, learning and care of children from birth to 5 years old with childminders (family day care), in preschools (playgroups) and day nurseries, as well as in nursery and reception classes in primary schools. Its standards are organised around three prime areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development; communication and language; and physical development. Within these there are four specific areas of learning: literacy; mathematics; expressive arts and design; and understanding the world (for a fuller discussion of the EYFS, see Chapter 7).

At the end of children’s year in the reception class of primary school, when they are around 5 years old, their performance on 17 early learning goals (ELGs) is assessed by teachers through the EYFS profile, ‘to provide a reliable, valid and accurate assessment of individual children at the end of the EYFS’ (DfE 2019a, 9). The teacher must observe and judge each child’s performance against the expected norm for each goal, and rank the child in one of the following three prescribed and enumerated categories:

1. Emerging: The child has not yet reached the normal performance level.
2. Expected: The child meets the normal performance level and is classified as ‘normal’ and therefore ‘school-ready’.
3. Exceeding: The child’s performance is above the normal expected level for this age.

Each of the 17 ELGs is accompanied by its own ‘norm’-based set criteria and materials known as the ‘EYFS profile exemplification for the level of

learning and development expected at the end of the EYFS' (DfE 2013). For example, to achieve the 'expected', 'normal' ELG for writing a child has to perform the following: 'Children use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds. They also write some irregular common words. They write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others. Some words are spelt correctly and others are phonetically plausible' (DfE 2013, 1). If a child obtains an 'expected level of learning and development' in 12 out of the 17 ELGs, she or he is classified as having obtained the status of a 'good level of development' (GLD) and is labelled as a successful 'school-ready' child.

Teachers' and practitioners' ELG judgements are scrutinised with a business-like 'quality assurance' moderation process to ensure an accurate and valid 'standardised' score. First, teachers' judgements are moderated by their colleagues using the 'exemplification materials'. Second, a sample of each teacher's EYFS profiles must be submitted to the local authority (LA) EYFS profile 'moderation manager' who externally moderates them for accuracy and consistency, demonstrating a lack of trust in the teacher's judgements. The moderation manager looks across the total percentages of children achieving GLD in local schools and encourages competition by comparing scores:

We 'name and shame' by showing all the school names. Some schools didn't have any children at 'Exceeding Level' so you say 'well your statistical neighbour has this percentage so how come you haven't?' And they think 'I'd better go back and have another look at that ... It does challenge them and that's why we do it (EYFS Profile Moderation Manager). (Roberts-Holmes and Bradbury 2016, 607)

The LA profile manager encourages this competition in an attempt to constantly drive up schools' performance levels year-on-year as the LA itself is then judged against other LAs in a national GLD performance competition. In some schools, early years teachers' pay increases are directly linked to increases in the number of children obtaining their GLDs, placing further pressure to raise successive 'pass' rates. Finally, the EYFS profile assessment for each child must be given to parents and Year 1 teachers in primary school as a written summary of the child's attainment against the 17 ELGs.

Taken together, the EYFS and its attendant goals and profile capture, normalise and discipline the child (and the teacher), as they are caught within increasingly tight webs and grids of managerial control. All of this means that early years education becomes '*defined*' by policy as

one of standards and the need to raise standards, represented in quantitative outcomes and measures' (Ball et al. 2012, 93, emphasis added). But the process does not end with the EYFS profile, with further performance measures either in place or planned.

The phonics screening check

The phonics screening check (PSC) was introduced in 2011 and is a performance measure taken by 6-year-old children (in Year 1 of primary school). The PSC is a standardised arbitrary pass/fail 'high stakes test' in which 6-year-old children decode a mixture of 20 real words and 20 pseudo or 'nonsense' words. Those children who 'fail' to score a mark of more than 32 must re-take the test.

The PSC, with its associated formal curriculum and pedagogy, has cascaded down through the early years, dramatically steering curriculum and pedagogy into preparing young children for their Year 1 phonics test. The English Department for Education (DfE 2017, 7) states that 'the core purpose of the reception year' is to teach systematic synthetic phonics in preparation for the Year 1 PSC, and has threatened the early years sector with inspection checks on the teaching of synthetic phonics. Research has demonstrated that children as young as 3 years old in nursery classes are prepared and trained to be 'school-ready' for the phonics test (Bradbury 2018; Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes 2017b).

Reception baseline assessment and the International Early Learning and Well-being Study

As if the above performance measures were not enough, the Department for Education (DfE) in England is developing further digitally based performance measures with which to judge and hold early years teachers and schools to account. The proposed reception baseline assessment (RBA) is to be administered as a tablet-based test for 4-year-olds within the first six weeks of their attending primary school reception class. This digital test is 'to provide an on-entry assessment of pupil attainment to be used as a starting point from which a cohort-level progress measure to the end of key stage 2 (KS2) [that is, at 11 years old] can be created' (DfE 2019b, 4).

From 2020, 4-year-olds will be tested in literacy and maths, and seven years later, starting in 2027, they will be tested again to measure their attainment and progress.¹ Children's progress across their primary schooling will then be compared, ranked and judged based upon these two performance measurements, taken seven years apart. The new assessment will, therefore, effectively tie early years curriculum and pedagogy

to literacy and maths in primary school. The RBA is being introduced despite extensive research that has demonstrated that it will produce inaccurate and invalid data (Goldstein et al. 2018; Roberts-Holmes et al. 2020): ‘The government’s proposals, which will cost upward of £10 million, are flawed, unjustified, and wholly unfit for purpose’ (Goldstein et al. 2018, 30).

In 2018, the DfE trialled, in 300 reception classes, another standardised performance measure of early years education, the International Early Learning and Well-being Study (IELS). The IELS is an international large-scale assessment of 5-year-olds organised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Roberts-Holmes 2019b). The aim is to measure and compare performance between countries on four early learning ‘domains’: emerging literacy; numeracy; self-regulation; and empathy and trust. Each is assessed using a tablet-based process lasting around 20 minutes.

For the first round of this new international assessment, the OECD managed to recruit only three countries: Estonia, the United States – and England. It will hope to recruit more for a second round, which will follow the publication in March 2020 of reports on the initial study. Moss and Urban (2017, 256) state that ‘our overriding concern, therefore, remains that the IELS will end up, in the words of Loris Malaguzzi, as “a ridiculous simplification of knowledge, and a robbing of meaning from individual histories” (cited in Cagliari et al. 2016: 378)’. The potential danger with both the English RBA and the international IELS is that they both reduce the rich diversity and complexity of early years education to a common outcome and measure. As a headteacher commented in research on the pilot of the RBA (Roberts-Holmes et al. 2020):

When it’s used like TripAdvisor by parents or by the government and Ofsted, that’s not alright because they don’t take any context into account. And then when you compare us to other schools round here, which is what parents do, they’re going to go ‘oh look, their results aren’t very good’ because they’ve got no context, none whatsoever.

Inspection

Using performance data, observations and parents’ feedback, Ofsted grades early years settings as being ‘Outstanding’, ‘Good’, ‘Requires Improvement’ or ‘Inadequate’. Ofsted notes that early years settings must

have an ‘extremely sharp focus’ on communication and language to be graded as ‘Outstanding’ (Ofsted 2018, 37) and praises those settings that have based their literacy and maths upon Year 1 primary school national curriculum expectations (DfE 2017, 7).

So, from the early years to the end of primary school, the performance data must show progress particularly in literacy and numeracy. Because the stakes are so high for schools, Ofsted inspections effectively manage and control early years education towards a narrow focus on prescribed early literacy and numeracy school readiness performance measures. The threat of Ofsted’s public humiliation if early years performance measures are not met makes schools and teachers compliant because Ofsted operates as ‘a pistol loaded with blame to be fired at the heads of those who cannot answer charges’ (Inglis 2017, 20). Within Ofsted’s punitive and disciplinary context, the only early years professionalism that counts is that which produces the government’s prescribed performance outcomes.

Datafication and managerial control

Managerial and disciplinary control has become considerably more powerful and intense with the recent rise in the datafication of early years education (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes 2017a). Datafication has facilitated hyper-active managerial control of early years performance measures through its ability to create vast amounts of comparable digital data that are used to fuel competition and choice. Datafication reduces the complexity of early years education into a crude set of numbers on a spreadsheet that can be publicly tracked, ranked and compared with other nursery and primary schools. At the same time, the datafication of early years performance measures has enabled a heightened surveillance and tracking of digital data in a process known as dataveillance, that is ‘the proactive surveillance of what effectively become suspect populations, using new technologies to identify “risky groups”’ (Amoore and De Goede 2005, 151). Dataveillance of individual children’s performance in tests enables risk management via targeted governance.

Datafication is central to making visible school performance measures to stimulate competition between schools. For example, datafication enables progression data from the early years to Year 2 and Year 6 of primary school to be made visible through websites such as the DfE’s (2019c) ‘Find and compare schools in England’. This allows for an

easy, and simplistic, comparison and judgement of nursery and primary schools, creating a market place of competing schools for calculating and savvy parents to choose the 'best' performers. Such comparability enables decontextualised judgements to be made about 'best' and 'worst' performing nursery and primary schools, acting as a form of educational Darwinism in the market place of choice and competition. Nursery and primary schools are incited to use calculating strategies and practices to stay ahead of the competition and become winners in this high-stakes competitive environment. All this, it is claimed, produces efficient and transparent schools.

The combination of RBA at the beginning of the reception year and the EYFS profile and the IELTS at the end of reception year suggests that the early years are being framed as an intensely data-led governed space and as a 'social laboratory of experimentation'. For example, data-led calculation and algorithmic prediction of progress from 4-year-olds' RBA test scores will enable primary schools to foresee potential data performance risks and threats. These managerial tools enable an algorithmic digital governance that offers the seductive prospect of responsible forward planning by identifying individual children at ever-earlier ages who pose a risk and threat to the future performance security of the school. This creates an ever-more precise 'data-led watchful politics' (Amoore and De Goede 2005, 230, in Roberts-Holmes 2019c) of 'anticipation, precaution and pre-emption' (Lentzos and Rose 2009, 235) within the uncertainties of a risk society (Beck 1992).

Consequences of tight managerial control

This harsh competitive environment leads to pedagogically inappropriate early years strategies, such as 'ability' grouping. In a national survey of nursery and reception classes in primary schools, ability grouping from the age of 3 years was found to be common in phonics (76 per cent), maths (62 per cent), reading (57 per cent) and literacy (54 per cent), hardly surprising given the performance management focus upon these areas (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes 2017b). 'Ability grouping' works as a biopolitical strategy to classify, sort and categorise children according to their so-called cognitive abilities (Bradbury 2018). It makes spurious predictive claims about young children's current and future potential and hence limits and constrains possibilities. Campbell's (2013) research into early years ability grouping practices found that summer-born children tended to be more often placed in the lowest-ability groups while autumn-born

children, who were relatively older, were placed in the highest-ability groups. Such arbitrary use of ability grouping based upon chance events such as whether a child is summer or autumn born is problematic, especially given that the overwhelming majority of young children placed into particular ability sets or streams will stay in their assigned ability groups throughout their schooling journey (Roberts-Holmes 2019a).

The effects of early years ability grouping can be profoundly damaging and long lasting. Judging, labelling and placing young children into ability groups from the moment they first walk through the reception door at age 4, or at an even earlier age, serves as a form of ‘evil’ (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes 2017b, 1). Practitioners in Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes’ (2017b) national survey stated that system demands were changing the character of education. For example, one pointed to a loss of play time: ‘Grouping in a data driven world seems to be becoming the norm. This sadly takes away from child led play time as we are forced into writing and reading.’ Two others noted that streaming by ability was forced on them: ‘The constant fixation on data results means that grouping becomes necessary’ and ‘They are streamed by ability for phonics because of the phonics test.’

From the perspective of managerial control, early years ability grouping for early literacy, phonics and numeracy is seen as a necessary strategy to achieve the required ELG and PSC outcomes and to stay ahead of the competition. However, Jarvis (2016, 15) notes that for many early years children, especially boys, the relentless pressure to perform in early numeracy and literacy at such a young age is developmentally inappropriate and has resulted in ‘a tsunami of mental health problems’, and insists that ‘the entire system must be radically reconsidered, including a proposal for nursery education to age 7, firmly based upon independent and collaborative discovery’.

Excessive early years managerial control also has detrimental impacts upon early years practitioners’ well-being and mental health, as noted in Chapter 5. Early years workers, respondents in research into the pilot of the RBA (Roberts-Holmes et al. 2020), spoke of the stress such testing regimes induced:

Get rid of it [the RBA] and for once look after the staff and their well-being. We do far too much paperwork as it is.

Mental health and well-being of pupils and staff need this funding not additional assessments.

The education system is completely out of hand. Teachers are not happy and the stress level is high.

Invest in teachers and reduce workload!! So many good teachers are leaving due lack of support, workload, stress and pressure!

A survey of 2,000 childcare workers by the Pre-school Learning Alliance reported 'out of control' workload pressures, driven by the paperwork and administration generated by excessive accountability. Respondents in the survey commented that:

The paperwork and EYFS goals are ridiculous. I do not agree with the way the UK [sic] government perceives children as robots reaching milestones at set points in their lives.

Early years has become about making children fit a criteria [sic] – no consideration is given to the speed the children learn at the moment ... Everything is now about ticking the right box. (Pre-school Learning Alliance 2018, 7)

A quarter of the respondents in the survey were considering quitting the sector as a result of stress and mental health difficulties. This teacher, in the study of the pilot RBA, had gone beyond considering to actually quitting:

I handed in my resignation earlier in the academic year. One of my concerns was the Baseline testing and the constant pressures put upon EYFS to produce the appropriate data. When there was talk that the Baseline was returning, I knew it was time for me to leave teaching.

Given the above deeply problematic consequences of the English government's tightly controlled and managerial approach to accountability in early years education, I would argue it should be scrapped and replaced by a more participatory and democratic approach based on professional judgements. Trusting early years professional judgements is an essential step in moving early years education away from its current 'dead zone of the imagination' (Giroux 2014, 503) and towards democratic child-led possibilities, diversity and difference. The chapter now turns its attention towards such democratic alternatives and possibilities.

Towards transformative change

From managerial control to democratic assessment and accountability

A socio-cultural approach to learning respects and values the complexity of teachers and children's relationships and so offers a democratic, participatory and meaningful approach to assessment and accountability. The defining features of such an approach to assessment and accountability are premised upon the respectful and democratic image of a 'rich' child (and 'rich' teachers) with their myriad potentialities and possibilities and who are collaborative actors in their own learning. A 'rich' child is:

a child born with great potential that can be expressed in a hundred languages; an active learner, seeking the meaning of the world from birth, a co-creator of knowledge, identity, culture and values; a child that can live, learn, listen and communicate, but always in relation with others; the whole child, the child with body, mind, emotions, creativity, history and social identity; an individual, whose individuality and autonomy depend upon interdependence ... and a citizen and a subject of rights. (Moss 2014, 88)

A democratic assessment is one concerned with the participation of young children in meaningful and authentic contexts, in collaboration with other children and adults, and one which is embedded in tasks that children see as significant, meaningful and worthwhile. This approach to assessment and accountability values early years teachers' professional judgements to observe and listen to children in their everyday authentic experiences and contexts such as play. Through an engagement with a discourse of meaning-making rather than a functional and utilitarian discourse of standards, performance measures and outcomes, early years teachers can reclaim the idea of professional judgement.

Informal assessments, carried out as children engage in experiences they see as relevant and meaningful, such as play, are likely to produce the best and most comprehensive rich picture of early learning and development. Unlike positivist norm-based accountability, which seeks to govern and control through simplistic categories, numbers and linear outcomes, democratic assessment focuses upon the learning process itself. It embraces a participatory and democratic co-construction of knowledge between children and adults that is driven by children's questions and curiosity.

Examples of a democratic socio-cultural approach to assessment and accountability include learning stories (Carr and Lee 2012), originally from New Zealand, and pedagogical documentation (Moss 2014), originally from Reggio Emilia in northern Italy. Both have already appeared in this book; see in particular Chapter 8 for a discussion of learning stories and pedagogical documentation. Learning stories and pedagogical documentation are democratic because they trust early years teachers to make their own contextualised professional judgements as members of teams working collaboratively and having deep knowledge of the life circumstances of the children in their care. These democratic assessment approaches embrace diversity, uncertainty, contingency and unpredictability of processes and outcomes. Indeed, according to the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, young children ‘need to learn how to learn ... [to] support lifelong learning’ (Ministry of Education 2017, 7). Both approaches document learning that is chosen and led by the children themselves, with the educator participating as a facilitator, enabler and co-creator who is open to the unexpected and the unpredictable. They use a narrative assessment approach that respectfully documents, interprets and reflects upon a rich and complex picture of children and teachers as co-constructors of meaning and knowledge. They emphasise and focus upon the importance of making a wide range of children’s early learning visible and evident to the children themselves, families and teachers so that all can democratically participate and reflect upon the learning that children *can* do.

Learning that may be made visible with learning stories and pedagogical documentation includes, for example, learning dispositions, a range of cognitive abilities, emotional well-being and sociability (Dunphy 2008). This rich and democratic approach to assessment and making learning visible is formative, because it can be used to promote further learning with children and families. Learning stories and pedagogical documentation take listening to young children seriously, as children seek to communicate through multi-modal expressions of meaning-making, their hundred languages. Over time, early years teachers carefully and sensitively use the methods of observation, communication, documentation and reflection to write narrative assessments compiled from a variety of sources including observations, conversations, photographs, drawings, art work and notes. A particularly useful time to engage in such observations and listening to children is when they are participating in meaningful play activities (Dunphy 2008). Indeed a child’s well-being and the characteristics of effective learning, such as resilience, perseverance and self-regulation learned in the context of meaningful play, are

seen to be more reliable predictors of later academic achievement, rather than 'short-term academic results', which may not last (Whitebread and Bingham 2012).

Pedagogical documentation (such as drawings, artefacts and photographs), along with storytelling and dialogue with teachers, allows teachers to democratically respect young children's competence and ability to have a say in and recognise their own learning journeys, enabling children to construct positive 'possible learner selves' (Carr and Lee 2012). These positive alternatives and possibilities of the self are situated within the school and home and ascribe an agency to the young learner that enables her or him to take on an 'authoring role' in the construction of themselves. Here, educational outcomes become 'the appropriation of a repertoire of learner identities and possible selves' (Carr and Lee 2012, 32), which can help to remedy children's negative self-perceptions.

An excellent example of pedagogical documentation is the Crow Project (Moss 2014), undertaken in a Swedish preschool. The documentation consisted of children's (and teachers') drawings, paintings, photographs from the woods, research notes, plaster and papier-mâché models of crows, made over the course of a year. Ongoing democratic discussion with the children about their artefacts made visible the social-learning processes to the children and teachers. The Crow Project had a strong emphasis upon open-ended project work, listening to children and 'a strong belief in the unlimited potentiality of children' (Carr and Lee 2012, 139), and focused upon the learning processes of participation, dialogue and imagination. Within the Crow Project, learning in its myriad of forms and contexts was locally generated, owned and used by the children, teachers and families for their own democratically decided purposes.

However, Dunphy (2008) has noted the challenges for the implementation of such an approach. First, there is a need for professional preparation and understanding of how authentic participatory assessments can be carried out. Second, narrative formative assessments and their collaborative interpretation take considerable time – a scarce commodity for early years teachers already straining under immense workloads. Third, there are structural issues, such as adult to child ratios, that militate against a complex narrative approach to assessment and accountability.

The democratic assessment and accountability approach outlined above involves professional teams and families taking responsibility for the assessment of children's learning rather than relying on 'outside experts' with their supposedly objective indicators and performance

measures. Taking local, shared responsibility involves decision-making from a position of mutual understanding. Such a cooperatively democratic accountability is a moral and political process because it involves a shared, mutual trust and responsibility (Fielding and Moss 2011) from teachers, families, children and local early years' advisors. For example, Alison Peacock (2016, 132), the headteacher of an English primary school, advocates a shared responsibility approach to accountability based on socio-cultural pedagogy:

What we need next is to lead the way in finding a means to improve our accountability systems, informed and inspired by dispositions of trust, openness, generosity and professional courage ... As teachers we have the opportunity (and responsibility) to make a difference for those within our own learning sphere today. We can make the decision to listen, to trust, to work collaboratively and most importantly, to believe that there is another way.

The accountability approach I am advocating, of democratic participation and shared responsibility engaging with meaningful learning, is quite different from an accountability approach of managerial control, where children and teachers have little shared social responsibility for assessment beyond a functional and instrumental requirement to provide performance 'evidence'. This is because neoliberalism 'attempts to undermine all forms of solidarity capable of challenging market-driven values and social relations, promoting the virtues of an unbridled individualism almost pathological in its disdain for community, social responsibility, public values and the public good' (Giroux 2014, 2). However, as Peacock and her comments quoted above exemplify, there are many courageous teachers involved in a resistance movement to neoliberalism, managerial accountability and their damaging effects upon early years education: it is heartening to note that the neoliberal accountability reforms outlined in this chapter are challenged and contested.

There are other examples. On a local scale, Archer (2019) has identified early years professionals' and teachers' 'stories of activism' made in response to political decisions. These micro 'stories of activism' included lobbying, social media activity, petitions and meetings, which had the effect of developing a critical literacy among teachers. This critical literacy enabled teachers to 'recognise the power of dominant narratives and how these shape policy trajectories'. On a larger scale, there are a range of early years organisations engaged in an urgent advocacy for children's voices to be heard and teachers' professionalism to be respected.

For example, the Early Years Coalition is a campaigning coalition made up of different early years sector organisations working together to represent the sector's views to the Department for Education, particularly around proposed new ELGs (Pascal et al. 2019).

Additionally, primary school teacher unions such as the National Education Union have led successful campaigns against the introduction of the RBA. For example, in 2016, nearly 5,000 primary schools *refused* to implement the English government's first attempt to introduce the RBA in England, and this contributed to the government withdrawing, albeit returning later with a second attempt at introducing this new testing regime. Alison Peacock was one of the thousands of headteachers and early years teachers who refused baseline testing. She noted that:

understanding children's thinking and developing their ideas through building and sustaining dialogue as an expert form of teaching, enables high challenge within a richly supportive environment. This is the beauty and the art of early years teaching that cannot be reduced to scores on a page, or to boxes on a tracking screen ... we need to put assessment back in its box; thereby refusing temptation to place labels on children or their teachers. (Peacock 2016, 36)

Early years teachers' activism in 2016 demonstrated that an apparently dominant, totalising and monolithic accountability regime was in fact, contestable. Moreover, in 2019 over 7,000 schools refused to pilot the government's latest RBA (Nursery World 2019). One of the headteachers who decided not to participate commented that if:

the government really wanted to make a difference to education what you do is, you massively, massively invest in early years education, as in nursery schools and pre-schools and you get all of that community stuff going again such as Sure Start and libraries and health visitors.

This political struggle is important because, as Giroux (2019, 508) states, 'market-driven educational reforms, with their obsession with standardisation, high-stakes testing, and punitive policies ... exhibit contempt for teachers and distrust of parents, repress creative teaching, destroy challenging and imaginative programs of study, and treat children as mere inputs on an assembly line'. By contesting the English government's commitment to managerial control, early years activism at both the micro and macro scale can demonstrate a critical disposition and literacy towards

market-driven educational reforms. Such activism provides hope to contest neoliberal reforms *and* advocate for local democratic, participatory and authentic assessment that respects and values both children and teachers.

Further reading

Alternative Narratives in Early Childhood by Peter Moss (Routledge, 2019) is an important book that gives the reader an accessible entry into what neoliberalism means and its impacts upon early years education. It also provides an excellent introduction to the importance of telling alternative narratives, which contest the ‘dictatorship of no alternative’ that is currently prevalent in English early years education.

Guy Roberts-Holmes’s article ‘School readiness, governance and early years ability grouping’ (*Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 2019), available at doi.org/10.1177/1463949119863128, presents research evidence from a national project that suggests that performance measures, such as the early learning goals and the phonics screening check, govern and steer early years teachers towards inappropriate ability-grouping practices to obtain required outputs and results.

Finally, the website for More Than A Score, at morethanascore.org.uk, carries videos, stories and blogs that demonstrate how the early years should be a time for self-discovery, building confidence and nourishing potential. It argues that young children in England are being let down by a system that cares more about measurement than their education, imagination and possibilities.

Note

1. On 25 June 2020, the English Department for Education (DfE, 2020, n.p.) announced that ‘the statutory introduction of the Reception Baseline Assessment will be delayed for a year because of the issues brought about by the Covid 19 pandemic.’

References

- Amoore, L. and De Goede, M. (2005) ‘Governance, risk and dataveillance in the war on terror’. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 43 (2–3), 149–73.
- Archer, N. (2019) ‘Hope and Resilience in Testing Times’. Children’s Centre. Online. <https://medium.com/children-s-centre/hope-and-resilience-in-testing-times-22d37b8c6af7> (accessed 10 January 2020).

- Ball, S. (1999) 'Global Trends in Educational Reform and the Struggle for the Soul of the Teacher!' Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Sussex at Brighton, 2–5 September 1999. Online. www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00001212.htm (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Ball, S., Maguire, M. and Braun, A. (2012) 'Assessment technologies in schools: "Deliverology" and the "play of dominations"'. *Research Papers in Education*, 27 (5), 513–33.
- Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a new modernity*. London: SAGE.
- Bradbury, A. (2018) 'The impact of the Phonics Screening Check on grouping by ability: A "necessary evil" amid the policy storm.' *British Educational Research Journal*, 44 (4), 539–56.
- Bradbury, A. and Roberts-Holmes, G. (2016) 'They are children... not robots, not machines': *The introduction of reception baseline assessment*. London: National Union of Teachers. Online. www.betterwithoutbaseline.org.uk/uploads/2/0/3/8/20381265/baseline_assessment_2.2.16_10404.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Bradbury, A. and Roberts-Holmes, G. (2017a) *The Datafication of Primary and Early Years Education: Playing with numbers*. London: Routledge.
- Bradbury, A. and Roberts-Holmes, G. (2017b) *Grouping in Early Years and Key Stage 1: 'A necessary evil'?* London: National Education Union/UCL Institute of Education. Online. <https://neu.org.uk/media/3191/view> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Cagliari, P., Castagnetti, M., Giudici, C., Rinaldi, C., Vecchi, V. and P. Moss (eds) (2016) *Loris Malaguzzi and the Schools of Reggio Emilia: A selection of his writings and speeches, 1945–1993*. London: Routledge.
- Campbell, T. (2013) *In-school Ability Grouping and the Month of Birth Effect: Preliminary evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study*. London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies.
- Carr, M. and Lee, W. (2012) *Learning Stories: Constructing learner identities in early education*. London: SAGE.
- DfE (Department for Education) (2013) *Early Years Foundation Stage Profile: Exemplification materials*. Online. www.gov.uk/government/publications/eyps-profile-exemplification-materials (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2017) 'Bold Beginnings: Reception curriculum in good and outstanding primary schools'. Online. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reception-curriculum-in-good-and-outstanding-primary-schools-bold-beginnings> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2018) 'Pilot launched to boost early language skills and cut teacher workload'. Online. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pilot-launched-to-boost-early-language-skills-and-cut-teacher-workload> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2019a) *Early Years Foundation Stage Profile: 2020 handbook*. London: Department for Education. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/790580/EYFSP_Handbook_2019.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2019b) 'Reception baseline assessment framework'. London: Department for Education. Online. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reception-baseline-assessment-framework> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2019c) 'Find and compare schools in England'. Online. www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/?_ga=2.87142872.1157616084.1568973032-458760283.1563853186 (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2020) 'Reception Baseline Assessment FAQs'. Online. <https://dfemedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/06/25/reception-baseline-assessment-faqs/> (accessed 3 July 2020).
- Dunphy, E. (2008) *Supporting Early Learning and Development through Formative Assessment*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.
- Fielding, M. and Moss, P. (2011) *Radical Education and the Common School: A democratic alternative*. London: Routledge.
- Giroux, H. (2014) *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Giroux, H. (2019) 'when schools become dead zones of the imagination: A critical pedagogy manifesto'. In Saltman, K. and Means, A. (eds) *The Wiley Handbook of Global Educational Reform*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 503–15.
- Goldstein, H., Moss, G., Sammons, P., Sinnott, G. and Stobart, G. (2018) *A Baseline without Basis: The validity and utility of the proposed reception baseline assessment in England*. London: BERA. Online. www.bera.ac.uk/publication/a-baseline-without-basis (accessed 10 January 2020).

- Inglis, F. (2017) *Beyond the Exam Factory: Alternatives to high-stakes testing*. Moulton: More Than A Score. Online. www.morethanascore.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Beyond-the-exam-factory.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Jarvis, P. (2016) 'Developmentally Informed Teaching: Challenging premature targets in early learning'. *Reclaiming Schools*. Online. <https://reclaimingschools.org/2016/10/06/too-much-too-soon/> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Kay, L. (2018) 'Bold beginnings and the rhetoric of "school readiness"'. *Forum*, 60 (3), 327–36.
- Lentzos, F. and Rose, N. (2009) 'Governing insecurity: Contingency planning, protection, resilience'. *Economy and Society*, 38 (2), 230–54.
- Ministry of Education (New Zealand) (2017) *Te Whāriki: Early childhood curriculum*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education. Online. <https://education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/ELS-Te-Whariki-Early-Childhood-Curriculum-ENG-Web.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Moss, P. (2014) *Transformative Change and Real Utopias in Early Childhood Education*. London: Routledge.
- Moss, P. (2019) *Alternative Narratives in Early Childhood*. London: Routledge.
- Moss, P. and Urban, M. (2017) 'The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's International Early Learning Study: What happened next'. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 18 (2), 250–8.
- Nursery World (2019) 'Thousands of schools signed up to pilot the Reception baseline'. *Nursery World*. Online. <https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/nursery-world/news/1167650/thousands-of-schools-signed-up-to-pilot-the-reception-baseline> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) (2015) *School Inspection Handbook*. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/390141/School_inspection_handbook.pdf (accessed 26 March 2020).
- Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) (2018) *Early Years Inspection Handbook*. Online. http://thelinkingnetwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/EY_inspection_handbook-April-2018.pdf (accessed 26 March 2020).
- Pascal, C., Bertram, T. and Rouse, L. (2019) *Getting it Right in the Early Years Foundation Stage: A review of the evidence*. Watford: British Association for Early Childhood Education. Online. <https://www.early-education.org.uk/sites/default/files/Getting%20it%20right%20in%20the%20EYFS%20Literature%20Review.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Peacock, A. (2016) *Assessment for Learning Without Limits*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Pre-school Learning Alliance (2018) *Minds Matter: The impact of working in the early years sector on practitioners' mental health and wellbeing*. Online. www.eyalliance.org.uk/sites/default/files/minds_matter_report_pre-school_learning_alliance.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Roberts-Holmes, G. (2014) 'The "datafication" of early years pedagogy: "If the teaching is good, the data should be good and if there's bad teaching, there is bad data"'. *Journal of Education Policy*, 30 (3), 302–15.
- Roberts-Holmes, G. (2019a) 'School readiness, governance and early years ability grouping'. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*. Online. doi.org/10.1177/1463949119863128 (accessed 10 February 2020).
- Roberts-Holmes, G. (2019b) 'Governing and commercialising early childhood education: Profiting from The International Early Learning and Well-being Study (IELS)'. *Policy Futures in Education*, 17 (1), 27–40.
- Roberts-Holmes, J. (2019c) 'The securitization of everyday London life in the post 9/11 era'. School of Geography, Queen Mary University of London. Personal Correspondence.
- Roberts-Holmes, G. and Bradbury, A. (2016) 'Governance, accountability and the datafication of early years education in England'. *British Educational Research Journal*, 42 (4), 600–13.
- Roberts-Holmes, G., Sousa, D. and Lee, S.F. (2020) *The Introduction of Reception Baseline Assessment*. Online. neu.org.uk/media/9116/view (accessed 10 May 2020).
- Whitebread, D. and Bingham, S. (2012) *School Readiness: A critical review of perspectives and evidence*. TACTYC Occasional Paper No. 2.
- Wood, E. (2019) 'Unbalanced and unbalancing acts in the Early Years Foundation Stage: A critical discourse analysis of policy-led evidence on teaching and play from the Office for Standards in Education in England (Ofsted)'. *Education 3–13*, 47 (7), 784–95.

12

Towards empowerment for food and eating in ECEC

Francesca Vaghi

The need for transformative change

Where do children fit?

What roles do food and eating play in English early years settings? Given that only voluntary guidelines for food provision currently exist in policy frameworks for early childhood education and care (ECEC), mealtimes in early years settings can take any number of configurations, depending on the available resources a setting is able to dedicate to this. Food has a central function in providing nutrition to children, yet is implicated in myriad other projects. Several scholars, following Norbert Elias (1994), have already noted that infant feeding is central to the ‘civilising process’ we all undergo as human beings (for example, Lupton 1996; Albon and Hellman 2018); table manners and the regulation of the self when eating, for example, are considered clear markers of what makes a ‘civilised body’. In current ECEC discourse, which increasingly prioritises school readiness, feeding children also becomes part of the task of preparing children to become integrated into the primary education system.

Adherence to voluntary food guidelines is also among the criteria considered in the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) assessments of early years institutions in England; these are provided in the ‘Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage’ from the English Department for Education (DfE). This document indicates a few broad standards for food and drink: ‘Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious’ (DfE 2017, 28). It also emphasises the importance of food

hygiene and outlines the procedure that should be followed in the event of a food poisoning incident. Parallel to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the 'Eat Better Start Better' (EBSB) programme, developed by the (now defunct) charity the Children's Food Trust in 2012, is also used by some settings as a reference for food provision (Action for Children 2017). In contrast to the lack of specificity in the EYFS, EBSB provides meticulous advice on food groups, portion sizes and sample menus for all the meals that settings might offer to children (breakfast, lunch, snacks and supper). Aside from these two actors, the National Health Service (NHS 2018) also offers general guidance to early years settings, through campaigns such as 'Change4Life'.

Aside from being considered in Ofsted inspections, what children are fed in ECEC certainly matters greatly to parents as well. Menus are often part of what might make a setting more or less appealing to families, and this is particularly salient in the largely marketised context that currently exists in England, in which different private settings compete with each other to attract clients (see Chapter 6).

Yet, where do children fit into these considerations? If looking at ECEC policy frameworks, food seems to be largely implicated in reinforcing a still-prevailing vision of the child as a malleable future adult. If considered as a criterion that will contribute to receiving a positive Ofsted report, or a quality that potential (parent) customers will look at in making a decision about where to pay for ECEC, children's food and eating become a lot more about validating institutions in the eyes of official actors and families than about valuing children's daily experiences and preferences.

This chapter thus aims to propose a different view of food and eating in the ECEC context, through ethnographic accounts drawn from research conducted over a 12-month period in a state-maintained nursery and children's centre in inner London. The purpose of conducting this research on children's food policy and practice in ECEC is to show that the universalism of policy and bureaucracy sits uncomfortably alongside the particularism that feeding and eating in the early years entails. This results in unintended consequences, such as contradictory public health messaging and arbitrary policy interventions, which rarely align with practitioners', parents' and children's practices and intentions.

An overview of the policy frameworks and assumptions that operated in the setting where I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork will be provided to contextualise my case study. Following the work of Clark (2017) on listening to children (see Chapter 9), and of Nolas, Aruldoss and Varvantakis (2018) on 'idioms of childhood', the chapter will then

delve into an exploration of the alternatives that children created in their daily mealtime routines. It will be shown that children valued the convivial and social roles that food and eating played for them at school, which in turn were an important way in which self and peer identities were constructed by the children in this setting. I argue that this has significant implications for how we might (re)think what constitutes children's well-being, beyond biomedical understandings of this notion. Drawing from Ruth Levitas' utopian studies, the premise that 'alternative or oppositional social practices [can] create new, or at least slightly different, social institutions' (Levitas 2013, xiii) will be put forward.

Policy and bureaucracy in ECEC

It is July 2017, and I am interviewing Ipsa, one of the lunchtime assistants working at Ladybird Nursery School and Children's Centre.¹ As with all staff members who are involved in feeding children at the setting, I ask her what she thinks is the most important aspect of her job. She replies:

To make sure that the children have a nutritional, balanced diet, and encouraging the child to try different foods. Because certain children are just used to their traditional foods ... so it's really important that we open them up to all the different kinds of food that is available ... [E]ach child is different so you have to go with each child, you can't just have the same ... how can I put it ... routine for all of them, because it doesn't work, some children get too emotional when they don't want something on their plate. And just that they enjoy it [lunchtime] as well. Eating can be fun as well. So letting them experiment, even if it means touching and feeling as well, it's important ... yeah, we encourage them to use their knives and forks but it's important to have the sensory ... because there are children ... like, in my tradition [Indian], we use our hands to eat, so a lot of children that do come, we tend to notice that they really do use their fingers and their hands to eat, because that's what they're used to back home. So yeah, just understanding every child's background, because we have such diverse children that come in, it's important to understand what their background is as well.

I am struck by Ipsa's answer to this general question, as she encapsulated in just a few minutes many of the aims that staff members had to take into account, often simultaneously, when feeding children at Ladybird. Looking back on our conversation, months after the end of my fieldwork,

I realise Ipsa's account highlighted the way in which many ECEC and public health policy discourses play out in the daily lives of the people that I worked with. It also made it clear that there is a need to transform the way in which food and mealtimes are thought of in ECEC, not as part of a set of mechanisms that should result in measurable outcomes, but as components of a 'slow pedagogy' (see Chapter 9) that takes children's experiences and viewpoints into consideration.

Nonetheless, this approach sits in contrast to how ECEC policy in the UK has evolved in the post-Second World War era. Randall argues that, relative to other welfare states in Europe, the UK has given little priority to the establishment of reliable ECEC services; she attributes this to the government's '(partial) incorporation of a liberal philosophy ... and strong male breadwinner assumptions' (2002, 219) in the years after the war. In subsequent decades, ECEC policy has tended to be changeable and inconsistent because 'the primary groups affected as "consumers" – mothers and children – lack political organization or leverage' (Randall 2002, 224). This, she further contends, is also linked to, and contributes to, the devalued status of care work. Such devaluation, it needs to be said, is not a phenomenon confined to the UK; women's (and children's) lack of political leverage is historically and geographically pervasive (Lister 2003). Alongside these ideological underpinnings, Randall has also shown that ECEC in the UK is a particularly fragmented policy domain, with a tension between childcare and early education, but also historically between education and public health, which further blurs the aims and outcomes sought by official actors when developing legislations (Randall 2002).

This, in part, created a fruitful environment for the proliferation of a more market-orientated model of ECEC provision during the Thatcher years, when maternalism remained influential but also became ambiguous as women began to form an increasing part of the workforce (Randall 2002). This stance carried on, under subsequent Conservative as well as Labour administrations, and some of the rhetoric around ECEC policy that emerged in these decades continues to this day.

Currently, preparing infants for primary education is an increasingly prominent aim in ECEC policy and curriculum (DfE 2011, 2017), and one in which the language of early intervention and neuroscience frequently gets invoked (an important critique of this policy discourse has been developed by Gillies et al. 2017). The rhetoric around school readiness, for obvious reasons, is largely future-orientated. The DfE (2017, 5), for example, states that the EYFS framework 'promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's "school readiness" and gives children the

broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life’.

The future-orientated language of ECEC policy needs to be evaluated. As already suggested, it reinforces a view of children as ‘becomings’ rather than ‘beings’, valuable for their potential as future adults (Qvortrup 2005, 5). Several scholars in the sociology and anthropology of childhood have taken issue with this. Mayall argues that this is a result of a ‘continued dominance in the UK of positivist development psychology’ that frames children as ‘socialisation projects’ (2006, 13). By a similar token, Moran-Ellis suggests that embedded within ECEC policy is a paradoxical assumption about children being simultaneously ‘dangerous’ and ‘in danger’, which leads both to an overemphasis on safeguarding and guaranteeing children’s rights, as well as a desire to control them through policy interventions (2010, 189). These underlying assumptions have important implications with regard to children’s food policy. In particular, the notion that early intervention matters because habits developed in the initial stages of life are irreplaceable and/or irreversible (Albon 2015) also plays a big role in this discourse.

These conceptualisations of the child and ECEC aims are linked to several other policy domains in England. Childhood obesity and related non-communicable diseases, such as Type 2 diabetes, have been a central public health concern across nations in recent decades, and England is no exception (NHS 2016; Goisis et al. 2016; Perkins and DeSousa 2018). The Health and Social Care Information Centre has conducted the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) since 2005, which entails the collection of body mass index (BMI) data for children in reception class (4 to 5 years old) and Year 6 (10 to 11 years old) in state-maintained schools in England. Results from the most recent NCMP report show that in the reception class 9.5 per cent of 610,435 children were either overweight or obese (Stats Team, NHS Digital 2018, 2). Similar trends have been recorded elsewhere; for instance, in 2014 the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS) published a briefing using data from the Millennium Cohort Study, which revealed that one in five children born in the UK at the beginning of the new century were obese by the age of 11 (CLS 2014).

The notion that health trends reflect structural inequalities is prevalent in these reports; the level of obesity at reception class age was twice as high in the most socio-economically deprived areas compared with the least deprived (Stats Team, NHS Digital 2018, 13). Although several scholars have called the ‘crisis’ narrative of childhood obesity into question (see, for example, Moffat 2010; Maher et al. 2010; Warin et al. 2008),

and measures such as the BMI are also increasingly deemed problematic by social scientists and health professionals alike (Kelly and Daniels 2017), this trend is nonetheless a cause for concern, particularly its role in widening health inequalities (Schrecker 2017; Rougeaux et al. 2017).

The discourse about food provision in the early years context has responded to such evidence. Indeed, in a 2018 report on the government's childhood obesity strategy published by the Health and Social Care Commons Select Committee, the early years sector is identified as a crucial domain for intervention (House of Commons Health Committee 2018). Nonetheless, as stated earlier, only voluntary food guidelines are available for early years settings, and service providers face a number of challenges in their attempts to meet these, particularly within the state-maintained sector in which I conducted my research. Although Ofsted follows mandatory regulations for providers of early childhood services within the EYFS, there are no associated statutory nutritional standards; this has meant that actors such as the Children's Food Trust and the NHS were key promoters of voluntary dietary guidelines at the time during which I carried out my fieldwork.

Daily practices

To return to my conversation with Ipsa, we can see how these official discourses have had an impact on daily practices within ECEC settings. Ipsa's concern with promoting healthy eating and a varied diet was salient, as well as managing children's 'emotions' during lunchtime, which other staff said to me was something important that children should learn for their transition between nursery and primary school. Ipsa also expressed the difficulties professionals can face when applying public policies in a diverse context, such as the one in which she worked. As stated earlier, the EYFS talks about food provision in vague terms, overlooking that healthy food and eating might mean very different things to different people. The cultural significance attached to food is also often missing from nutrition-driven perspectives, as other scholars have emphasised (see, for example, Karrebæk 2013; Caldwell 2014). However, the precise guidelines that are put forward in the EBSB programme – which emphasises that children's diets should be varied, consist of fresh ingredients, and be cooked on the premises if possible – do not acknowledge the material constraints that settings might face in providing meals to children. At Ladybird, staff often mentioned that the cost of offering the food suggested in EBSB was beyond the school's budget. The setting did not have its own kitchen, so the food served was made by an external

provider. The competencies staff might need to develop in order to prepare such meals are also not addressed in the guidelines.

Indeed, the task of feeding children in an institutional setting was further complicated by the various (and at times competing) ethics of care (Tronto 2010) of different staff members. Ruby, who fed children at breakfast and ‘tea club’ (supper), was much more determined to get children ready for ‘big’, or primary, school than some of her colleagues. During our interview she explained why she believed mealtimes to be so important in preparing them for this change:

The transition from nursery to reception is very different, because the children in the reception age group they eat in a big hall ... and it’s very, it’s big, there’s rows ... the comfy environment that you have in nursery, it’s not like that in the schools. So children could get lost in that kind of setting ... they need to learn how to be independent, to do things for themselves.

Not all staff members were equally committed to fulfilling these aims, however. In Ipsa’s account above, wanting to teach children about healthy eating and manners was emphasised; she also expressed a desire to make mealtimes ‘fun’, and a concern for being mindful of each child’s ‘routine’. Others were critical of the contradiction posed by the structured nature of mealtimes, in which children were engaged in a much more formal mode of learning (about the nutrients in food or about table manners, for example). This stood in contrast to the rest of the day’s activities at Ladybird, which were far more child-led. Joyce, the lead early years practitioner at the children’s centre, said to me that:

the children are here all day, they are doing an activity on the table and being encouraged to play with this, feel this, then they [the adults] clear the table and put food on it and they’re told, ‘Don’t play’. But 10 minutes ago they were playing on that table ... so that to me, that’s part of it, they have to play with their food ... [A]ll we are doing is telling them to play except for this half an hour when they sit down with their food, that’s insane. How are these kids supposed to know they’re not playing now?

Joyce’s comment, as opposed to some of the views that other staff members shared with me, highlighted the mismatch that can often exist between how official ECEC guidelines specify what should happen within a setting, and children’s daily lived experiences. While teaching children

about healthy eating and preparing them for primary school can perpetuate a future-orientated vision of childhood, Joyce's position seems to get closer to an approach that takes listening to children's viewpoints into consideration.

Towards transformative change

The children's perspectives

The work of Clark and Moss on the Mosaic approach and listening to children (Clark 2017) was fundamental to my exploration of the alternative practices that children created during mealtimes at Ladybird (see also Chapter 9). As well as valuing the multi-method and participatory framework developed by Clark and Moss through the Mosaic approach, I consider their commitment to understanding children's lived experiences within institutions particularly important. As they argue, it is crucial to explore 'children's views and experiences of *everyday life* in the institutions they attend; as members of communities rather than consumers of education or users of products' (Clark 2017, 27, original emphasis). Parallel to this, I also draw from the work of Nolas, Varvantakis and Aruldoss (2018), in which they extend the concept of listening to children by calling for researchers to further engage with children's everyday, embodied and creative forms of communication, what they call 'idioms of childhood'; a process that 'helps us to make sense of children's worlds, and to identify their meanings and agency' (Nolas et al. 2018, 4).

In my own work, I consider children's drawings, role-play, humour, conversations, and non-verbal interactions as idioms of childhood. I was particularly interested in the ways in which children contested adult norms and re-appropriated mealtimes at Ladybird, emphasising the social, caring and convivial dimension of sharing food, which I understood to be most valuable to them. Particularly during breakfast and 'tea club', children monitored each other's behaviour and preferences more openly, often assuming an adult-like role when doing so, and expressing what they thought was right or wrong about each other's food practices, showing an awareness of staff members' expectations about their eating habits. Children also claimed some authority during mealtimes through role reversal. For instance, they reminded each other to say 'please' and 'thank you' when asking for food, a task that was pervasive among the staff, alongside the frequent reminders to 'be kind to each other' and the repetition of 'sharing is caring'. In line with my aim to adopt a 'least adult

role' (Warming 2005) in my research, I also complied when children asked me to lend them my badge, which other adults did not do. When this happened, they would 'become' me, and I them, which then meant they would boss me around a little, either telling me to wash my hands or to also eat what was being served to them.

Acts of resistance performed by children, as I observed them, were a way to subvert adults' control, yet also a way to establish unity and express group belonging. Showing that they knew what others liked was one of the ways in which this manifested itself. One morning, when Ruby asked Eva (4 years old) what she would like for breakfast, Crystal (also 4 years old) answered instead of her, saying enthusiastically, 'She's a Rice Krispies girl!' – as indeed Eva was, since this was always her choice of breakfast food during the time I spent at Ladybird. Similar moments were also common during the more logistically complex and formal lunch hours. Once, while one of the lunchtime assistants was passing food to the group she and I were sitting with, Amir very decisively told her what she should give his friend Cem (both 4 years old): 'He likes chicken, and baked potato, and salad!'

Unity was also emphasised in the new mealtime norms that children established, in a manner similar to that in which adults communicated the standards they wanted children to abide by. For instance, rules were created about how certain foods should be eaten: a recurrent case was that of the berry compote and Greek yogurt dessert option at lunch, which children unfailingly instructed each other to mix, 'to make it pink'. On an occasion during which I too ate this, but kept the compote and yogurt separate, Crystal was puzzled about my choice and asked me if she could mix my pudding for me, to which I agreed. During 'tea club', if spaghetti was being served, children would very often dangle the pasta above their faces from their forks and into their mouths, a technique that was predictably not appreciated by the staff members, yet one through which the children bonded by exhibiting each other's ability to eat spaghetti in this way.

Humorous talk was one of the most effective ways in which children challenged adults' attempts to regulate their mealtimes, as in this instance that I observed in April 2017:

For a couple of weeks now, the children's silverware has been missing from the children's centre, so we have had to use plastic cutlery at tea club instead. This has not gone unnoticed by the children, and Crystal brings it up today as she struggles to stab a piece of broccoli with her plastic fork. A humorous conversation between Ruby and

the children, about what could have possibly happened to the metal cutlery, ensues: 'Is it in the microwave?' 'Is it in the fridge?' 'Maybe it's in the office!' Fred says, 'I think Fran hid it!' I reply jokingly: 'No, I wouldn't do that!' and he continues, 'I think you hid it in the oven!' 'In the oven?!' I say. 'Yes,' he says, 'or I think you pooped on them!' I tell him that, 'I really wouldn't do that!' and he says, 'Or maybe you just peed on them! Or farted on them!' I laugh and keep saying that I wouldn't do any of those things. I notice that Ruby has meanwhile stopped partaking in the conversation, and she soon stops us from continuing with these jokes: 'This is not something we talk about at the table', she says.

Most provocations by children were certainly engaged with and recognised by the staff. Ruby's change of tone during the conversation about the missing cutlery signalled that talk of 'poo' and 'pee' were perceived as 'threats', or attempts by children to overturn adults' pedagogical roles at the table. Moments of tension such as these provided me with insights into the various resistances adults faced in trying to shape children's daily practices. This not only shifted the discourse about food and eating away from the control of adults, but it also challenged the much larger 'civilising' project in which food and mealtimes are implicated. Yet, observing these tensions also shed light on children's abilities to resolve any number of situations on their own.

One instance stands out from a day on which I was helping a lunchtime assistant by sitting with Simon, a 4-year-old boy with special needs. In the months that I spent getting to know him, Simon never seemed to like having lunch at Ladybird, and days on which the staff succeeded in persuading him to sit at the table with the other children were a cause for celebration. This alone was perceived as a victory, since Simon was unwilling and, to a considerable extent, also physically unable to eat the food provided at the nursery. His mother told us that, due to complications after being born prematurely, he had difficulties consuming solid meals, so his diet at home still consisted primarily of pureed foods. One of the aims of him attending lunch at Ladybird once a week, on Tuesdays, was to introduce him to different kinds of foods and it was hoped that eating with children his age would provide encouragement. On this particular day, Simon was more distressed than usual when the time to have lunch came; as he often did, he cried intensely and refused to sit on his chair, so I was holding him on my lap. At one point during the episode, he refused to continue sitting on my legs and lay down on the floor; as this was unfolding and the lunchtime assistant and I looked to

each other concernedly, Johnny (3 years old), who was sitting to the left of Simon and me, leaned towards him and affectionately patted Simon on the head. After this brief interaction, Simon stopped crying and sat on his own chair, next to Johnny, and lunch continued without further difficulties.

Similar situations unfolded at ‘tea club’, where children were trusted to be more independent and staff members often took their preferences a lot more into account. Here, children had greater freedom to make mealtimes a caring and social time for themselves, and were often also able to resolve conflicts and issues unaided by adults. In December 2016, I observed the following interaction:

Jasmine fills her cup with milk and exclaims, ‘I can pour myself!’, followed by Lucy who also says happily, ‘I poured it myself!’, holding her cup of milk carefully with both hands. Robbie also grabs the milk jug and pours himself a drink, but doesn’t stop in time: the milk overflows in his cup, causing a spill. He looks embarrassed by this and glances worriedly at Joyce, who is running tea club today, to check if she noticed what happened. In the meantime, Crystal jumps out of her seat and brings him some paper towels to help him clean up.

Instances like these shed light on the crucial role that group unity and peer culture dynamics played in children’s daily life, and the importance of creating spaces in which self and peer identities can flourish on children’s own terms. This has important implications for how we think of children’s well-being, beyond a biomedical framework.

Alternative institutional spaces and practices

In this chapter, I have argued that historical and current ECEC policy frameworks in England have tended to perpetuate a future-orientated vision of the child. Under this model, paying attention to what children find valuable and meaningful in the present can be neglected in favour of achieving measurable outcomes, preparing them for future education and, in the case of food and eating, teaching them about healthy habits. I have shown how these discourses have had an impact on adults’ practices within the early years setting in which I conducted ethnographic fieldwork. Parallel to this, I have explored how children were able to contest adult attempts to regulate mealtimes through role-play, humorous conversations and non-verbal interactions and, in doing so, to promote

group unity and conviviality during mealtimes. I have asked what food is for in the early years, taking adults' and children's perspectives into account.

To conclude, the question that remains is what this small-scale, ethnographic study can contribute to this book's vision of a transformed ECEC landscape in England. To move towards this transformative change, the competencies and knowledge of practitioners should be given proper consideration. Many of the Ladybird staff were aware of the contradictions that some of the policies and guidelines they were required to follow posed to their practices, with consequences on children's enjoyment of mealtimes. Listening to children should thus take precedence in this transition.

Drawing from Levitas's work on utopian studies (2013), I would like to suggest that we can view listening to children as an oppositional, or transformative, practice. I have shown that paying attention to idioms of childhood reveals what children deem most meaningful about food and mealtimes, with significant implications for how we might think about children's well-being within institutions. Creating a space in which children are trusted to be more independent and autonomous can empower them to resolve situations as they arise without the need for adults' intervention. As Moss and Petrie (2002, 113) have argued, creating 'children's spaces' means recognising the potential of 'the collectivity of children who will exert their own agency, and make use of the opportunities and resources that the space provides' so that "'children's spaces' [are] for children's own purposes'.

In developing these considerations, it is therefore important to also ask what the purpose of teaching children about healthy eating might be in a context such as the one in which I conducted my research. First, the question of diversity should be considered, as the notion of 'healthy eating' had various meanings to the children and families I met, who were from a number of different backgrounds, but also to the staff members who worked at Ladybird. Second, the context of austerity in which the (shrinking) public early years sector currently operates created a number of contradictions. At Ladybird, for instance, the local authority stopped providing funding to give fruit as snacks at the children's centre, while simultaneously increasing public health messaging about diet and nutrition. Similarly, nutrition-driven approaches that emphasise individual choice as a key determinant of health outcomes are also problematic when those to whom these messages are promoted are socio-economically disadvantaged (Ulijaszek and McLennan 2016), as many of the families at Ladybird were.

With this in mind, it becomes even more apparent that what children deem meaningful about food and eating in an institutional setting should be prioritised.

Further reading

An article by Sophie Alcock, 'Playing with rules around routines: Children making mealtimes meaningful and enjoyable' (*Early Years*, 2007), available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575140701594426>, is a case study from an early childhood centre in New Zealand. It offers interesting insights about children's participation in mealtime group activities, showing similar interactions to those described in this chapter. The author contends that playful behaviour is a way in which children express their own objectives during mealtimes, that is, to create a sense of 'togetherness' in the peer group, which is separate from the adult objective of giving nourishment and establishing a routine.

A brief paper by Francesca Vaghi, 'Drawing, sounds and play: Understanding children's viewpoints and participation', available free at <https://entanglementsjournal.org/drawing-sounds-and-play-understanding-childrens-viewpoints-and-participation/>, delves deeper into the child-centred methodologies used in her research. It outlines how innovative methodological and theoretical approaches can be used to understand children's viewpoints, and how these might offer a way into recognising their voices in matters that have an impact on their day-to-day lives.

Notes

1. The names of participants and of the setting have been changed to ensure anonymity.
2. These guidelines were originally drafted and promoted by the charity the Children's Food Trust, which closed in 2017 due to lack of funding. This original source is no longer available online, but the document referenced in this article is the same.

References

- Action for Children (2017) *Eat Better, Start Better: Voluntary food and drink guidelines for early years settings in England, a practical guide*. Watford: Action for Children. Online. www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Eat-Better-Start-Better1.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).²
- Albon, D. (2015) 'Nutritionally "empty" but full of meanings: The socio-cultural significance of birthday cakes in four early childhood settings'. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 13 (1), 79–92.

- Albon, D. and Hellman, A. (2018) 'Of routine consideration: "Civilising" children's bodies via food events in Swedish and English early childhood settings'. *Ethnography and Education*, January, 1–17.
- Alcock, S. (2007) 'Playing with rules around routines: Children making mealtimes meaningful and enjoyable'. *Early Years*, 27 (3), 281–93.
- Caldwell, M.L. (2014) 'Epilogue: Anthropological reflections on critical nutrition'. *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*, 14 (3), 67–9.
- Clark, A. (2017) *Listening to Young Children, Expanded Third Edition: A guide to understanding and using the Mosaic approach*. London: National Children's Bureau.
- CLS (Centre for Longitudinal Studies) (2014) 'Child overweight and obesity: Initial findings from the Millennium Cohort Age 11 Survey'. London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies. Online. <https://cls.ucl.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/MCS-Age-11-initial-findings-Child-overweight-and-obesity-briefing.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2011) *Supporting Families in the Foundation Years*. London: Department for Education. Online. www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/184868/DFE-01001-2011_supporting_families_in_the_foundation_years.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2017) *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage: Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five*. London: Department for Education. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/596629/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Elias, N. (1994) *The Civilizing Process*. Rev. ed. Trans. Jephcott, E. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gillies, V., Edwards, R. and Horsley, N. (2017) *Challenging the Politics of Early Intervention: Who's 'saving' children and why*. Bristol: Polity Press.
- Goisis, A., Sacker, A. and Kelly, Y. (2016) 'Why are poorer children at higher risk of obesity and overweight? A UK cohort study'. *The European Journal of Public Health*, 26 (1), 7–13.
- House of Commons Health Committee (2018) 'Childhood obesity: Time for action'. London: House of Commons. Online. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmhealth/882/88208.htm#_idTextAnchor042 (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Karrebæk, M.S. (2013) 'Rye bread and halal: Enregistration of food practices in the primary classroom'. *Language & Communication*, 34 (September), 17–34.
- Kelly, A.S. and Daniels, S.R. (2017) 'Rethinking the use of body mass index z-score in children and adolescents with severe obesity: Time to kick it to the curb?' *The Journal of Pediatrics*, 188 (September), 7–8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2017.05.003>
- Levitas, R. (2013) *Utopia as Method: The imaginary reconstitution of society*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lister, R. (2003) *Citizenship: Feminist perspectives*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lupton, D. (1996) *Food, the Body and the Self*. London: SAGE.
- Maher, J., Fraser, S. and Lindsay, J. (2010) 'Between provisioning and consuming? Children, mothers and "childhood obesity"'. *Health Sociology Review*, 19 (3), 304–16.
- Mayall, B. (2006) 'Values and assumptions underpinning policy for children and young people in England'. *Children's Geographies*, 4 (1), 9–17.
- Moffat, T. (2010) 'The "childhood obesity epidemic": Health crisis or social construction?' *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 24 (1), 1–21.
- Moran-Ellis, J. (2010) 'Reflections on the sociology of childhood in the UK'. *Current Sociology*, 58 (2), 186–205.
- Moss, P. and Petrie, P. (2002) *From Children's Services to Children's Spaces*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- NHS (National Health Service) (2016) 'National Child Measurement Programme shows increased obesity prevalence in primary schools'. NHS Digital (blog), 3 November 2016. Online. <https://digital.nhs.uk/article/923/National-Child-Measurement-Programme-shows-increased-obesity-prevalence-in-primary-schools> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- NHS (National Health Service) (2018) 'Change4Life'. Online. www.nhs.uk/change4life (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Nolas, S.-M., Aruldoss, V. and Varvantakis, C. (2018). 'Learning to listen: Exploring the idioms of childhood'. *Sociological Research Online*, 1–20. Online. http://research.gold.ac.uk/24589/1/nolas%20et%20al_exploring%20idioms%20of%20childhood_prepub%20version_SRO.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).

- Perkins, C. and DeSousa, E. (2018) 'Trends in childhood height and weight, and socioeconomic inequalities'. *The Lancet Public Health*, 3 (4), e160–1.
- Qvortrup, J. (ed.) (2005) *Studies in Modern Childhood: Society, agency, culture*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Randall, V. (2002) 'Child care in Britain; or, How do you restructure nothing?' In Michel, S. and Mahon, R. (eds) *Child Care Policy at the Crossroads: Gender and welfare state restructuring*. New York: Routledge, 219–38.
- Rougeaux, E., Hope, S., Law, C. and Pearce, A. (2017) 'Have health inequalities changed during childhood in the New Labour generation? Findings from the UK Millennium Cohort Study'. *BMJ Open*, 7 (1), e012868.
- Schrecker, T. (2017) 'Was Mackenbach right? Towards a practical political science of redistribution and health inequalities'. *Health & Place*, 46 (July), 293–99.
- Stats Team, NHS Digital (2018) *National Child Measurement Programme, England –2017/18 School Year*. London: The Health and Social Innovation Centre. Online. <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/national-child-measurement-programme/2017-18-school-year> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Tronto, J.C. (2010) 'Creating caring institutions: Politics, plurality, and purpose'. *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 4 (2), 158–71.
- Ulijaszek, S.J. and McLennan, A.K. (2016) 'Framing obesity in UK policy from the Blair years, 1997–2015: The persistence of individualistic approaches despite overwhelming evidence of societal and economic factors, and the need for collective responsibility'. *Obesity Reviews*, 17 (5), 397–411.
- Vaghi, F. (2018) 'Drawing, sounds and play: understanding children's viewpoints and participation', *entanglements*, 1 (1), 21–3.
- Warin, M., Turner, K., Moore, V. and Davies, M. (2008) 'Bodies, mothers and identities: Rethinking obesity and the BMI'. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 30 (1), 97–111.
- Warming, H. (2005) 'Participant observation: A way to learn about children's perspectives'. In Clark, A., Kjørholt, A.T. and Moss, P. (eds) *Beyond Listening: Children's perspectives on early childhood services*. Bristol: Policy Press, 51–70.

Towards an ECEC system in synergy with parenting leave

Margaret O'Brien and Peter Moss

The need for transformative change

First day back at work today after two weeks' paternity leave. Bewildering that in the 21st century dads are granted only a fortnight after the birth to hang out with their new kids. It's not only about spending time with your children but it's supporting your partner. (Twitter, 5 June 2019, UK journalist)

In this chapter we consider the relationship between two important policy fields for young children and their families: early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, and leave for parents; in doing so, we develop the discussion in Chapter 6 about the need for 'a wider set of family-work policies', including leave, to complement and mesh with ECEC services. We shall argue that the relationship in the UK lacks synergy, the policies not being integrated, and that leave policy is more generally (like ECEC policy) flawed and dysfunctional. But we want to frame this discussion and critique within a wider introduction to leave policy itself – some definitions, its rationale and impact, and the spread internationally of leave policies in recent years that has made this field one of the most important today within national welfare states and social policy. We hope in this way to supply readers coming from an ECEC background, and who may know less about leave policy, with necessary information about this important field for children and parents.

Some definitions

Leave policies provide job protection for a period so that a worker can take time away from employment to be available to care for a dependant – usually, though not always, a young child – and, after this period of time, return to employment with the same employer. Policies can also include an element of wage replacement during this period (Ray et al. 2010). These policies can take several forms. Maternity leave, first established in Germany in 1883, is usually available to mothers only, to be taken just before, during and immediately after childbirth; it is a health and welfare measure intended to protect the health of the mother and newborn child. Paternity leave is available to fathers only, to be taken soon after the birth of a child, and intended to enable the father to spend time with and care for his partner, new child and older children. By contrast, parental leave, introduced in Sweden in 1974, is available equally to mothers and fathers and is taken after the end of maternity leave; it can, however, assume various forms, for example being a ‘family entitlement’ that parents choose how to divide between themselves or an ‘individual entitlement’ that allots a period of leave to each parent, sometimes transferable to the other parent and sometimes on a ‘use it or lose it’ basis. It is usually understood to be a care measure, intended to give both parents an equal opportunity to spend time caring for a young child. A final form of leave enables parents to take time off work to care for a child who is ill or for some other medical reason.

In this chapter the summary term ‘parenting leave’ or ‘leave’ is adopted to encompass the full range of statutory leave policies, while the terms ‘maternity leave’, ‘paternity leave’ or ‘parental leave’ are used when these specific policy measures are being discussed.

Rationale for leave policies and their impact

As we shall discuss below, statutory leave policies are now widespread, and not only in rich countries. Why has parenting leave moved so widely onto the policy agenda? The introduction of maternity leave, the oldest form of parenting leave, was driven by health and welfare concerns, and more recent forms of leave, paternity and parental leave, have also been seen as supporting the health and well-being of children and their parents. But they have also been advocated for other reasons, including in some cases the stimulation of flagging fertility rates and, most importantly, the promotion of gender equality: maintaining the presence of mothers in the labour market (Dearing 2016), reducing gender pay gaps

(Kamerman and Moss 2009; Andersen 2018), and increasing the opportunities for fathers to spend more time caring for their young children (O'Brien 2009; di Torella 2014). More generally, leave policies are seen as an important means of improving work–life balance for women and men with children, so contributing to better family lives.

Although the evidence base has focused mainly on the impact of maternity leave, there is a growing body of scholarship on economic, health and social advantages associated with parenting leave policies more generally (for example, Budig et al. 2016; Nandi et al. 2018). Early epidemiological research has shown improved child and maternal health, with child health benefits for instance in immunisation uptake, breast-feeding and employment retention (for example, Tanaka 2005; Han et al. 2009). Positive health gains for children are maximised when the maternity leave is paid, provided in a job-secure context and with a duration of at least 10 weeks.

The Nordic countries have provided fertile ground for 'before and after' studies of impact at a country level (Duvander and Johansson 2012; Ekberg et al. 2013) and, more recently, Germany, with its parental leave reform of 2007, created a new incentive for men to take parental leave by introducing two well-remunerated 'daddy months' (Schober 2014). The natural experiment paradigm, which has framed many of these studies, has produced evidence for greater engagement of leave-taking fathers in the care of children after policy reforms, in comparison with fathers who do not take leave. In addition, there are emerging indications that duration matters, with leave-taking of one month by fathers, particularly if taken alone, being a tipping point for priming subsequent greater engagement in the care of children (Buenning 2015; O'Brien and Wall 2017). Research in Denmark has found that a redistribution of care in the early years, from women to men, facilitated by parental leave policy reforms has been associated with a reduction of the within-household gender pay gap (Andersen 2018).

Being on leave: Personal experiences

There are a growing number of qualitative studies describing the transition to parenthood for employed men and women, including their experiences of parenting leave and returning to work (for example, Brannen and Moss 1991; Doucet 2009; Miller 2010). Parental experiences are diverse, and contingent on intersecting personal, workplace and institutional influences as well as the unique contribution of children to family

dynamics. Understanding the experiences of fathers taking leave has been an area of interest particularly as, despite social change in gender norms, mothers still tend to be positioned as more salient in children's early years.

In her longitudinal qualitative study of a group of 17 employed men and their partners, when they anticipate and then experience parenthood for the first time, Miller (2010, 93) portrays their daily individual lives and everyday practices of caring: 'one of the biggest things I've noticed is, it's just this little baby, but ... how much time it will take up, that was ... yeh, that's the most phenomenal thing, we just weren't prepared for that', as one father said. The fathers described highly emotional encounters with their infant children, using the language of caring and conveying tender masculinities. Their accounts illuminate the tensions fathers face when they return to work after paternity leave and find it difficult to keep as connected to daily baby routines – 'returning to a new normal' (Miller 2010, 11).

Fathers taking more than one month's leave, particularly if taken alone, describe both the joys and emotional toll of intensive caregiving (O'Brien and Twamley 2017, 176):

Interviewer: So having taken more responsibility – in what way does it affect your relationship with [son]?

Simon: Well just because I know, like, I can just read him really well. Like I knew he was doing a poo earlier on, I saw half an hour ago he was getting quite tired and it's just you know what he's up to and what he's thinking, or how he's feeling. And also the way he responds to me when, I like, come home from work, he's generally quite happy. So we have this like – I don't know, quite a strong bond, which I don't think would have happened in quite the same way if I hadn't have been off with him. Just you know, trying to keep him from being grumpy before bed time, things like that. (Simon, lawyer, 35 years old, three months' leave)

Taking leave can be critical to help fathers establish a close relationship with their child, especially because of the female embodiment of pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding. Fathers taking leave describe experiences of intensive and involved caregiving, learning to take responsibility alone; being preoccupied and absorbed with their child; shaping daily life around their child's routines; enjoying increased physical contact with their child; sympathising with mothers' stress; learning to balance care and housework; experiencing the time as fulfilling, joyful, 'a luxury',

‘an oasis’ (O’Brien and Wall 2017). But as studies of mothers’ experiences of care have repeatedly found, there is also ambivalence with reports of anxiety, saturation, fatigue, loneliness and boredom mixed with these affirming experiences.

Observations of fathers on leave demonstrate the routine and repetitive nature of life with a new baby, whatever the gender of the carer (O’Brien and Twamley 2017). The most time and effort is spent on feeding and encouraging babies to sleep, with fathers entering into long and detailed conversations about the various whims and particularities of their babies, along with how they attempt to arrange some order on the day, while also following their child’s lead.

The emotionally and physically demanding hard work of caring for young children is exacerbated when social norms and public policies assume babyhood and early childhood care is best carried out in the private home by one primary caregiver only with ‘support’, as this mother makes clear:

I do like being a professional person and myself ... I really felt by the end of my maternity leave that I was treading water and the whole world was getting on with their lives and mine was on hold ... Even if I was achieving something with him, I didn’t feel it was enough for me. That might sound selfish, I don’t know? I felt so trapped by the end of my maternity leave, I felt so isolated. (Miller 2010, 164)

Interview accounts confirm epidemiological data that this period of early parenthood can be a time of high stress and worry, and for a minority trigger mental health concerns and not only for women (Ramchandani and Psychogiou 2009). New generations of women and men prefer family lives where they can integrate employment with caring for children. Parenting leave can help achieve this goal.

International leave policies

Today, the spread of leave policies has become global. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO 2014), in its 2013 survey of legal provision in 185 countries, all provided some form of statutory leave for pregnant women, and all but two (Papua New Guinea and the United States) included some payment. But widespread leave provision is no longer confined to women. The ILO’s survey found that paternity leave was available in 79 out of 167 countries for which information was available, with payment of some sort in most cases. Parental leave in some

form was present in 66 out of 169 countries supplying information, though only paid in 36 countries.

Coverage and standards of leave do, however, vary. According to the ILO (2014, xiii), ‘only 34 per cent (57 countries) fully meet the requirements of [ILO] Convention No. 183 [2000] on three key aspects [of maternity leave]: they provide for at least 14 weeks of leave at a rate of at least two-thirds of previous earnings, paid by social insurance or public funds or in a manner determined by national law and practice where the employer is not solely responsible for payment’. Standards for leave are particularly low in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, with a mixed picture in Asia and the Middle East. Leave provision for men is found most often in higher-income countries.

Regionally, the highest levels of leave provision are to be found in Europe. But Europe’s leadership on leave has not only been at national level; it is the only part of the world where leave provision is mandated through regional-level legislation, the European Union (EU) acting as a supra-national legal entity to require its member states to meet minimum standards for maternity leave (since 1992), parental leave (since 1996) and, most recently, paternity leave (2019). Following earlier directives on the first two kinds of leave, in 2019, the EU adopted a Directive on Work–Life Balance for Parents and Carers (<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/PE-20-2019-INIT/en/pdf>), introducing more work–life balance measures throughout the EU. For the first time, at least 10 working days of paternity leave paid at the level of sick pay is mandated across all member states; while the existing right of each parent to four months of parental leave is amended to require that at least two months is non-transferable from one parent to another, an additional incentive to encourage greater take-up of this leave by fathers. The directive also introduces a new European entitlement: 5 days of carers’ leave for workers providing personal care or support to a relative or person living in the same household.

The EU has recognised that not only do there need to be a variety of types of leave for parents, but that leave needs to be part of a package of policies. As far back as 1992, a Council Recommendation on Child Care (92/241/EEC) was adopted by member states of the European Economic Community (EEC; the precursor of the EU), including the UK, in the interests of ‘the reconciliation of occupational, family and upbringing responsibilities arising from the care of children’ and the furthering of gender equality. This document, a statement of political commitment rather than legal requirement, ‘recommended that member states should take initiatives’ in four related areas: (1) the environment, structure and

organisation of work, (2) promoting increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children, (3) childcare services and (4) leave.

Such legal and political initiatives do not, however, mean that leave policies are at a uniformly high level across Europe. Standards mandated by the EU are a minimum, and there are wide variations between countries in terms of length of leave, levels of payment, eligibility for leave and the degree and types of flexibility available to parents taking leave. Furthermore, synergy between leave policies and other measures for reconciling work and family life is lacking in most countries, producing a gap between the end of well-paid leave and the start of an entitlement to ECEC (Koslowski et al. 2019). Later in this chapter we will describe the leave entitlements in a country with some of the most advanced policies in Europe (though not a member of the EU); now, however, we turn to a country with a very different approach and far less generous entitlements.

From policy neglect ...

The recent history of leave policies for parents of young children in the UK follows a similar trajectory to those for ECEC policies in England¹ – a period of neglect followed by a burst of activism characterised by missed opportunities to rectify flaws and dysfunctionalities. The UK was late by European standards in introducing any form of statutory leave provision, maternity leave only being adopted and implemented in 1976–7. Maternity leave not only came late in the day, but was introduced in an unusual form, very different to other European countries. Whereas maternity leave in the six original member states of the EEC ran from 12 to 14 weeks (except for Italy, where it was 20 weeks), the UK's new legislation went for 40 weeks, with up to 29 weeks available after birth²; and while the full period of leave in the former countries was paid at a high level of earnings replacement, in the UK only 6 weeks were highly paid (at 90 per cent of earnings), the remainder being paid at a low flat rate (12 weeks) or unpaid (22 weeks).

For more than 20 years after the introduction of maternity leave, little further happened to UK leave policy. This was a period dominated by a Conservative government (1979–97) opposed on principle to regulation of the labour market, including leave policy. Indeed, the UK government used its veto to block a 1983 proposal from the European Commission (EC) for a directive setting minimum standards for parental leave, despite a Parliamentary Committee reporting in 1985 that 'parental leave can be seen as a bold social innovation bringing important benefits for childcare

and equal opportunities at work ... [and] is a proper subject for legislation' (House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities 1985, para.83).

Similarly, in 1994 the Conservative government declined to support a recommendation, from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Parenting, for statutory paternity and parental leave, one of seven recommendations for the International Year of the Family (APPG 1994). The only change in UK policy during this period was an easing of the restrictive eligibility conditions for maternity leave, in 1994. This was not, however, voluntarily entered into, but resulted from another European directive, which the government on this occasion could not veto as it was a 'health and welfare' measure requiring only a majority vote of member states.

... to policy mainstream

We have already seen in earlier chapters how the election in 1997 of a Labour government brought about change in ECEC policy, moving it from decades of neglect into the policy mainstream. The same is true of leave policies for parents of young children, as the new administration made a priority of supporting employed parents and promoting gender equality. As well as measures to improve the supply of and access to 'childcare', steps were taken to develop leave policy. The government adopted, in 1999, an EU directive on parental leave that other member states had agreed in 1996 (at that time, the UK had an opt-out from such European social policies). It subsequently introduced paid paternity leave in 2003, and enhanced and amended maternity leave in 2003, 2007 and 2010.

Yet despite this activity, the overall results were problematic. The Labour government inherited one leave measure, a maternity leave that was both very long in duration and largely low paid or unpaid; as such it was out of kilter with most other European countries, which had shorter periods of leave, but all paid at a high level of income replacement. Rather than question this legacy, the new government put most of its energies into further enhancing maternity leave, increasing the already long period of leave from 9 to 12 months (2003) and the low flat-rate payment from 12 weeks to, first, 20 weeks (2003) and then to 33 weeks (2007).

Parental leave was adopted early on, but was very much the poor relation to maternity leave – thin in substance and marginalised in position. The UK opted for the bare minimum then required by EU law: three months per parent and unpaid. Furthermore, this leave could only be taken in short blocks of time: one month per year, spreading the entitlement over three years. While some other European countries permitted

parental leave to be split and taken in short blocks, all allowed leave also to be taken as one continuous period of time. Over the two decades of its existence, the UK's parental leave has always looked like an afterthought and had minimal impact: unknown of by many, used by few and ignored in policy changes.

Apart from this weak measure, the Labour government did take some other steps to increase fathers' use of leave. A short period (2 weeks) of low paid paternity leave was introduced, but the main initiative was based on a change to maternity leave. Towards the end of its period in office, in 2010, Labour introduced a new twist to UK leave policy: mothers could transfer unused maternity leave and pay to fathers after 20 weeks. It also brought in another new feature of policy – the distortion of terminology. The new arrangement was called additional paternity leave (APL). A true paternity leave is a father-only entitlement, while APL was, in actual fact, a system of transferable maternity leave; fathers had no inherent entitlement to this leave, instead depending on the mother's eligibility for maternity leave and her willingness to transfer part of that leave.

When Labour lost power in May 2010, they left a UK policy that remained centred on maternity leave, indeed even more so than when they came to power. Opportunities for fundamental reform, by a government that took parental employment seriously, had been missed. Matters have not improved under subsequent governments. A proposal to reform leave policy (HM Government 2011), based on shortening maternity leave and extending parental leave, introduced by the Conservative-led Coalition government in 2011 was dropped, and in its place the existing policy was reinforced; since 2014, mothers can choose to transfer up to 50 weeks of maternity leave to their partners, now re-named, still incorrectly, 'shared parental leave' (for a fuller discussion of this attempt at reform and earlier missed opportunities, see Moss and O'Brien 2019).

After 40 years of intermittent development, the UK has today a leave policy based on a long period of mainly poorly paid or unpaid maternity leave, mostly transferable if the mother agrees, and then mis-labelled as 'parental leave'. Actual parental leave is unpaid and inflexible, languishing on the margins. Put another way, UK leave policy in practice reflects a maternalist assumption, that mothers are primarily responsible for the care and upbringing of very young children; if that responsibility is to be shared through taking leave, it is at the mother's behest, dependent on her agreement to transfer some of her entitlement to the child's father.

There is now much evidence that points to the key conditions for fathers' use of leave, in particular there should be a leave entitlement that is for fathers only *and* is well paid (Moss 2007, Schulze and Gergoric

2015). Since neither 'shared parental leave' nor the UK's actual parental leave meet these conditions, it is not surprising that fathers' use of leave (apart from the short period of paternity leave) is low in the UK. As one recent newspaper article put it, 'Shared parental leave is a flop because taking it makes no financial sense', going on to note that:

A recent freedom of information request by law firm EMW revealed that just 9,200 people took shared parental leave (SPL) in the year to March [2018]. That means that out of every 1,000 eligible people who had a baby during that period, around 15 opted to share their leave ... Out of all new parents, just eight people per 1,000 used the scheme. That's even lower than the Government's dismal calculation that 2pc of eligible parents took advantage. (Davidson 2018)

Low take-up for fathers is not the only problem with leave policy for parents of young children in the UK. Since most leave is either paid at a low flat rate or unpaid, it is difficult for many women, as well as men, to take it – taking leave means a financial sacrifice for parents and families.

Moreover, not all parents are eligible. Recent evidence (O'Brien et al. 2017) has shown that there are significant minorities in the UK working population who are not eligible to receive basic paid forms of leave. Twenty-seven per cent of employed fathers who had had a child in the last year were not eligible for paid paternity leave due to their employment status – that is, self-employment (20 per cent) or not earning enough to reach an earnings threshold (7 per cent). A smaller minority (16 per cent) of employed mothers who had had a child in the last year were also not eligible for paid maternity leave because their earnings fell below the earnings threshold (7 per cent), they were self-employed (7 per cent) or they did not meet the continuous employment condition (2 per cent). In addition, 4 per cent of new mothers were not even eligible for the basic maternity allowance payment, designed as a fall-back. Similarly, even access to unpaid parental leave is restricted with the UK, alongside Greece and Ireland, having significantly lower eligibility than in other EU-28 countries (EIGE 2020); to be eligible for this parental leave, UK parents need a continuous record of 12 months' length of service, which is not always possible for those with a history of unstable and precarious employment.

Last but not least, there is a lack of synergy between leave and ECEC policy, with a long gap between the end of well-paid leave, at six weeks after birth, and the start of an entitlement to early childhood provision, when a child reaches 3 years of age. In this respect, the UK finds itself

in the company of most European countries, though the gap of nearly three years is longer than most (Kosłowski et al. 2019). The gap reflects a divide in responsibility within government: leave policy resides with the UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, ECEC with education ministries in the UK's four national governments, the former focused on employment and labour markets, the latter on children.

Towards transformative change

What it looks like in practice: The case of Norway

To see what a transformed leave policy looks like in practice, we could turn to any of the Nordic countries, but we have chosen the case of Norway because, on balance, it has the most comprehensive and gender-equal system. It has also been a trail-blazer, 'the first country to reserve part of paid parental leave for fathers, making it a leader in parental leave policies and fathers' rights' (Brandth and Kvande 2009, 192). This innovation happened in 1993, when fathers were given the right to four weeks of paid parental leave that could not be transferred to the mother – a case of use it or lose it.

This 'father's quota' has subsequently been extended in length. Since July 2018 it is either 15 weeks paid at 100 per cent of earnings or 19 weeks at 80 per cent (up to a ceiling of six times the basic national insurance benefit payment, that is, NOK98,866 (about £7,910) per month as of May 2020). This is one part of the parenting leave system, which today is based on the total leave period being split equally into three portions: the 'father's quota', and similar periods for the mother (the 'mother's quota') and for the parents to divide between themselves as they choose (the 'shared period'). In addition, the mother is entitled to 3 paid weeks of leave before the birth. Overall, therefore, a two-parent family (including same-sex parents) can take up to 13 months of leave at 80 per cent of earnings or just under 11 months at 100 per cent.

There is flexibility in how leave can be used. As well as a choice between a longer period at a lower rate of benefit or a shorter period with full income compensation, parents can take leave at any time until a child is aged 3 years, can work part time and extend the period of leave accordingly and can take leave in one block of time or several.

How have parents responded to Norway's policy of well-paid, flexible leave, with increasing amounts earmarked for the sole use of fathers? It is clear that the introduction of a father's quota, in 1993, had an immediate

and long-lasting impact. Leading Norwegian researchers, Berit Brandth and Elin Kvande (2019a, 7), conclude that:

In the years prior to the introduction of the father's quota, less than four per cent of fathers took some parental leave. Only a few years later, the take-up rate was over 70 per cent ... [and with every subsequent] expansion of the father's quota, fathers have increased their uptake the following year ... Fathers take the number of father's quota days that corresponds to the number of weeks granted by the rules.

But while most fathers use their quota, the 'shared period' of leave is mainly taken by mothers, a finding replicated in other countries – leave designated as a 'family' entitlement is, in practice, mainly leave for mothers.

Commonly 'fathers in Norway take their leave after the mother has taken hers, usually starting when the child is about nine months old' (Brandth and Kvande 2019b, 210). As the quota has extended, more fathers have used it flexibly, with around 25 per cent taking leave part time, combining work and care. Such flexible use, however, has adverse consequences for equality in caring: 'Our [research] results show that taking leave on a part-time basis in combination with part-time work has negative effects on fathers' caregiving ... The boundaries between work and childcare become blurred and prevent men from becoming fully immersed with their babies' (Brandth and Kvande 2019b, 217–18). Taking leave piecemeal, that is in short blocks of time, may have similar negative effects on shared caring, if it involves a father taking leave as a holiday together with the mother; but if the block of leave taken is fairly long and the mother is at work, it can support equal sharing of caregiving.

In addition to parental leave, each parent of one or two children under 12 years has a right to 10 working days of leave per year when children are sick (or when the childminder or grandparent is ill, in the case that children are not in kindergarten), or 15 days if they have more than two children. Single parents have the right to 20 or 30 days a year. For severely or chronically sick children, there are extended rights to such leave until the child is 18 years old. Leave is paid by the employer at the same rate as sickness benefit, that is, at 100 per cent of earnings.

The ECEC system in Norway, which was discussed in Chapter 6, is in synergy with parenting leave policies. Well-paid leave is available for over 12 months, while there is an entitlement to a full-time place in a kindergarten from the age of 12 months. Parents with a child between 1 and 2 years old are entitled to receive a flat-rate cash benefit (NOK7,500

[about £600] per month) on condition they do not use a publicly funded ECEC service. This ‘cash-for-care’ scheme has had a chequered history. Originally introduced in 1999, and initially available to parents (in practice, mainly mothers) of 1- and 2-year-olds, take-up was high to begin with, at 75 per cent, but subsequently plunged, dropping to only 25 per cent of parents at the end of 2011 (Ellingsæter 2012). While take-up has fallen across all groups, ‘those receiving the benefit have become more homogeneous. Parents with low income and education, immigrants from Asia and Africa and mothers with weak labour market attachment are overrepresented’ (Duvander and Ellingsæter 2016, 80–1). As cash-for-care has dropped back, attendance at publicly funded ECEC has risen rapidly, and by 2016, 53 per cent of children under 3 years old were attending a formal service.

Towards reformed parenting leave and policy synergy

As with ECEC services, transformation of leave policies in England is not a case of starting from scratch, but of reforming in fundamental ways an existing system that is not fit for purpose. In some respects, that is much harder to do. It will require opening up a democratic debate about what society wants for its children and families, a debate that will call for better information and better understanding (for example, understanding that so-called ‘shared parental leave’ is not actually parental leave), but also arguing about changes that some people and organisations may regard as regressive, even if they are not so. Thus the 2011 attempt to reform UK leave policy fell prey, in part, to opposition to the proposed reduction in maternity leave and the compensating increase in parental leave, on the grounds that it undermined an established employment right for women – though the proposed change would actually have enabled women to take the same amount of leave as before if they had taken full advantage of the proposed extension to parental leave (Moss and O’Brien 2019). Making such change, therefore, requires careful and clear explanation. It would also be assisted if accompanied by the introduction of additional benefits, such as, for example, increased payments and greater flexibility.

Bearing these points in mind, and focusing again on the big picture rather than getting too embroiled in detail, we would propose the following seven steps:

1. A clear set of aims to be agreed for leave policy, for example, more equal sharing of leave-taking between women and men to promote gender equality. Where possible clear targets should be attached to

these aims, for example, a level of take-up by fathers to be achieved within a defined period.

2. Leave policy to be reformed and restructured by reducing maternity leave, removing 'shared parental leave' and increasing actual parental leave, while retaining a short-form of birth-related paternity leave (father only). For example, at present there are 20 months of leave available to parents (excluding paternity leave) – 12 months of maternity leave and 4 months per parent of parental leave. This might be reconfigured to 4 months of maternity leave and 8 months per parent for parental leave, that is, giving mothers potentially the possibility of 12 months' leave and fathers 8 months – though some would argue that in the interests of gender equality, mothers and fathers should have equal entitlements to leave.
3. Eligibility conditions to be removed from leave provision, making it a universal right to care for all women and all men who have parental responsibilities, irrespective of employment status, length of service or household composition.
4. Over a period of time, say 10 years, payments to parents taking leave to be improved to a high proportion of earnings for the greater part of leave, for example, ensuring that both parents can take six to eight months of leave at 80 per cent of earnings, with a generous ceiling. Immediate priority should be given to introducing one month of well-paid and non-transferable parental leave for both parents.
5. Flexibility to be increased, in particular ensuring parental leave can be taken either in one block of time or several, and on a full-time or part-time basis.
6. Paid leave to care for sick children to be introduced, the duration to be built up over 10 years.
7. The gap between leave and ECEC to be removed by ensuring well-paid leave will be available for at least 12 months, and a child's entitlement to an early childhood service provided from at least 12 months of age.

Such change would not complete the transformation of social policy to support the reconciliation of employment and child-rearing, and to promote gender equality based on a new and sustainable relationship between employment, care and gender. Going back to the 1992 Council Recommendation on Child Care, it would leave much still to be done in the workplace, as well as the need to find other ways to support more equal sharing of responsibility for children between women and men. It

would, however, take England and the rest of the UK a long way forward in creating a society that took seriously the needs of children, parents and families and made early parenthood less demanding and stressful than it often is today.³

Further reading

The annual *International Review of Leave Policies and Research* by the International Network on Leave Policies and Research, available free at www.leavenetwork.org/leave-policies-research/, is an invaluable reference source on leave policies in over 40 countries, including the relationship between these policies and ECEC provision.

A book edited by Margaret O'Brien and Karin Wall, *Comparative Perspectives on Work-Life Balance and Gender Equality: Fathers on leave alone* (Springer, 2017), available free at www.springer.com/gp/book/9783319429687, looks at the experience of men taking parental leave alone in 11 countries, both in Europe and elsewhere.

Exploring similar issues of gender and care, Andrea Doucet's book *Do Men Mother? Fathering, care, and domestic responsibility* (University of Toronto Press, 2006) is a study of Canadian fathers who decide to stay at home and care for their children rather than work full time outside the home. Doucet argues the case for leave as a universal right to care in a book edited by Peter Moss, Alison Koslowski and Ann-Zofie Duvander, *Parental Leave and Beyond* (Policy Press, 2019), which includes other contributions on possible future directions for leave policy, as well as examining a range of current issues in the field.

Notes

1. Leave policy, unlike ECEC policy, is not devolved to the four nations that constitute the United Kingdom; thus Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales can develop their own ECEC policies, but have no say when it comes to leave policies.
2. Subsequently women could choose when to start maternity leave before giving birth, with 11 weeks before birth being the earliest at which leave could begin.
3. At the time of writing, the UK government has published a consultation paper inviting comments on maternity, paternity and parental leave policy (HM Government 2019). With one exception, the consultation does not propose any substantive changes to the current system of leave, but rather poses questions on existing leave policies. The one exception is a proposal for a new paid leave for parents with a baby requiring neonatal care after birth.

References

- Andersen, S.H. (2018) 'Paternity leave and the motherhood penalty: New causal evidence'. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 80 (5), 1125–43.
- APPG (All Party Parliamentary Group on Parenting and the International Year of the Family) (1994) *Report on UK Proceedings*. London: HMSO.
- Brandth, B. and Kvande, E. (2009) 'Norway: The making of the father's quota'. In Kamerman, S. and Moss, P. (eds) *The Politics of Parental Leave Policies: Children, gender, parenting and the labour market*. Bristol: Policy Press, 191–206.
- Brandth, B. and Kvande, E. (2019a) 'Norway country note'. In Koslowski, A., Dobrotić, I., Blum, S., Macht, A. and Moss, P. (eds) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2019*. Online. www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/ (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Brandth, B. and Kvande, E. (2019b) 'Flexibility: Some consequences for fathers' caregiving'. In Moss, P., Duvander, A.-Z. and Koslowski, A. (eds) *Parental Leave and Beyond: Recent international developments, current issues and future directions*. Bristol: Policy Press, 205–22.
- Brannen, J. and Moss, P. (1991) *Managing Mothers: Dual earner households after maternity leave*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Budig, M.J., Misra, J. and Boeckmann, I. (2016) 'Work–family policy trade-offs for mothers? Unpacking the cross-national variation in motherhood earnings penalties'. *Work and Occupations*, 43 (2), 119–77.
- Buening, M. (2015) 'What happens after the "daddy months"? Fathers' involvement in paid work, childcare, and housework after taking parental leave in Germany'. *European Sociological Review*, 31 (6), 738–48.
- Davidson, L. (2018) 'Shared parental leave is a flop because taking it makes no financial sense'. *The Daily Telegraph*, 13 August 2018. Online. www.telegraph.co.uk/money/consumer-affairs/shared-parental-leave-flop-taking-makes-no-financial-sense/ (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Dearing, H. (2016) 'Gender equality in the division of work: How to assess European leave policies regarding their compliance with an ideal leave model'. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 26 (3), 234–47.
- di Torella, E.C. (2014) 'Brave new fathers for a brave new world? Fathers as caregivers in an evolving European Union'. *European Law Journal*, 20 (1), 88–106.
- Doucet, A. (2006) *Do Men Mother? Fathering, care, and domestic responsibility*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Doucet, A. (2009) 'Dad and baby in the first year: Gendered responsibilities and embodiment'. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 624 (1), 78–98.
- Duvander, A.-Z. and Ellingsæter, A.L. (2016) 'Cash for childcare schemes in the Nordic welfare states: Diverse paths, diverse outcomes'. *European Societies*, 18 (1), 70–90.
- Duvander, A.-Z. and Johansson, M. (2012) 'What are the effects of reforms promoting fathers' parental leave use?' *Journal of European Social Policy*, 22 (3), 319–30.
- EIGE (European Institute for Gender Equality) (2020) *Eligibility for parental leave in EU Member States*. Online. <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/eligibility-parental-leave-eu-member-states> (accessed 14 April 2020).
- Ekberg, J., Eriksson, R. and Friebe, G. (2013) 'Parental leave: A policy evaluation of the Swedish "Daddy-Month" reform'. *Journal of Public Economics*, 97, issue C, 131–43.
- Ellingsæter, A.L. (2012) *Cash for Childcare: Experiences from Finland, Norway and Sweden*. Berlin: FSE. Online. <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/09079.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Han, W.-J., Ruhm, C. and Waldfogel, J. (2009) 'Parental leave policies and parents' employment and leave-taking'. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 28 (1), 29–54.
- HM Government (2011) *Consultation on Modern Workplaces*. London: HMSO. Online. www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/31549/11-699-consultation-modern-workplaces.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- HM Government (2019) *Good Work Plan: Proposals to support families*. London: HMSO. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/819041/good-work-family-support-consultation.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities (1985) *Parental Leave and Leave for Family Reasons*. London: HMSO.
- ILO (International Labour Organization) (2014) *Maternity and Paternity at Work: Law and practice across the world*. Geneva: International Labour Office. Online. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_242615.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).

- Kammerman, S. and Moss, P. (eds) (2009) *The Politics of Parental Leave Policies: Children, gender, parenting and the labour market*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Kosłowski, A., Blum, S., Dobrotić, I., Macht, A. and Moss, P. (eds) (2019) *15th International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2019*. Online. https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user_upload/k_leavenetwork/annual_reviews/2019/2_2019_Compiled_Report_2019_0824-.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Miller, T. (2010) *Making Sense of Fatherhood: Gender, caring and work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moss, P. (2007) 'Policies to increase fathers' use of leave'. Paper presented at the annual seminar of the International Network on Leave Policies and Research, Budapest, October 2007. Online. www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user_upload/k_leavenetwork/seminars/2007/2007_peter_moss.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Moss, P., Duvander, A.-Z. and Kosłowski, A. (eds) (2019) *Parental Leave and Beyond: Recent international developments, current issues and future directions*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Moss, P. and O'Brien, M. (2019) 'United Kingdom: Leave policy and an attempt to take a new path'. In Moss, P., Duvander, A.-Z. and Kosłowski, A. (eds) *Parental Leave and Beyond: Recent international developments, current issues and future directions*. Bristol: Policy Press, 57–74.
- Nandi, A., Jahagirdar, D., Dimitris, M.C., Labrecque, J.A., Strumpf, E.C., Kaufman, J.S., Vincent, I., Atabay, E., Harper, S., Earle, A. and Heymann, S.J. (2018) 'The impact of parental and medical leave policies on socioeconomic and health outcomes in OECD countries: A systematic review of the empirical literature'. *The Milbank Quarterly*, 96 (3), 434–71.
- O'Brien, M. (2009) 'Fathers, parental leave policies, and infant quality of life: International perspectives and policy impact'. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 624 (1), 190–213.
- O'Brien, M., Connolly, S., Aldrich, M., Cook, R. and Speight, S. (2017) 'Inequalities in access to paid maternity and paternity and flexible work'. Briefing paper. Online. www.modern-fatherhood.org/publications/inequalities-in-parental-leave-full-report/ (accessed 10 January 2020).
- O'Brien, M. and Twamley, K. (2017) 'Fathers taking leave alone in the UK: A gift exchange between mother and father?' In O'Brien, M. and Wall, K. (eds) *Comparative Perspectives on Work-Life Balance and Gender Equality: Fathers on leave alone*. London: Springer, 165–82.
- O'Brien, M. and Wall, K. (2017) *Comparative Perspectives on Work-Life Balance and Gender Equality: Fathers on leave alone*. London: Springer.
- Ramchandani, P. and Psychogiou, L. (2009) 'Paternal psychiatric disorders and children's psychosocial development'. *The Lancet*, 374, (9690), 646–53.
- Ray, R., Gornick, J.C. and Schmitt, J. (2010) 'Who cares? Assessing generosity and gender equality in parental leave policy designs in 21 countries'. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 20 (3), 196–216.
- Schober, P.S. (2014) 'Parental leave and domestic work of mothers and fathers: A longitudinal study of two reforms in West Germany'. *Journal of Social Policy*, 43 (2), 351–72.
- Schulze, E. and Gergoric, M. (2015) 'Maternity, paternity and parental leave: Data related to duration and compensation rates in the European Union'. Brussels: European Parliament. Online. [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/509999/IPOL_STU\(2015\)509999_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/509999/IPOL_STU(2015)509999_EN.pdf) (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Tanaka, S. (2005) 'Parental leave and child health across OECD countries'. *The Economic Journal*, Issue 501, F7–F28.

Conclusion: From 'the state we're in' to 'what do we want for our children?'

Peter Moss and Claire Cameron

The old world, which once looked stable, even immutable, is collapsing. A new era has begun, loaded with hazard if we fail to respond, charged with promise if we seize the moment. Whether the systems that emerge from this rupture are better or worse than the current dispensation depends on our ability to tell a new story, a story that learns from the past, places us in the present and guides the future. (Monbiot 2017, 1)

The preceding chapters have made the case that the state of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in England is not good. The system itself is flawed and dysfunctional, still split between 'childcare' and 'education', with fragmented services, many operating as private businesses, competing with each other in a market that treats services as commodities and parents as consumers; and the whole shaky edifice dependent on the hard work and commitment of a female workforce of early childhood workers, most of whom are scandalously poorly paid and (relative to school teachers) under qualified, indicative of the low value placed by society on this important work. Moreover, despite recent government recognition of the needs of employed parents, there is a lack of synergy between the two most important policy areas to address these needs: leave for parents and ECEC for their children.

To these structural faults (the subject of Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 13) can be added serious shortcomings in what goes on within the system, in its practices and governance, what might be called pedagogical problems (the subject of Chapters 7 to 12). ECEC is in the grip of a culture of accountability, with its emphasis on standardised and measurable

outcomes, with its attendant risk: of ‘a ridiculous simplification of knowledge, and a robbing of meaning from individual histories’ (Cagliari et al. 2016, 378), with ‘subtle and fleeting’ signs of learning, so difficult to measure, easily overlooked; of schoolification, with downward pressure from a narrow compulsory schooling agenda of numeracy and literacy, accompanied by harmful effects on pedagogical practice such as ability grouping; and of a future-orientation, which not only uncritically and unrealistically assumes a future of more of the same, but prioritises a certain idea of what children should become at the expense of what is valuable and meaningful to children in the present.

Our contention then is, as we said in Chapter 1, that ECEC in England ‘is a failure on many counts; it does not work for children or parents, workers or society’ – though reiterating our qualification, that the failure lies with the system and the policies behind it, not those who work in it. But it is also evident that the parlous state for young children and their families goes well beyond the condition of ECEC (the subject of Chapters 2 and 3). After 40 years or more of neoliberal government, culminating in a decade of austerity, the welfare state has become threadbare, failing to prevent the lives of many young children and families from being blighted by poverty, insecurity, poor housing and homelessness. These lives, too, suffer from a diminution of vital services, including the hollowing out of the recently created network of children’s centres as local authorities’ budgets have been slashed (spending on local services in England fell by 21 per cent between 2009–10 and 2017–18) (Partington 2019).

The erosion of local authority services is part of a wider process undermining the social infrastructure of communities, a process vividly described by journalist Aditya Chakraborty (2019):

Britain is being stripped of its social infrastructure: the institutions that make up its daily life, the buildings and spaces that host friends and gently push strangers together. Public parks are disappearing. Playgrounds are being sold off. High streets are fast turning to desert. These trends are national, but their greatest force is felt in the poorest towns and suburbs, the most remote parts of the countryside, where there isn’t the footfall to lure in the businesses or household wealth to save the local boozier ... Politicians bemoan the loss of community, but that resonant word is not precise enough. A large part of what’s missing is social infrastructure. It can be public or private. It is often slightly dog-eared and usually overlooked. But when it vanishes, the social damage can be huge.

The one exception to this picture of declining social provision is the inexorable rise in recent years of food banks, an emergency service unheard of before 2010, with the UK's largest food bank network reporting a record 1.6 million food parcels distributed in the year to March 2019 (Trussell Trust 2019).

Nor can we leave this dismaying account of the state we're in without acknowledging perhaps the greatest long-term threat to young children and their families, the converging crises of a ravaged environment: global heating, multiple forms of pollution, the depletion of essential resources and diminishing bio-diversity. Most immediately, this environmental emergency affects children's health, the World Health Organization (WHO 2018) estimating that 'every day around 93% of the world's children under the age of 15 years (1.8 billion children) breathe air that is so polluted it puts their health and development at serious risk'. Other effects of these converging crises will make themselves increasingly felt, with young children always most vulnerable, along with those both nationally and globally who are poorest (and least culpable).

Such is the state we are in, a state so serious that it justifies a call for transformative change, a change that goes beyond 'reformist tinkering' to a complete re-thinking that leads to radical, root-and-branch re-forming, calling on (in George Monbiot's words) 'our ability to tell a new story'. In this final chapter, we will focus on the transformation of ECEC; to tackle more is beyond our scope and capabilities. But we reiterate that this needs to be part of a larger transformation: a renewal of the whole education system, of the welfare state,¹ of our social infrastructure, and above all, a radical transformation of the way we live if humankind is to survive the environmental emergency – for we cannot carry on as we are. A transformed ECEC should be seen, therefore, as but one part of a transformed society – democratic and just, caring and sustainable – in which all can flourish.

We approach our limited brief, with its focus on transforming ECEC, as a political task, by which we mean (as we argued at the start of this book) that change must be built on the answer to political questions, that is, 'not mere technical issues to be solved by experts ... [but questions that] always involve decisions which require us to make choices between conflicting alternatives' (Mouffe 2007). Technical issues, of the 'what works?' and 'how to?' variety, have their place, but addressing these should come after political questions have been asked and political choices made.

Some political questions and political choices

We proposed some political questions relevant to ECEC in Chapter 1, and will focus on just some here – those that we think are particularly important. First, *What is our image of the child?* That is, who do we think or imagine the child to be? This question follows the advice of Loris Malaguzzi that a declaration about the image of the child ‘is not only a necessary act of clarity and correctness, it is the necessary premise for any pedagogical theory, and any pedagogical project’ (Cagliari et al. 2016, 374). While no policy document in England has offered such a declaration, in practice the image of the child that is offered, reading between the lines, is that of the ‘poor’ child: in need, passive, malleable, under-developed, not ready, an empty vessel into which prescribed competencies and so-called ‘fundamental British values’ need to be poured. Our choice would be different, again following Malaguzzi in proposing an image of the ‘rich’ child, ‘rich’ not in the economic sense, but meaning that all children are ‘better equipped, more talented, stronger and more intelligent than we can suppose’ (Cagliari et al. 2016, 397), ‘not bottles to be filled’ but ‘active in constructing the self and knowledge through social interactions and inter-dependencies’. Children born with great potential that can be expressed in a hundred languages. Children, too, who are citizens, ‘not bearers of needs, but bearers of rights, values and competencies’ (Cagliari et al. 2016, 377).

Second, *What is an early childhood education and care system for? What is its purpose?* Clearly, it has an educative purpose, though that raises the question of what we mean by ‘education’. We favour ‘education-in-its-broadest-sense’:

a long-established concept of education that understands education as fostering and supporting the general well-being and development of children and young people, and their ability to interact effectively with their environment and to live a good life. This is education as a process of upbringing and increasing participation in the wider society, with the goal that both individual and society flourish. (Moss and Haydon 2008, 2)

But we would also see such a system as having many other potential purposes, responding to a range of needs and desires from children, parents, communities and societies. Other services, such as various health and welfare services, may be provided under its aegis, as already happens

in many surviving children's centres; so, too, may numerous other projects – cultural, social, political, environmental and economic. Writing about the transformative potential of compulsory school education, but also, we think, with application to early childhood education, Keri Facer envisages schools as public spaces where community members have the opportunity 'to encounter each other and learn from each other' and where they can begin 'to build the intergenerational solidarity, respect for diversity and democratic capability needed to ensure fairness in the context of socio-technical change'. As such, education can contribute not only to improving the here and now, but also to that wider social transformation that we refer to above, including equipping 'communities to respond to and shape the socio-technical changes of the next few years' (Facer 2011, 28). Writing more recently, on the possible response of public education to the climate emergency, Facer further develops the solidaristic, democratic and transformative purpose of education, through its capacity to 'engage students and their wider communities in meaningful real-life projects of mitigation and community-building ... Centrally, a key role of the public school is that it has the potential to convene publics around the challenge of reducing emissions' (Facer 2019, 209). To which might be added the potential to 'convene publics' around many of the other challenges that face us today.

Where does this leave 'childcare for working parents'? The 'care' part of 'early childhood education and care' has been by far the dominant theme of government policy in England in recent years. We see the support of parents in their many roles and activities as an important purpose for an ECEC system, and this includes support for parents in employment – but also for those studying, active in civic society and participating in other personally and socially important activities. One way this is provided is by services being open for a substantial period each day, up to 12 hours, though individual children would not attend for as long as this, except in very exceptional circumstances (we also recognise there is an important debate to be had about how far it is the job of ECEC to meet all demands of the labour market). But this support for parents in employment, and supporting parents to enter employment, is, as we have indicated above, just one of many purposes served by the ECEC system. Moreover, *all* children attending early childhood services, or indeed schools, require care, whether or not their parents are employed; care, we would suggest, that takes the form of an 'ethics of care', defining a relationship that includes both particular acts of caring and a general habit of mind that should inform all aspects of life and which includes attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness (Tronto 1993).

This leads us to propose no more talk of ‘childcare services’, but much talk of how to work with an ‘ethics of care’ with all children and across all services for children. Indeed, we would suggest transforming the discourse from ‘early childhood education and care’ to ‘early childhood education’, taking a lead on this from New Zealand, where by the 1990s, as a result of re-thinking and reform, “early childhood education” (ECE) again became the integrating concept and official term as people took for granted that early education involved care as well. Early childhood education continues to be used as the generic term covering the diverse range of types of ECE services in New Zealand’ (Meade and Podmore 2010, 32). So, in future let us adopt the New Zealand way and talk of ‘early childhood education’ or ECE, recognising there can be no education without care.

Third, *What are the fundamental values of early childhood education?* We would propose four here, by no means a comprehensive listing. First, equality: all young children, including children with special educational needs, should have equal access to good, affordable and local services. Second, democracy, with its attendant qualities of listening, dialogue and respect for diversity, enacted in pedagogy and management, in everyday life and relationships. Third, cooperation, within and between services, replacing the present valuing of competition. Fourth, solidarity, replacing the current valuing of competitive individualism and privatised consumerism.

Solidarity is or can be apparent in many forms: workplace solidarity, intergenerational solidarity, cultural solidarity, solidarity with humankind and with our environment, solidarity within and between services. Solidarity, we believe, is a vital building block for a cohesive and caring society and a strong welfare state. Solidarity is a standpoint and a value representing common ground among citizens or others who share an interest; it expresses the principle that ‘people ought to cooperate with each other not simply because of what they personally receive, but also from a real commitment to the well-being of others and a sense of moral obligation that it is right to do’ (Wright 2019, 18). As such, it acts as a connector between peoples and provides a motivation for services from which all can benefit (Derpmann 2018); the recognition that is gained from standing in solidarity with others generates self-esteem for individuals (Honneth 1995).

These values – equality, democracy, cooperation, solidarity – do not stand alone, but are inter-connected, all contributing to a flourishing life, each fostering the others. Early childhood services, which have a responsibility for upbringing and are physically sited in communities, are

'portals in to the community' for young children, with potential to build social capital by enhancing both their internally focused 'bonding' ties and their externally orientated 'bridging' ties (Putnam 2000). Bridging ties are particularly important to avoid exclusionary practices, to learn about communities and to exercise community solidarity. In this way, ECE can connect diverse groups, which is essential for expanding networks and opportunities, and so promote social inclusion and cohesion.

Fourth, *What is our image of the early childhood centre?* In practice, the present-day image of the centre, while not officially stated, is as a factory intended to produce predetermined, standardised and measurable outcomes and as a private business, selling a commodity to parent-customers in the market place. Our image is very different. We see the centre as a public space and a public resource, a place of encounter between citizens, children and adults, a forum in civil society where:

children and adults may participate together in projects of social, cultural, political and economic significance ... Determining these projects – answering the basic question 'what are early childhood institutions for?' – is one of the political projects of the institution as forum, as well as for the wider society; it is an issue for continuous dialogue between children and adults, including local and national politicians. (Dahlberg et al. 2013, 80)

Picking up on earlier discussions, we also envisage early childhood centres as a place to 'convene publics' to address urgent challenges and as part of the social infrastructure, necessary for the health, vitality and solidarity of any local community.

Fifth, *What do we want for our children, here and now and in the future?* For a start, we as adults need to dwell less on preparing children for a predetermined (and impossible) future of intensifying competition, endless consumption and inexorable growth, a policy ambition that is linked to spiralling mental health crises and declining happiness among children (The Children's Society 2019), and more on how we can begin the hard task of changing course towards a sustainable, just and democratic world, in which today's children can flourish as tomorrow's adults. In short, as Facer (2011) puts it, prioritising future-building over future-proofing.

In the meantime, we must focus on making a better here and now for our children, valuing them as beings and not just becomings; and valuing, too, education and other services for children, in John Dewey's words, 'as a process of living and not a preparation for future living' (Dewey

1897, 78). A good starting point is to take seriously the commitments already made by adults to children, yet too often ignored, commitments, for example, expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, that include children's right to:

- express [their] views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (Article 12)
- the highest attainable standard of health ... taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution (Article 24)
- adequate nutritious foods (Article 24)
- a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (Article 27)
- [the provision of] material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing (Article 27)
- engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts (Article 31). (United Nations 1989)

The subsequent General Comment No.7 of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on 'Implementing child rights in early childhood' elaborates how these commitments apply to young children. It starts by stating that 'young children are holders of all rights enshrined in the Convention [on the Rights of the Child] and that early childhood is a critical period for the realization of these rights' (UNCRC 2005, para. 1). Not only are young children holders of rights, but they should be:

active participant[s] in the promotion, protection and monitoring of their rights ... with freedom to express views and the right to be consulted in matters that affect [them] ... The right to express views and feelings should be anchored in the child's daily life at home (including, when applicable, the extended family) and in [their] community; within the full range of early childhood health, care and education facilities, as well as in legal proceedings; and in the development of policies and services, including through research and consultations. (UNCRC 2005, para. 10)

The Committee emphasises that the 'Convention requires that children, including the very youngest children, be respected as persons in their own right. Young children should be recognized as active members of

families, communities and societies, with their own concerns, interests and points of view' (UNCRC 2005, para. 6). The Committee reminds:

States parties (and others concerned) that the [young child's] right to survival and development can only be implemented in a holistic manner, through the enforcement of all the other provisions of the Convention, including rights to health, adequate nutrition, social security, an adequate standard of living, a healthy and safe environment, education and play. (UNCRC 2005, para. 10)

The Committee is critical of how services for young children are often fragmented and their 'planning often piecemeal and uncoordinated' (UNCRC 2005, para. 22), and argues that:

- services should be 'rights-based, coordinated, multisectoral' (UNCRC 2005, para. 22)
- work with young children 'should be socially valued and properly paid, in order to attract a highly qualified workforce, men as well as women' (UNCRC 2005, para. 23)
- the right of the child to education begins 'at birth and [is] closely linked to young children's right to maximum development' (UNCRC 2005, para. 28)

It is with this last right, to education beginning at birth, that we now turn, while holding in mind that it is just one of a number of important rights, a necessary but by no means sufficient condition for what we might want for our children, here and now.

Towards transformative change of early childhood education

Based on political questions and choices, taking inspiration from the Convention on the Rights of the Child and informed by the preceding chapters, we propose transformative change towards a public system of early childhood education, available as of right to all children and their parents (or other carers). By 'public' we mean the public taking collective responsibility, through democratic decision-making: for providing services that are open to all young children and their families, based on

the right to education from birth, and early childhood education being recognised as a public good, whose benefits reach beyond the individual users of these services to the wider society; and also services that are provided by public authorities (such as local authorities) or by private non-profit organisations that are accountable to these public authorities, and all of which subscribe to democratically determined and shared values, principles and goals. As we have discussed, 'education' is understood as a broad concept, and an 'education' system is not confined to learning (whether formal or informal) but includes other purposes. This public system would be inscribed with values of equality, democracy, cooperation and solidarity, and an ethics of care: values and ethics that would be expressed in the relationships between services, but also in relationships within services, including in the approach taken to management and leadership, pedagogical work and assessment.

The preceding chapters have provided detailed suggestions and examples for how different aspects of such transformative change might be enacted: some from other countries (Denmark, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Sweden), some from England. Here, therefore, we will confine ourselves to highlighting some broad structural principles of a transformed public system of early childhood education, the main building blocks of such a system:

1. The system would be fully integrated across all structural dimensions (policymaking, administration, curriculum, regulation, access, funding, workforce, type of provision), and underpinned by an integrative concept, that is, a broad concept of education working with an ethics of care, so finally removing the education/care split.
2. The system of early childhood education would be combined with an entitlement to at least 12 months of well-paid maternity and parental leave, with at least 4 months available only for fathers and at least 4 months only for mothers² (parental leave and early childhood education are viewed as necessary but not sufficient conditions for both gender equality and work-life balance).
3. This integrated system would be available as of right for children from birth to 6 years and their carers; as nearly all children would be at home with parents during their first year (because of the availability of well-paid leave), this would mean access to various child-and-parent services in children's centres (see 4 below) during this early period, with children starting to attend on their own during their second year.

4. The reformed system would be based on a fully integrated, multi-purpose and community-serving early childhood centre, which might be called a children's centre (or, if matched by similar transformative change throughout the compulsory school sector, an 'extended school for young children').
5. The core staffing for this form of provision would be a well-educated graduate professional specialising in work with children from birth to 6 years, having parity of status and conditions with compulsory school teachers and accounting for at least 60 per cent of staff working directly with children. The argument has been made in this book for the professional to be a social pedagogue, as found in some countries today; in other countries, the professional is an early years teacher.
6. Early childhood education for children from birth to 6 years would be recognised as the first stage of the education system, with primary (and compulsory) education starting at age 6, and as being of comparable standing to other stages in the education system with which it should develop strong and equal partnerships.
7. Attendance by children for a core period (for example, 30 hours a week, 38 weeks a year) would be free of charge, the core period being equivalent to normal school hours in the compulsory education sector, so matching the right to education from birth to the education principle of free attendance, with parents contributing on a means-tested basis for children attending additional hours up to a capped maximum level.
8. Services would be funded directly, rather than indirectly via subsidies paid to parents, that is, supply-side funding would entirely replace demand-side funding, so applying the same principle to early childhood education as applies to primary and secondary education, with the amount payable being sufficient to assure high-quality services, regardless of location.
9. Local authorities would play a key role in this transformed system, including: acting as service planners; facilitating cooperation and solidarity between centres and between centres and other services for children and families; offering specialist expertise in relation to disability or other special circumstances; supporting experimentation and knowledge exchange; contributing to a competent system of support for services and their workforces; evaluating local services; and providing some services directly themselves, as well as determining which non-profit private providers would provide the remaining services for the public system.

10. Central government would have a commensurately reduced, but still important, strategic role, for example, being responsible for setting broad policy goals, creating a framework national curriculum, ensuring necessary national infrastructure (for example, education of early childhood workers), evaluating the system overall, sharing funding costs with local authorities, and overseeing and supporting local authorities in their role.

So far, our discussion of transformative structural change has focused very much on schools and other centre-based services. But there is another form of provision that plays an important part in today's early childhood system: childminding or family day care. Our view is that such provision should also form part of the proposed public system of early childhood education, benefiting, for example, from direct funding, improved qualifications (though not necessarily at graduate level) and working conditions, and strong support. However, we are less certain about the future place of childminding. The number of childminders has fallen substantially in recent years, down 29 per cent in England between 2012 and 2018 (Gaunt 2019). By 2019, they accounted for just 18 per cent of childcare and early years places, and this fall is likely to continue, with fewer joiners than leavers every year (Ofsted 2019), as the occupation proves less appealing to women.

We also think that demand for childminding will decrease, with parents opting to use a public system of local and affordable children's centres. We say this because there is evidence that existing publicly funded early childhood education services are already an attractive proposition: almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of state-funded nursery schools in England are rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted and nearly all the rest are rated 'Good' (Ofsted 2019). The experience of Sweden is also telling: over time, accessible, affordable and well-run centres have proved to be highly popular, with childminding withering away as 'preschool' provision has been built up.

Transformative change requires attention to pedagogical as well as structural principles. Earlier chapters have reminded us that we have the good fortune, in implementing pedagogical principles, of drawing on rich traditions of educational thought and experience. We must take full advantage of this invaluable cultural heritage represented by the thought and work of past pedagogues such as Froebel, Dewey, McMillan, Isaacs, Freinet, Freire and Malaguzzi.

Drawing on these cultural reserves, as well as the intelligence and expertise of today's practitioners, a pedagogical transformation can be

embarked upon, turning away from a culture of targets, measurement and what Paulo Freire (n.d.) termed a 'banking concept of education', which treats learners as empty containers into which predefined knowledge is deposited. Previous chapters in this book map out a new cultural direction for early childhood education in England. It is an education in which cooperation and participation, democracy and listening are central pedagogical values and ethics, informing our way of being with and relating to young children. It is an education that slows down, adopting notions of slow knowledge and slow thinking and slow pedagogy, notions that value lingering, revisiting, reflection, and that lead to deep learning and rich meaning-making. It is an education that is comfortable with uncertainty and unpredictability, and so opens up to the unexpected and the surprising, to rediscover and to express wonder about the immediate and abstract world. It is an education that understands the importance of context and interpretation, and is sceptical of attempts to apply, unquestioningly, universal standards. It is an education in which observation and documentation, and in particular pedagogical documentation, enable all learning of all children, in its full diversity and complexity, to become visible and valued, and which understands assessment as a cooperative and dynamic process embedded in everyday educational experience. It is an education that will enable a turning away from the current demand for managerial accounting, towards a search for democratic, participatory and meaningful accountability. It is an education that recognises the importance of skilled and trusted practitioners, able to co-construct both curriculum and learning with children understood to be valued protagonists in education. Last but not least, it is an education based on trust in and respect for the agency, capabilities and potentialities of all involved, whether children, practitioners, parents or others.

So, we are not against assessment, nor against evaluation or accountability, but we think there are major issues to be resolved around purpose, process and participation. What, how and who? Nor are we against measuring and counting, when there is a clear rationale for this, and as long as numbers are not reified but are treated as just one form of documentation, to be critically discussed, reflected upon and interpreted alongside other forms of documentation. On this we agree with management expert Henry Mintzberg (interview, in Caulkin 2003) when he says:

We've become prisoners of measurement: audits, league tables, targets. It just destroys creativity. Look, I'm not opposed to measuring things that can be measured – I'm opposed to letting those things

drive everything else out. It has some destructive effect in business, but in education and healthcare it's absolutely devastating.

What would happen if we started from the premise that we can't measure what matters and go from there? Then instead of measurement we'd have to use something very scary: it's called judgment. A society without judgment is a society that's lost. And that's what bureaucracy does: it drives out judgment.

Is this a real utopia?

The term 'real utopia' was coined by the American sociologist Erik Olin Wright to emphasise that proposals for transformative change should not only be desirable (that is, 'utopian'), but also viable and achievable (that is, 'real' or doable). 'Desirability' pays particular attention to values, ethics and goals; this is what we want for our children and our society. 'Viability' is:

a response to the perpetual objection to radical egalitarian proposals: 'it sounds good on paper, but it will never work' ... Two kinds of analysis are especially pertinent here: systematic theoretical models of how particular social structures and institutions would work, and empirical studies of cases, both historical and contemporary, where at least some aspects of the proposal have been tried. (Wright 2007, 27)

While 'achievability' is about the process of transformation and the practical political work of strategies for social change: 'It asks of proposals for social change that have passed the test of desirability and viability, what it would take to actually implement them' (Wright 2007, 27). In short, how might you scale up such proposals.

Judged against these criteria, we think we have supplied sufficient evidence, either in actual case studies or theoretical models, to prove the *viability* of both structural and pedagogical transformation – these things could be done or are already to be found in practice today. Much more work is needed (which is true of any major change), but we contend that transformation is patently doable. *Achievability*, putting our proposals for transformational change into general usage, is, we admit, more problematic, because of the scale and complexity of what is needed to extend from local instances to general application.

There are, we think, three main conditions that need to be in place if achievability is to happen, and none of them are easy. First, politically there needs to be a turn away from the neoliberal regime of the last 40 years, which has brought marketisation, privatisation, individualism and competition to the fore, including but going far beyond early childhood education. Transformative change, as presented here, assumes a politics based on very different beliefs and values, not least equality, democracy, cooperation and solidarity, with a renewed welfare state infused by a rediscovered sense of public good and collective responsibility.

It's a big ask, but we see some slivers of hope. Neoliberalism remains a powerful force in the land, but its days may be numbered. Its claims are increasingly discredited, its harmful consequences are more and more apparent, its incompatibility with finding solutions to the converging environmental problems manifest; in short, its time may be nearly up as its cycle of dominance draws to an end and it enters into crisis. Or, as George Monbiot puts it in the excerpt that starts this chapter, the old world is collapsing and a new era beginning. At which stage the words of Milton Friedman (1962/1982, ix), one of the godfathers of neoliberalism quoted at the start of this book, come to mind again:

Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable.

Like Milton Friedman and his neoliberal allies in the 1960s anticipating the imminent crisis of the then-dominant regime of social democracy, today those who oppose neoliberalism need to be prepared for its imminent crisis, ensuring there are transformative ideas 'lying around', developing 'alternatives to existing policies', getting ready for when the 'politically impossible becomes politically inevitable'. Or, in Monbiot's words, for a better system we must be able to tell a new story. This book, then, is a contribution to that task, of developing new ideas or telling a new story, in one relatively small but important field.

The first condition, therefore, that needs to be in place for achievability is profound political change. The second condition is more prosaic, finding a way to transition from what we have to where we want to get to. Such a shift between two very different systems, from one based on markets and competing businesses to one based on co-operation and public services, from one based on managerialism and measurement to one

based on democracy and deliberation, would generate opposition especially from private, for-profit providers who would not fit into a public system based on values of equality, democracy, cooperation and solidarity. Such providers would not and could not be forced out of business by legal prohibition, but would lose access to their life-blood of public funding.

It should be emphasised that any major transformation cannot and will not occur overnight. There needs to be a long transition period, to build up both new institutions and a new workforce, of probably at least 15 years. During that period, all public funding of early childhood services would be consolidated in a single early childhood fund, and gradually shifted from the current split disbursement (some money paid to services, some to parents) to a single funding system involving direct payment to an expanding public system and its network of preferred services, that is, children's centres.

This means the gradual withdrawal of public funding from the private, for-profit sector. The sector would have time for adjustment, allowing some nursery providers and their financial backers to turn to full reliance on parental fees (like private schools) and others to withdraw from the field; childminders could choose to become part of the public system, becoming essentially salaried workers, or else opt to work outside it. Measures, too, would be put in place for existing 'childcare workers' to upgrade their qualifications to become professionals in the early childhood education system, and for some nursery owners, too, to find employment in the new public system; transformation should not lead to redundancies, but rather to better working conditions and improved job status. However, with the changes in funding and the development of an integrated public system, there is no escaping the fact that transformation would bring, as political rhetoric says, 'hard choices' that mean unwelcome disruption to some service providers, but this might be kept to a minimum through central-funding mechanisms, a transition period and local authority-led sector expertise.

A final condition for transformative change is continuity. Structural changes, including to the workforce, will take years to complete. Pedagogical changes, which involve profound shifts in culture and thinking, as well as in practice, may take even longer; indeed, they might be thought of as a continuous process of movement and experimentation. If we take, for example, the cases of New Zealand or Sweden, featured in earlier chapters, transformation has taken decades to bring about and is still in progress; especially in the former case, changes of government have caused disruptions and uncertainties. England does not have a good track record here, the post-2010 Conservative-led governments

thoughtlessly dismantling or neglecting much that the preceding Labour government had sought to build up (for example, children's centres, extended schools, policies such as 'Every Child Matters').

Yet at the same time, there have been continuities, in particular an ongoing commitment to marketisation and privatisation, individual choice and provider competition, strong central control and the importance of 'childcare'. What underpinned this continuity was a shared belief by successive Labour and Conservative governments in neoliberalism and the methods of new public management, with its emphasis on standard setting and performance measurement. Perhaps in a future where neoliberalism has lost its allure, and another political regimen has gained prominence, one more suited to the times we live in, valuing democracy and decentralisation, equality and inclusion, solidarity and sustainability, a degree of continuity could be rebuilt on other foundations – and this time, also, involving a stronger role for local democracy.

We are confident in the desirability and viability of our utopian proposal for transformative change. Its achievability is, we admit, less certain, dependent on a number of imponderables – while the ominous shadow of the environmental emergency hangs over all, making it especially hard to see what the future may hold. But, like so much else in England today, early childhood education is in a poor state, unfit for purpose and unable to do justice to our young children, endlessly telling an old story that was never up to much. Surely we are capable of telling a better story.

Notes

1. We note that at the time of writing this book, the Child Poverty Action Group has begun a new project on an important part of the welfare state, the social security system. The project, 'Secure Futures for Children and Families', will ask the question: *What does a social security system that provides a secure future for children and families look like?* (<https://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/secure-futures-children-and-families>).
2. An increasing number of countries are now adapting leave policies to accommodate same-sex parents. Some also provide extra leave in the case of single parents where there is no second parent to share leave (Koslowski et al. 2019).

References

- Cagliari, P., Castagnetti, M., Giudici, C., Rinaldi, C., Vecchi, V. and Moss, P. (eds) (2016) *Loris Malaguzzi and the Schools of Reggio Emilia: A selection of his writings and speeches 1945–1993*. London: Routledge.
- Caulkin, S. (2003) 'The scary world of Mr Mintzberg'. *Guardian*, 26 January 2003. Online. www.theguardian.com/business/2003/jan/26/theobserver.observerbusiness11 (accessed 10 January 2020).

- Chakraborty, A. (2019) 'Britain's infrastructure is breaking down. And here's why no one's fixing it'. *Guardian*, 14 August 2019. Online. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/aug/14/britain-social-infrastructure-money-national-grid (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Dahlberg, G., Moss, P. and Pence, A.R. (2013) *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Languages of evaluation*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge.
- Derpman, S. (2018) 'Union's inspiration: Universal health care and the essential partiality of solidarity'. *Bioethics*, 32 (9), 569–76.
- Dewey, J. (1897) 'My pedagogic creed'. *School Journal*, 54, 77–80. Online. <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Facer, K. (2011) *Learning Futures: Education, technology and social change*. London: Routledge.
- Facer, K. (2019) 'Climate change: How should public education respond?'. *FORUM*, 61 (2), 207–16.
- Freire, P. (n.d.) *The 'Banking' Concept of Education*. Online. http://puente2014.pbworks.com/w/file/attach/87465079/freire_banking_concept.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Friedman, M. (1962/1982) *Capitalism and Freedom*. New ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gaunt, C. (2019) 'Childminder numbers fall by 3 per cent in three months'. *Nursery World*. Online. www.nurseryworld.co.uk/nursery-world/news/1167228/childminder-numbers-fall-by-3-per-cent-in-three-months (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Honneth, A. (1995) *The Struggle for Recognition: The moral grammar of social conflicts*. Trans. Anderson, J. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Koslowski, A., Blum, S., Dobrotic, I., Macht, A. and Moss, P. (eds) (2019) *15th International Review on Leave Policies and Related Research 2019*. Online. www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/review-2019/ (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Meade, A. and Podmore, V. (2010) *Caring and Learning Together: A case study of New Zealand*. Online. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000187234> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Monbiot, G. (2017) *Out of the Wreckage: A new politics for an age of crisis*. London: Verso.
- Moss, P. and Haydon, G. (2008) *Every Child Matters and the Concept of Education*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.
- Mouffe, C. (2007) 'Artistic activism and agonistic spaces'. *Art and Research*, 1 (2), Summer.
- Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) (2019) 'Childcare Providers and Inspections as at 31 March 2019: Main findings'. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/vna8fym> (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Partington, R. (2019) 'Council spending on local services down 21% over past decade'. *Guardian*, 29 May 2019. Online. www.theguardian.com/society/2019/may/29/council-spending-on-local-services-down (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Putnam, R. (2000) *Bowling Alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- The Children's Society (2019) *The Good Childhood Report*. Online. www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/the_good_childhood_report_2019.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Tronto, J. (1993) *Moral Boundaries: A political argument for an ethic of care*. London: Routledge.
- Trussell Trust (2019) 'Latest stats'. Online. www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/ (accessed 10 January 2020).
- United Nations (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Online. www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf (accessed 10 January 2020).
- UNCRC (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child) (2005) *General Comment No. 7: Implementing child rights in early childhood*. Online. www.refworld.org/docid/460bc5a62.html (accessed 10 January 2020).
- WHO (World Health Organization) (2018) 'More than 90% of the world's children breathe toxic air every day'. Online. www.who.int/news-room/detail/29-10-2018-more-than-90-of-the-world%E2%80%99s-children-breathe-toxic-air-every-day (accessed 10 January 2020).
- Wright, E.O. (2007) 'Guidelines for envisioning real utopias'. *Soundings*, 36 (Summer), 26–39.
- Wright, E.O. (2019) *How to be an Anti-capitalist in the 21st Century*. London: Verso.

Index

- 'ability' grouping 177–8, 185, 221
accountability 130, 132, 171, 179–84, 229, 232
 culture of 119, 220–1
achievability of change 233–6
activism in response to political decisions 183–5
activities charts 162–3
additional paternity leave (APL) 211
advocacy in health services 46–7
air pollution 222
Alcock, Sophie 200
All Party Parliamentary Group on Parenting 210
Alston, Philip 19–20, 26
Ang, Lynn vii; *co-author of Chapter 7*
assessment 107–10, 129–32, 180–5, 232
 cooperative 164
 formative 162, 182
 international 175
 statutory 120
 summative 125
 see also reception baseline assessment
asthma 38, 42–3
attainment gap 171
austerity measures 9, 12, 19, 25, 29, 50, 96, 101, 199, 221
authoritarian regimes 152
autumn-born children 178

Baltimore 43–4
baseline testing 184; *see also* reception
 baseline assessment
belonging, sense of 139
'benefit cap' 25
benefits 83, 93; *see also* welfare policy and the welfare state
Bennett, John 65
Bertram, Tony 114
Blair, Tony 24–5
blame culture 29
body mass index (BMI) 192–3
bonding between parents and children 206
Bourdieu, Pierre 110–11
Brandth, Berit 214
Brannen, Julia viii; *co-author of Chapter 2*
Brexit referendum (2016) 36, 70, 153
bridgeing ties 226
British Cohort Study 48–9

Brooklands Project 54
Brown, Gordon 24
burnout 71

Cameron, Cheryl 142, 147
Cameron, Claire vii, 70, 78; *co-editor, author of Chapter 5 and co-author of Chapters 1 and 14*
Cameron, David 25
Caol Primary School 143
care, forms of 224; *see also* childcare
Carr, Margaret 107, 111, 128–9, 182
case studies 20, 121
cash-for-care systems 215
central government, role of 231
centralised government 11
Centre for Longitudinal Studies 192
Chakraborty, Aditya 221
charity 28, 48
Child Behaviour Checklist 43
child-centredness 100, 125
Child at Heart campaign 36
Child Poverty Act (2010–2015) 25
Child Poverty Action Group 46
childcare 207–10
 access to 210
 blurred boundaries with education 214
 costs and funding of *see* financing of ECEC
 as a distinct concept 58–9
 formal and informal 94
 parents' engagement with 205–9
Childcare Act (2006) 57, 84, 100
childcare workers 2, 58, 68–70, 235
childhood, early years of 34
childhood centres 223–5, 229–31, 235–6
childminding and childminders 4, 68–9, 84, 231, 235
childrearing by parents 94
children, conceptualisations of 192
Children Act (1989) 4, 134
children's centres 6–9, 27–8, 48, 55–8, 64–5, 85, 87, 221
Children's Commissioners 34, 85
Children's Food Trust 189, 193
children's services 36–7
Clark, Alison viii, 109, 147, 189, 195; *author of Chapter 9*
climate change 224
clock-based practices 140

- co-construction of knowledge 141, 181
- Cohen, Bronwen 66
- Common World Research Collective 144
- competencies 106, 223
- competition between schools 177
- competitiveness, international 104–5
- compulsory schooling 2, 13, 55, 60, 64, 68–9
- conditions of employment 71
- context 106–10
- core periods for children's attendance 230
- core workers 78
- corporate chains involved in provision of childcare 84, 87
- Coustley, Adam 147
- COVID-19 pandemic 26
- Cowan, Kate viii; *co-author of Chapter 8*
- critical literacy 183
- Crow Project 113, 115, 182
- culturally relevant assessment 110
- curriculum 104–11, 130, 172
 - child-centred 100
- Dahlberg, Gunilla 64, 106, 113, 136, 226
- Dalli, Carmen 79, 138
- 'datafication' 131, 176
- 'dataveillance' 176
- Davis, Sandra 21–9
- debt, personal 26–7
- dehumanisation 130
- Deleuze, Gilles 145–6
- demand-side funding 230
- democracy and democratic education 65, 151–62, 165–7, 180–3
- democratic deficit 3
- Denmark 68, 70, 75–9, 112, 205
- Department for Education (DfE) 2, 85, 94, 135, 174–5, 184, 188, 191–2
- Department of Health and Social Care 85
- Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) 85
- dependency on welfare 24
- developmental potential 34
- developmental stages 120
- Dewey, Evelyn 167
- Dewey, John 151–2, 167, 226, 231
- diabetes 38–9
- digital technologies 120–1, 124–32
 - constraints on the use of 131
 - shortcomings of 125
- disability 39, 43; *see also* special educational needs and disabilities
- disadvantaged groups 100, 121, 171
- diversity in the ECEC sector 101, 126
- division between education and care 2, 6, 8–9, 55–9, 62–4, 80, 85–6, 220
- documentation, pedagogical 119–32, 138, 142, 147, 164, 181–2
 - children contributing to 125
 - practitioner reflections on 123
- 'domains' of early learning 175
- Dorothy Gardner Children's Centre 56
- Doucet, Andrea 217
- Drummond, Mary Jane 136
- early childhood education and care (ECEC) system 1–13, 48, 54–7, 60, 140, 220–5
 - diversity of settings for 101, 126
 - purposes of 223–4
 - seen as a public good 229
 - and social disadvantage 100
 - timeline for 14–17
 - use of the term 153
- Early Childhood Studies degree 77–8
- Early Childhood Unit 136
- early learning goals (ELGs) 102–4, 172–3, 178, 184–5
- Early Years Coalition 187–8
- Early Years Educators (EYEs) 72
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 8, 13, 100–9, 114, 120, 123–6, 131, 172–3, 177–9, 188–93
 - guiding themes of 103
 - later versions of 104, 106
- Early Years National Funding Formula 87
- Early Years Outcomes* (DfE, 2013) 108
- Early Years Pay and Conditions Survey (2016) 72
- Early Years Professional (EYP) qualification 7, 72, 77
- Early Years Teachers (EYTs) 9, 72
- 'Eat Better Start Better' (EBSB) campaign 189, 193
- eating habits 188–200
- ecological systems theory 109
- education
 - 'banking' model of 231–2
 - in the broadest sense 223
 - care as an intrinsic part of 225
 - proposed nature of 232
 - purpose of 224
 - underlying concept of 229
- Elias, Norbert 188
- employed parents, childcare provision for 84
- employment rates (for mothers) 89
- English arrangements for ECEC
 - deficiencies in 88–9, 92–5, 155, 220–1, 236
 - disparate policies of various departments 86
 - mixed market in 84–5
 - prospects of a truly 'public' system 91, 94
- environmental problems 222, 234, 236
- epidemiological research 205, 207
- equal opportunities at work 209–10
- Equality and Human Rights Commission 48
- equity 91
- escola*, use of the term 153
- ethical considerations 135
- ethnic minorities 21, 95
- ethnographic studies 121, 189, 199
- European Union (EU) 29, 208–9; *see also* Brexit referendum
- Every Child Matters* agenda 103, 236
- evidence-based interventions 40
- expenditure on the early years 6, 63, 221
 - in relation to GDP 101
- expressing opinions 134–5
- Facer, Keri 224, 226
- family entitlements to leave 214
- family-friendly policies 91, 93
- family life reconciled with work 209
- fee-capping 92, 94
- financing of ECEC 4–5, 57, 87–8, 92–3, 230
- Flewitt, Rosie viii–ix; *co-author of Chapter 8*

- flexible working arrangements 92–3
 Folque, Maria Assunção 160–1, 167
 food banks 28, 48, 222
 food policies and practices 188–200
förskolor and *förskolårare* 60–2
 Fortunati, Aldo 146
 Foucault, Michel 10
 fragmentation of services 58
 free provision of ECEC 59, 84–5, 88–9, 93
 Freinet, Célestin 151–2, 157–8, 161, 167, 231
 Freire, Paulo 167, 231–2
 Friedman, Milton 11–12, 234
 Froebel, Friedrich (and Froebelian principles)
 119, 121, 126, 130–2, 231
 fundamental British values (FBVs) agenda
 153–4, 223
 future-building prioritised over future-
 proofing 225
- gender differences 70–2, 79
 gender equality 204–5, 210, 215–16, 229
 gender norms 206
 Germany 205
 Giroux, Henry 170, 179, 183–4
 Glass, Norman 7
 goals of learning 103; *see also* early learning
 goals
 ‘good level of development’ (GLD) 173
 Grayland, Christine 147
 Greece 212
 group diaries 163–4
 Guattari, Felix 145–6
- habitus* 110–11
 Hareclive Academy 143
 Haug, Peder 96
 Health and Social Care Committee of the
 House of Commons 193
 Health and Social Care Information
 Centre 192
 health indicators and health promotion 49–50,
 205
 Helen Keller Centre 157
 hepatitis B and C viruses (HVB and
 HVC) 43–4
 High Scope pedagogy 111
 ‘high-stakes’ testing 174–7
 Hodge, Margaret 135
 homelessness 34–51
 definitions of 35
 interventions related to 44–7
 pathways to 35–6
 housing standards 27
 human capital 105, 155
 human rights 95, 154
 ‘hundred languages of children’ 127,
 180–1, 223
 Hwang, Stephen W. 51
- ‘idioms of childhood’ 195, 199
 image
 of the child 223
 of early childhood centres 225
 Ince, Amanda ix, 114–15; *co-author of*
Chapter 7
 inclusive practice 103
- inequalities in health 37–8
 infant mortality 37–8
 infectious diseases 43
 informal care 94
 inspection of schools 175–6
 Institute of Education (IOE), University
 College London 12, 14, 20, 54
 integration in early year provision 8, 55–66,
 68, 77, 102, 229
 International Early Learning and Child
 Well-being Study (IELS) 155, 175, 177
 International Labour Organization (ILO)
 207–8
International Review of Leave Policies and
Research 217
 Iorio, Jeane Marie 144, 147
 Ireland 212
 Isaacs, Susan 119, 126, 131, 136, 231
 Italy 209
- Japan 87
 job security 205
 Joseph Rowntree Foundation 29–30, 39, 48
- Kaga, Yoshie 57, 65
 Kind, Sylvia 142–7
 kindergartens (in Norway) 90, 214
 Kitto, Eleanor 114–15
 Knight, Abigail ix; *co-author of Chapter 2*
 knowledge, areas of 106
 Korpi, Barbara Martin 65–6
 Kvande, Elin 214
- ‘labelling’ 178, 184
 Labour Force Survey (LFS) 68–9
 labour market and labour market regulation
 93, 209
 Ladybird Nursery School and Children’s
 Centre 190, 193–5, 199
 Lakhanpaul, Monica ix; *co-author of Chapter 3*
The Lancet 51
 learning 100–5, 108–11
 areas of 100–4, 172
 child-centred 125
 context-specific nature of 109–10
 as dynamic interaction 109
 national approach to 105
 recognition of 123–4, 128–32
 signs of 121–6, 131, 221
 as a social project 180, 182
 surface approach to 108
 ‘learning dispositions’ 110, 181
 learning how to learn 181
 learning opportunities 108
 ‘learning plans’ 76
 ‘learning stories’ 128–31, 181
 leave policies 203–16
 eligibility criteria 212, 216
 international 207–9
 levels of provision 208
 rationale for and impact of 204–5
 steps to be followed in planning of 215–16
 Lee, Wendy 128–9, 152, 182
 Levitas, Ruth 190, 199
 lifelong learning 111
 ‘lines of flight’ (Deleuze and Guattari) 146

- listening 134–8, 142–7
- marginalisation of 136
 - pedagogy of 138
 - to young children 135–7
- listening culture 142
- literacy 2–3, 172–8
- literature reviews 50–1
- Living Spaces study 139
- Lloyd, Eva ix–x, 91–2, 95; *author of Chapter 6*
- local authorities 3–4, 6, 11, 27–8, 57, 65, 84, 173, 230
- London 35
- Low Pay Commission 72

- McMillan, Margaret 119, 126, 131
- Major, John 4, 24
- Malaguzzi, Loris 3, 7, 126, 146, 175, 223, 231
- Malting House School 119
- managerial control in education 170, 183–4
 - through standards and performance measures 171–6
 - consequences of 177–9
- Māori people 110
- marketisation 7–10, 24, 63, 83–8, 95–6
 - consequences of 87
 - educational reforms driven by 184
- maternal health 37, 42
- maternity leave 4, 204–12, 215–16, 229
 - eligibility for pay 212
 - transferable 211
- mathematics 174, 176
- meaning-making 128–32, 141, 180–1, 232
- measurement
 - of children 50, 192
 - culture of 136–7, 154, 185, 232
- mental health 40–2, 47, 50, 178–9, 207
- Miller, Judy 136
- minimum wage levels 72, 88
- Minister for Children, post of 135
- Mintzberg, Henry 232–3
- moderation managers 173
- Monbiot, George 220, 222, 234
- Moran-Ellis, Jo 192
- More Than a Score 185
- Morris, Paul 154
- mortality rates 37, 39, 43–4
- 'Mosaic' approach 109–10, 112, 138–42, 146, 195
- Moss, Peter vii, 65, 102, 105, 114, 136, 155, 175, 180, 185, 195, 199, 223; *co-editor, author of Chapter 4 and co-author of Chapters 1, 13 and 14*
- mother
 - benefits for 93
 - in employment 89, 93, 101
- Movimento da Escola Moderna Portuguesa* (MEM) 151, 155–67

- narrative assessment 181–2
- National Audit Office (NAO) 85
- National Childcare Strategy 6, 71, 102
- National Children's Bureau 136
- National Curriculum 113, 176
- National Education Union 184
- National Health Service (NHS) 189, 193

- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) 39
- nationalism, English 153
- neoliberal ideology and policies 10–11, 13, 24, 84, 170–1, 183–5, 221, 234, 236
- New Economics Foundation (NEF) 93
- new public management 10–11, 236
- 'new teacher' model 74, 76
- New York City 43–4
- New Zealand 68, 73–5, 78–80, 110–11, 128–32, 138, 181, 225, 235
- Nilsson, Sandra Feodor 40
- Niza, Sérgio 157–8, 161–2
- Nolas, Sevasti-Melissa 189, 195
- Nordic countries 60, 86, 93–4, 205
- Norway 83, 90–6, 213–15
- Nóvoa, António 156, 166
- numeracy 2–3, 172, 178
- nursery provision 4, 6, 27, 55–6, 77, 87, 89, 101, 178, 235
- nutrition 46

- obesity 39, 192–3
- O'Brien, Margaret x, 217; *co-author of Chapter 13*
- observation of children 119–23, 130–2, 146
 - practitioner reflections on 123
- O'Connell, Rebecca x; *co-author of Chapter 2*
- Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) 2, 9, 57, 89, 101–4, 108, 153–4, 170, 175–7, 188–9, 193, 231
- optimal health 39
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2, 7, 87, 100, 155, 175
- other countries, policy and experience from 12–13, 83
- otherness 136
- 'Out and About' research project 143
- outdoor environment 139, 144, 122–3

- paedagog* role in Denmark 68, 75–6
- Paley, Vivian Gussin 136
- parental leave 60–1, 79, 92–3, 204–16, 229
 - extension of 211
 - sharing of 215
 - unpaid 212
- parenting leave 13, 204–7, 214
- parents in employment, support for 224
- participatory learning 111
- partnership working
 - between parents and professionals 103
 - between the public and private sectors 89, 91
- Pascal, Chris 114
- paternity leave 203–12, 216
 - eligibility for pay 212
 - sharing of 212
- pay relativities 70, 72, 88, 173
- Payne, Phillip G. 140
- Peacock, Alison 183–4
- pedagogical problems 220
- Pember Reeves, Maud 19, 30
- Penn, Helen 10, 91–2, 102
- performance measures 174, 176, 185

- phonics screening 174, 178, 185
 photography, digital 128
 'plan, do, review' cycle 111
 play 178, 181–2
 nature of 137, 140
 playgroup movement 101
 playing out-of-doors 122–3
 Plowden Report (1967) 100–1, 113
 policy, educational 191–2
 neglect followed by activism 1–7, 56–60, 209–10
 political questions and choices 222–8
 Portugal 151–67
 poverty 4–5, 19–21, 25–6, 29–30, 36, 39, 46–9, 61–2, 95
 in-work 26
 relative deprivation approach to 21
 precarious employment 26, 71
 Pre-School Learning Alliance 179
 prior learning 79
 private provision 10, 57, 63, 70–1, 83–90
 privatisation 95
 professional judgements 180–1
 psychiatric disorders 40
 psychosocial characteristics 42
 'public' systems of ECEC 89–95, 228–31
- qualifications of staff 9, 69–74, 78–9
 Qualified Teacher Status 72
 quality assurance 173
 Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) 78
 quality of educational provision 91–2, 108
 questions and choices not faced 7–8, 10, 14;
 see also political questions and choices
- reception baseline assessment (RBA) 173–4, 177–9, 184
 recognition of children's rights 227–8
 recruitment difficulties 70–2, 79–80
 reflection 127, 146
 Reggio Emilia 3, 110, 126–32, 138, 146, 155–6, 181
 registering of young children 48
 regulation of ECEC 90, 92
 research needs 49, 132
 'rich' children 180
 Ridge, Tess 30
 rights of children 227
 Rinaldi, Carlina 112, 127, 138
 risks in the market for childcare 92
 Roberts-Holmes, Guy x–xi, 185; *author of Chapter 11*
 Rosen, Michael 137
 Rosenthal, Diana Margot xi; *co-author of Chapter 3*
 Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) 46–7, 50
- SAGE Handbook of Early Childhood Policy* 80, 96
 Salazar, António de Oliveira 151, 156
 Salopek, Paul 141
 Santana, Inácia 158–60, 166
 school readiness 8, 104–5, 108, 170–6, 191–2
 'schoolification' 2–3, 77, 120, 221
- schools, role of 224
 'scrapbook' systems 122
 screening programmes 50
 self-perception, children's 182
 Sérgio, António 157
 settings-based approach to health programmes 44
 Shayan, Tahmina 142, 147
 Shelter UK 34–5
 Shildrick, Tracy 30–1
 sick children, leave in respect of 214, 216
 sick pay 208
 Simon, Antonia 79
Sistema de formação cooperada 159–60
 slow pedagogy 134, 140–7, 191, 232
 training for 145–7
 Smith Report (2018) 9
 'smooth space' (Deleuze and Guattari) 145
 social capital 225–6
 social contract 30
 social divisions 57
 social exclusion 51
 Social Fund 28
 social infrastructure 221
 'social pedagogic model' of early childhood practice 75–9, 230
 Social Pedagogy Professional Association (SPPA) 77–8
 Charter 70, 79
 social re-engineering 20
 social segregation and social stratification 86, 92
 solidarity 225
 Sousa, Diana xi; *author of Chapter 10*
 special educational needs and disability (SEND) 87–8, 92–3
 standards 102–4, 171–4
 Starkey, Hugh 153–5
Starting Strong reports 2–3, 7
 StartRight report (1994) 102
 state involvement in public ECEC 83
 stay-at-home parents, payments to 86
 Stockholm project 113
 Storypark (company) 129
 stress 71, 75–6, 178–9, 207
 subsidies 83–7, 90
 substance abuse, treatment for 47
 summer-born children 177–8
 Sure Start programme 6–7, 9, 27, 34, 63, 184
 Sure Start Unit 135
 'surface' approach to learning 108
 Sutton Trust 9
 Sweden 8, 56, 59–66, 83, 113, 204, 231, 235
 synthetic phonics 174
- Tapestry* system 122
 tax credits 6, 25, 84
 tax-free childcare, policy of 86
Te Whāriki curriculum 110–11, 128, 181
 teachers' role 77
 teaching assistants 69
 'teaching to tests' 106
 'testology' 3
 Thatcher, Margaret (and Thatcherism) 10, 24, 27, 101, 191
 'Third Way' politics 24

- Thomas Coram Research Unit (TCRU)
54, 78
- Thomas the Tank Engine 139–40
- timeline of ECEC 14–17
- Tizard, Jack 1, 54–8, 62, 64
- Townsend, Peter 21
- trade union membership 70, 74, 76
- training programmes 44, 145–7
- transactional theory of knowledge 107
- Transformation Fund 65
- transformative change 10–14
need for 19–20, 34–7, 54–9, 67–72, 77,
80–9, 100–5, 119–26, 134–40, 151–6,
167, 170–9, 188–95, 203–13, 222
steps towards 47–50, 59–65, 73–80, 89–95,
106–14, 126–32, 140–7, 156–67,
180–5, 195–200, 213–17, 228–34
time and continuity required for 235
see also achievability
- transformational leadership 111
- Treasury Committee of the House of Commons
86, 94
- Trevor, Georgina xi; *co-author of Chapter 7*
- turnover of staff 70–1
- Unger, Roberto 10
- unified services 59, 61, 65, 68, 130
- unitary systems 60
- United Nations 19, 29, 36, 79, 95, 112, 114
Convention on the Rights of the Child
(UNCRC) 89, 134–5, 227–8
Educational, Scientific and Cultural
Organization (UNESCO) 57
- United States 46
- Universal Credit 26, 86, 95
- upskilling 73, 78
- Vaghi, Francesca xi–xii, 200; *author of
Chapter 12*
values 153–4, 158, 223–5
- Varvantakis, Christos 189, 195
- video recordings 124–5, 129–31
- visibility of learning 181
- ‘voice of the child’ 135
- volunteers, use of 71
- voucher schemes 4, 84
- Wall, Karin 217
- welfare policy and the welfare state 19–20,
24–5, 28, 36, 221
- ‘what works’ perspective 8, 222
- Whitman, Walt 152
- Wilshaw, Sir Michael 104
- work–life balance 205, 208, 229
- workforce and workload issues 2, 65, 67–9,
72–80, 88, 130, 179, 220, 235
- working hours 93
- World Health Organization (WHO) 222
- Wright, Erik Olin 233
- Yelland, Nicola & Frantz Bentley 147
- young children
circumstances faced by 13
rights of 227
sensitivity and understanding
of 135
- Zigler, Ed 5

Early childhood education and care has been a political priority in England since 1997, when government finally turned its attention to this long-neglected area. Public funding has increased, policy initiatives have proliferated and at each general election political parties aim to outbid each other in their offer to families. *Transforming Early Childhood in England: Towards a Democratic Education* argues that, despite this attention, the system of early childhood services remains flawed and dysfunctional. National discourse is dominated by the cost and availability of childcare at the expense of holistic education, while a hotchpotch of fragmented provision staffed by a devalued workforce is characterised by a culture of targets and measurement. With such deep-rooted problems, early childhood education and care in England is beyond minor improvements. In the context of austerity measures affecting many young families, transformative change is urgent.

Transforming Early Childhood in England offers a critical analysis of the current system and proposes change based on young children's universal right to education. The book calls for provision built on democratic principles, where all learning by all children is visible and recognised, educators are trusted and respected, and a calmer approach called 'slow pedagogy' replaces outcomes-driven targets. Combining criticism and hope, and drawing on inspiring research and examples from home and abroad, the book is essential reading for students, educators, practitioners, parents, academics and policymakers – anyone, in fact, who seeks to understand the policy problems for early childhood education and care in England, and see better prospects for the future.

Claire Cameron is Professor of Social Pedagogy at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education. She has a long-standing record of research on children's services, including studies of the early childhood care and education workforce. Publications include the coedited works *International Perspectives in the Early Years* and *The SAGE Handbook of Early Childhood Policy*.

Peter Moss is Emeritus Professor of Early Childhood provision at Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education. He co-founded the international network on leave policies and, for ten years, co-edited the book series 'Contesting Early Childhood'. Much of his work has been cross-national, and his interests include early childhood education, democracy in education and the relationship between employment, care and gender.

 Free open access
version available from
www.uclpress.co.uk

 **UCLPRESS**

Cover design:
www.ironicalics.com

Cover image:
© LarisaBlinova / iStock

