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The two faces of Integration: integrated systems of early childhood education and integration of ECEC services within Education

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Introduction

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is on the policy agenda and is a public concern in most industrialized countries. Its value and its multiple roles in society are strongly marked. However, unlike primary school or other levels of education, which have clear goals and a relatively homogeneous form, ECEC's policy and programs encompass a wide range of understandings and programme implementation.

The state management of childcare and preschool education has traditionally been separated into welfare and education, each having its own programme funding and administrative arrangements.

Such split systems have been the subject of critical discussion since the 1970s, with the debate towards an integrated approach to early childhood care and education (ECEC) intensifying following the work of the European Commission Network on Childcare in the 1980s and 1990s, and OECD thematic review on ECEC between 1998 and 2006. Some countries have sought mechanisms to overcome the inconsistencies of split systems by either setting up intersectoral coordination mechanisms or integrating the responsibilities for ECEC within a single sector. From the 1980s, and more intensively in the 1990s, countries started to move their services towards education¹. Are the premises that shape an integrated approach model to the previous model of childcare and preschool education the same that motivated countries to integrate all ECEC services within education? This paper intends to discuss this key question by arguing for the existence of distinct movements regarding integration: those towards shaping an integrated approach to childcare and preschool education in general, and those bringing those two areas within education.

In my previous study (HADDAD, 2002) I argued that world events such as the Cold War, the Western Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, and globalization raise new pressures, which create new value-based tensions for societies to solve, revealing what Cochran calls "pattern of change" once they transcend individual countries. While the Cold War ideologies caused a split in care and education, and the "Western cultural revolution" created a momentum towards integration, unifying educational and social objectives, Globalization forces have restrained the move toward unified services, by tending to minimise government's participation. In this paper, I shall argue that while an integrated approach to early care and education was nourished by the counter-cultural revolution of the Sixties, integration within education has been pushed by globalization.

An integrated approach to ECEC as an expression of counter cultural movements

¹ The project Learning and Caring Together (Kaga, Bennett and Moss, 2010) identifies 15 countries in which ECEC is integrated within education: Iceland, New Zealand (1986), Viet Nam (1986), Spain (1990), Botswana (1994), Brazil (1996), Slovenia (1996), Sweden (1996), England (1998), Jamaica (1998), Scotland (1998), and Norway (2005).

The call for an integrated approach to ECEC is a social phenomenon, a demand from civil society in most industrialized countries undergoing deep changes requiring new childcare arrangements, in which the women's movement played a special role.

The protest movements of 1967-1971 – feminist, black power, student, hippies etc.– is referred by Morin (1986, p. 165) as a “western cultural revolution”, as they problematize in depth within the Western society a model so far uncontested and implicit of “white, western and virile superiority”, which shook a system, a civilization, a culture and a society. While, in part, the countervalues that were opposed to the contested values, such as nature, love and peace, are culturally female, on the other part, they amplified an invisible movement; a pre-silent revolution that fought in the female universe and that unleashed a series of changes in the life and role of women in society. For this reason, the author considers the women's movement as a contemporary phenomenon that has placed more fundamental problems of science and politics on man.

Indeed, the global feminist movement played a unique role in the revision of the meaning of day care centre (*crèche*) by associating it with issues such as maternity, paternity and changes in the domestic arena like gender norms and roles. Moreover, the feminists challenged the idea that childcare services should be restricted to disadvantaged families or poor working mothers.

In many countries, the women's movement played an important role in creating new possibilities for extra parental child socialization, opening up a new concept of childcare – with professional and educational components, which met the child's needs for care and education as well as the social, occupational and family needs of women. This new conceptual framework, encompassing the social and educational dimensions, is one of the seeds sown in the development of what I have called integrated approach to ECEC (HADDAD, 2002, p. 22).

One important observation is the type of services demanded in the context of social movements. For example, in Brazil, the women were fighting for the rights for day care centres (*crèches*) and that was what was presented in the banner among the crowds. It was probably for the structure these services usually provided: full time, extension of age range (including spaces for under 3) and volume of services (such as resting and feeding). These components shape this type of institution as a solid mechanism of family support, making possible the reconciliation of paid work and family responsibility. Therefore, the linkage of these services to ministries related to family or child matters, which was the majority pattern in most industrial countries. There is no evidence in the literature of the development of day care centres (*crèches*) under the ministry of education during this period. It suggests that the educational system has not always been able or willing to answer the demands for *crèches*, which was circumscribed by issues of family life.

Some countries were more sensitive and responsive to answer the demand for childcare in a more consistent way, such as the Scandinavian countries and came out ahead with the consummation of integration of childcare services and kindergarten. Although not coordinated, these services were already linked to the social welfare ministry.

The qualitative leap from the past was the recognition of the multiple functions of ECEC, including, other dimensions of human existence not always taken into account. The promotion of child development in all aspects: physical, affective, moral, spiritual and intellectual; the well-being of children and their right to a safe, pleasant, joyful and stimulating atmosphere, as well as new opportunities for relationships with other

children and adults; the possibility for parents to combine professional and family activities; the promotion of equality between men and women; and the optimization of the parents' ability to fulfil their parental roles are some of the dimensions that can be cited.

Childcare began to move out of the domestic arena and became considered as an important social means for promoting human development to be guaranteed by public authorities. The work carried out by the European Community Network on Child Care (1988-1996) and the OECD Starting Strong project (1998 and 2006) contributed to this debate.

Established in 1988 and committed to gender equality, the EC Network on Childcare encompassed a wide range of issues correlated to ECEC services such as parental employment, parental leave, men as carers and childcare in rural areas. The Network's concept of 'child care' was broad and included the need for employment and the upbringing of children to be combined in a way that promoted gender equality, the best use of parents' skills and abilities and the well-being and development of children (EC Childcare Network, 1992, p.6).

One of the main evidences of the state of childcare services was the split system. The majority of the member states' provision came under the responsibility of two systems: welfare and education. Lack of coherence and inconsistencies between the services offered led to uncoordinated services and overlap of public responsibilities as well as affecting funding systems and admission criteria. Publicly funded services for children under 3, which were often dealt with within the welfare system, were low in terms of supply and offered a lower level of skilled professionals, work, and pay conditions, when compared to the services for children over 3. The latter, generally linked to the educational sector, offered greater availability but with shorter opening hours.

The 1996 EC Childcare Network report took another important step forward towards integration. It focused on the volume of services offered arguing that critical dimension could not be reached by simply counting the number of children and places available in each establishment. Greater availability, daily and annually, as found in the services linked to the welfare systems, was recognised as more in tune with the needs of families and working parents compared to those linked to the education systems. The report was critical of the failure of the education system to take into account the needs of working parents and care for school age children.

As a conclusion, the 1996 Report stated the difficulty to justify the "current" division between education and welfare systems given the recognition of the double pedagogical and care functions.

The development of a coherent and integrated system of services goes beyond issues of structure and organization. It deals with the concept of services - who and what they are for. A coherent and integrated service should be more able to adopt a holistic approach to the needs of children and their families, recognizing the breadth and inter-connectedness of these needs, and the importance of developing an approach to meeting these needs which is flexible and multi-functional (EC Childcare Network, 1996, p. 134-5.).

Created under the premises of equal opportunities for men and women, the EC Network generated an idea of integration that has as a central aspect a joint attention to the needs of children and family. This conception asserts multiple functions to ECEC. While

encompassing and going beyond the needs of working parents and children's learning, it also involves a new attitude towards the education of young children. Consequently, the transfer of services to a single ministry was not enough; a redefinition of its goal and structure towards the accomplishment of its multiple functions was a necessary condition.

Several of the premises established by the EC Network on Childcare remained as references in the OECD thematic review launched in 1998. One reason, as pointed out by Mahon (2011, p. 84) could be the collaboration of many members of the Network for the review, including its coordinator, Peter Moss. Moreover, OECD's *Starting Strong* project was headed by John Bennett, who had been deeply involved in the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, while in charge of UNESCO's Child and Youth program.

The adoption of the terminology Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) was a deliberate option to emphasise the fact that 'care' and 'education' are inseparable and to support the view of 'an integrated and coherent approach to policy and provision which is inclusive of *all* children and *all* parents, regardless of their employment or socio-economic status' (OECD, 2001, p. 14). Therefore, OECD's *Starting Strong* programme assumes an inclusive approach towards human rights with implications for policy and programme implementation. First, children are seen as a '*social group with rights*', and not just as dependents on parents or as primarily in need of childcare to enable their parents' employment' (idem, p. 127). Second, ECEC policies are considered 'part of a system of wider supports to promote the well-being of children and families' (idem, p. 34). Great consideration is given to the potential of ECEC to support parents in conciliating work and family responsibility as well as to promote gender equality. This approach emphasizes the close link between ECEC and parental leave policies as well as the socialization of children in both rural and urban areas. The broader role of ECEC is defined as a 'place for children in their early years to socialise and learn through their relationships with other children and other adults' (idem, p. 41). The review acknowledges that it is important for children to possess skills and learning strategies for school but is critical of the view that they need to be prepared for school and the future.

The second comparative report on the thematic review on ECEC (OECD 2006) evaluates the challenges of ECEC policy-making and service coordination, and restates the broader ECEC policy view that was concerned with not only providing education and care to young children, but also with women's and children's rights. The report indicates that integration under one ministry brings a clearer policy vision in ECEC and more effective funding and management of the system.

Neuman (2005, p. 134-5) calls attention to important political and philosophical issues raised by the decision to integrate all early childhood services into the national education system. One concern about bringing together some areas of responsibility is the marginalization of child welfare, health and other services from ECEC, making coordination with such services more challenging, and the exacerbation of coordination barriers with non-education sectors. Another concern is related to the loss of early childhood traditions and practices to a dominant schooling model focused on a narrower set of academic concerns and the erosion of specific pedagogical pre-school methods. While institutional positioning of ECEC within the education system may strengthen its political status with regards to national policy, it may lose some specificity vis-à-vis primary education and policy may become less distinctive.

These concerns are embodied in the term ‘schoolification’ to express what can happen when early education adopts the knowledge transfer model of primary education and is conceived of as a ‘junior school’. The term encompasses a combination of classes organised according to age; adoption of contents and methods of primary schooling with stress on literacy and numeracy; scheduled activities planned mostly indoors; little time left for free play, choice of activities and outdoor discoveries. In this model, teachers are trained predominantly in primary education methods and have little or no certification in early childhood pedagogy (OECD, 2006, p. 62).

According to Kaga et al (2010), there are conflicting arguments and ambivalent feelings about integrating ECEC services in education but relatively little information on its consequences. The lack of comparative research assessing this option motivated the launching of UNESCO’s *Caring and Learning Together* project that investigates nine countries’ experiences with different types of governance.

Integration within education as an expression of globalization

Far from being an expression of civil society movements integration within education is a government trend towards consolidating a national ECEC policy under the aegis of the ministry of education as part of the schooling system. This trend has evolved rapidly and in a worldwide scale and must be understood within the context of globalization.

Dale (2000) explores very well the relationship between globalization and education in his approach summarized as the Globally Structured Agenda for Education (GSAE). The starting point, drawn on work in international political economy, is to see the changing nature of the world capitalist economy as the driving force of globalization and seek to establish its effects on educational systems. The label “Global” implies an extra-national focus, i.e., social and economic forces operating “supranationally and transnationally”, “to elude, break down, or override national boundaries, while reconstructing the relations between nations”. “Structured Agenda” means a “systematic set of unavoidable issues for nation-states that is framed by their relation to globalization” (Dale, 2000, p. 428). “Education” is concerned to the structures and process that “affect the life chances of individuals and groups and the overall mutual relations of educational systems to the wider social collectivities and institutions of which they are part” (idem, p. 439).

In this approach, globalization is seen as being constructed through three related sets of activities: economic, political, and cultural, which is characterized, respectively, as “hyper-liberalism, governance without government, and commodification and consumerism”.

Dale (2000, p. 436-437) explains that this form and extent of globalization is different from any other ever seen in the past, for two key factors. First, it makes possible for the first time to speak of a global economy that includes all nations of the world. It has resulted from the formal collapse of the only alternative to capitalism as well as the accelerating thrust of the commodification of everything, which accompanies it. Second, it is a triumph of a system, not a new hegemonic nation. As a result, of the multinational corporations and the technical changes in the velocity of financial exchanges, the global economy escapes the control of even the most powerful of nations. This also led to the creation of new forms of supranational governance that took on authoritarian forms previously unheard of. He also emphasizes that these

changes result from changing conditions in the pursuit of profit, which remains the motor of the whole system.

In a critical fashion, every national regulatory policy is now molded and defined by both supranational forces as well as national political-economic forces. As a result of these indirect relationships, it is through the influence over States and regulation that globalization has its most obvious and important effects over national educational systems.

Dale & Robertson (2002, p.11) point out that much of the literature has essentially treated globalization as a “process without a subject”, which reveals a major source of the confusion and apprehension around globalization. Transnational corporations, international financial institutions, and international organizations, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), OECD, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and G7/8 are some of the wide range of subjects and drivers of the globalization process and the possible meaning for the globalization of education.

With different degrees of influence and importance, these organizations have direct intervention in educational policies. This external influence was highlighted at the World Education for All (EFA) Conference held in Jomtien in 1990, since EFA served as a landmark for designing educational policies worldwide, especially in basic education (Fullgraf, 2007).

However, beyond the focus limited to only education, this original broad vision of basic education i.e. basic learning skills for the world's population and the ambitious goal of a quality education for all has narrowed in many cases (Torres, 2001). Learning identified with school performance gave rise to standardized tests; ‘the traditional confusion between *education* and *teaching*, as well as between *teaching* and *learning*, suggested that “improving education” is equivalent to “improving teaching” and that both “improve learning” and the emphasis on contents and results rather than processes, resulting in the adoption of assessment systems by most countries (TORRES, 2001, p. 44-45). The trend of the 90s that ‘bet on increasing the *time* (of study, schooling, exposure to teaching) as a key variable to improve learning’ illustrates the impact of that concept of learning (TORRES, 2001, p. 48). In this decade, most countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia increased the number of years of compulsory education to eight, nine, ten, eleven or more. In many cases, this increase meant the inclusion of one or two years of pre-school education.

These changes in the broad concept of basic education directly influenced the identity and goals of early childhood education in the sense that ‘the programmes are being promoted not so much as a function of child development, but as “preventive strategy of school failure” among the most “needy”’ (TORRES, 2001, p. 35).

The first goal adopted by EFA, ‘Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children’, involves a realignment of ECEC policies in developing countries. Two sets of priorities to achieve this goal were observed (Haddad, 2002), which differ according to age group. One refers to the expansion of preschool classes for the age that precedes compulsory schooling, with a view to universalizing admission to ages 4–5, as a way of guaranteeing full access to formal schooling. The second refers to programmes for families and communities directed at children under 3.

Of note was the adoption of different terminologies by international organizations (such as *Early Childhood Development - ECD* – used by WB, and now, also by UNICEF), which altered the concept of childhood as a social category and of early childhood education as the legitimate space for the child to live its childhood, undermining the concept of social responsibility and accentuating the gap between developed and developing countries.

The programmes that stem from ECD are also quite different; they include all the activities and interventions, which address the needs of young children and the contexts in which they are embedded, such as families and community environments, which does not always mean providing services directly to children in centre-based programmes².

In contrast to the EC Network on Childcare and OECD's *Starting Strong* programme, the literature of international organizations regarding developing countries advocates that 'programmes should be less costly and run by mothers or community leaders'; 'parents and close caregivers (such as older siblings) should be an equal target population'; 'settings should be community or home-based'; and 'private sector involvement should be encouraged' (ARANGO, 1998; YOUNG, 1996, cf HADDAD, 2002, p. 41).

Closely examining OECD's ECEC policy discourses and those of the WB, Mahon (2011) found similar trends. While the WB and its networks draw their inspiration from the residual American social policy model, targeting the poor while leaving the rest to rely on markets and families, *Starting Strong* reflects European social policy and especially the Nordic model, which embodies the principle of universality. There are also huge differences in the approach to women. The WB remains rooted in American family values and emphasizes women's maternal role, while the OECD and the EU remain committed to 'women's equality with men in the labour market and the importance of shared parental leave' (MAHON, 2011, p. 92).

Conclusion

In the globally structured agenda for education, there is little room for issues related to family life, gender equality and reconciliation between work and family responsibilities. As Mahon states (2011, p. 81), gender equity in the ECD discourse of the WB is less 'a matter of equality between men and women than as means for levelling the playing field between boys and girls with regard to access to education'. The implication for policy and practice is a conceptual reduction of early childhood education and care; in the education system, which is legitimized only as the first stage of basic education, and not as an integrated policy, that combines education and social dimensions.

The more recent changes in the organization of the Brazilian basic education testifies to it. In the year 2006, the compulsory schooling was extended from 8 to 9 years by the inclusion of all 6-year-old children in elementary education nationwide. As a result, the age range of ECEC decreased to 0 to 5. By 2013, the period of compulsory basic education was extended from the age of 4, even though the right to a place in preschool had been guaranteed since 1998 by the Constitution. Enrolment in preschool is no longer a family choice. There is a concern that the expansion of educational provision

² For a critical discuss on the view on the World Bank's view of early childhood and ECD programmes, see Mahon (2011), Penn (2002) and Rosemberg (2006) among others.

for pre-school will penalize access for children under 3, since the coverage for this age group is still low.

The strengthening of schooling for 4 to 5 year olds and the declining attention to collective education for children under 3; the resistance from the education system to the expansion of resources for full time provision, especially for the over 3's; the definition of a common national curriculum, pushing on the rights of learning; and the implementation of a national system of evaluation for all levels of education, are some symptoms of a global agenda for education. An agenda that reduces the broader meaning of education to learning and weakens ECEC as an integrated system, since it eliminates the fundamental social dimensions that has supported this concept.

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