FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY
AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

Childcare as a public-private educational practice: A study of the relations between childcare and the family in the curriculum and in quality evaluation

Jeroen Janssen

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Michel Vandenbroeck

A dissertation submitted to Ghent University in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Social Work and Social Welfare Studies

Academic year 2020–2021

GHENT
UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY
AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

Childcare as a public-private educational practice: A study of the relations between childcare and the family in the curriculum and in quality evaluation

Jeroen Janssen

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Michel Vandenbroeck

A dissertation submitted to Ghent University in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Social Work and Social Welfare Studies

Academic year 2020–2021

GHENT
UNIVERSITY

Dutch title

Kinderopvang als een publiek-private opvoedingspraktijk: Een onderzoek naar de verbinding tussen het opvang- en thuismilieu in het curriculum en de kwaliteitsevaluatie

Doctoral Advisory Committee

Prof. Dr. Michel Vandenbroeck
Ghent University, Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy

Prof. Dr. Ilse Derluyn
Ghent University, Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy

Dr. Jan Peeters
Ghent University, Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy

Prof. Dr. Ann Buysse
Ghent University, Department of Experimental Clinical and Health Psychology

Examination Committee

Prof. Dr. Peter Vlerick
Ghent University, Department of Personnel Management, Work and Organizational Psychology

Prof. Dr. Pauline Slot
Utrecht University, Department of Child, Family and Education Studies

Prof. Dr. Tuba Bircan
Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Department of Sociology

Prof. Dr. Ruben Vanderlinde
Ghent University, Department of Educational Studies

Prof. Dr. Geert Van Hove
Ghent University, Department of Special Needs Education

Prof. Dr. Bruno Vanobbergen
Ghent University, Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy

Acknowledgments

This doctoral dissertation is the outcome of a journey on which I set off seven years ago. It all started shortly after my final exam, on Wednesday the 3th of July 2013 to be precisely, when I received a rather mysterious text message urging me to check my email for a job offer from Prof. Michel Vandenbroeck. This struck me by surprise as I was still awaiting my final grades and had never been in close contact with Michel before. Admittedly, working in an academic setting had never really occurred to me, but I chose to accept the offer anyway. During that summer I did several ‘internships’ at local childcare settings as a kind of preparation for what was coming, namely a three-year research project about ‘Measuring and Monitoring Quality’ in Flemish childcare (MeMoQ). Meanwhile, we developed the idea of using this landmark study as the basis for a doctoral study. So it happened that after three years I was given the opportunity to stay for four more years at the Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy as an assistant. Now, after finishing my PhD, I look back on this adventure with great pride. I would argue this is the result not only of my own efforts but also of the people surrounding me. Therefore, I sincerely want to thank them.

First and foremost, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to my supervisor Prof. dr. Michel Vandenbroeck for his intellectual guidance, encouragement and devotion. Michel, I can imagine that it must have been exhausting and frustrating at times to support a PhD student that continuously fails to meet his own deadlines, prefers major over minor revisions, gets lost into details and requests feedback on nearly everything (even emails). When you showed me that sword you received as an honorary doctor at the University of Tampere, I wondered whether you were finally going to put an end to it… No, seriously, I am deeply grateful for the fact that you accepted me as I am, for the way you kept providing me with feedback at short notice and for giving me the appreciation I needed to continue my work.

I am also deeply grateful to Prof. dr. Bram Spruyt. Bram, your assistance in conducting statistical analyses has been a true blessing. If it was up to Andy Field and his handbook *Discovering statistics using SPSS*, I was probably still checking assumptions. I would like to thank you for the many Skype conversations wherein you showed genuine interest in my work, explained the do's and don’ts in multilevel modelling and allowed me to develop my analyses to the next level. More than once, you succeeded in making plain the story behind the numbers. I would also like to thank all co-authors (Prof. dr. Filip Van Droogenbroeck, Prof. dr. Lieselot De Wilde and dr. Jochen Devlieghere), as well as the members of the Guidance Committee (dr. Jan Peeters, Prof. dr. Ilse Derluyn and Prof. dr. Ann Buysse). Your contributions and supportive feedback were of great value for my research.

Furthermore, I owe a word of thanks to my fellow MeMoQ researchers Hester Hulpia, Mieke Daems, Bart Declercq and Charlotte Van Cleynenbreugel. I am still amazed by the amount of work that we as a team, under supervision of Prof. dr. Michel Vandenbroeck and Prof. dr. Ferre Laevers, carried out over the course of those three years. A special thanks also to Hanne Van Mierlo and Charlotte Bastiaen, who joined the team in our *Ronde van Vlaanderen* (the period wherein we travelled across Flanders to undertake observations in 400 childcare settings). In this context, I would also like to extend my gratitude to all those childcare providers and parents who were willing to participate in the project. In addition, I am thankful to *Kind en Gezin* for giving me the opportunity to use these data within my doctoral dissertation.

A warm-hearted thanks goes to my (former) colleagues at the Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy. After seven years of coffee breaks, lunch in the kitchen, afterwork drinks, Christmas parties, conferences, structured retreats, receptions, office dinners, … there is an endless list of people that one way or another contributed to my well-being at work. Without going further into detail, I want to thank everyone for making the *PP04* and *office 120.006* such an enjoyable place. It was an honour to be part of this community. A special word of thanks goes to Cedric Goossens and Robin Kemper, who became close friends along the way.

I would also want to extend my gratitude to my girlfriend, Veerle Van Loon. Veerle, I am truly blessed to have you in my life. Throughout the last seven years you never hesitated to support me, even when this meant taking a day off to check my statistical analyses, discuss parts of my research or help me to overcome my writer’s block. During the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the both of us worked at home, you saw how hard I struggled to finalize my doctoral thesis. Thanks for giving me the strength to persevere!

Finally, my sincere gratitude goes to my family. I am grateful to my parents, Greet Op de Beeck and Raf Janssen, for their ongoing support and endless love. Mum and dad, thanks for everything you gave me in life.

Jeroen,
Ghent, August 2020

Table of contents

CHAPTER 1 13

General introduction 13

1.1 Problem statement 15
1.2 The pursuit of quality in Flanders: from necessary evil to the MeMoQ project 17
    1.2.1 Curriculum development 20
    1.2.2 Baseline measurement of childcare quality 21
    1.2.3 Instruments for monitoring and improvement of childcare quality 30
1.3 Beyond the pursuit of quality: re-politicization of early childhood education 31
    1.3.1 Parental involvement 32
    1.3.2 Commodification 34
    1.3.3 Equal opportunities 36
1.4 Research questions 38
1.5 Methodology 39
    1.5.1 Adopting a quantitative research stance 40
    1.5.2 Adopting a qualitative research stance 42
1.6 Chapter outline 45
1.7 References 47
1.8 Notes 63

CHAPTER 2 69

Is everybody happy? Exploring the predictability of parent satisfaction with childcare in Flanders 69

2.1 Introduction 73
2.2 Parents' imperfect rationality 74
2.3 The present study 75
    2.3.1 Research context 76
    2.3.2 Methods 77
    2.3.3 Measures 78
2.4 Results 82
    2.4.1 Descriptives 82
    2.4.2 Multilevel regression models 84
2.5 Conclusion 86
2.6 Limitations 88

CHAPTER 3 **103**

The language of choice and the childcare choices of language minority families: A portrait of disadvantage 103

3.1 Introduction 107
3.2 Parental childcare decision-making 107
3.3 The present study 109
  3.3.1 Research context 109
  3.3.2 Method 110
  3.3.3 Measures 112
  3.3.4 Analysis 114
3.4 Results 120
  3.4.1 Inequality in parental childcare decision-making 120
  3.4.2 Reproduction of inequality through parental childcare decision-making 121
3.5 Discussion and conclusion 122
  3.5.1 Reasons to use childcare 122
  3.5.2 Experiences while searching for childcare 123
  3.5.3 Selection motives 124
  3.5.4 Quality obtained 124
  3.5.5 Implications for policy and practice 125
3.6 Limitations 125
3.7 References 126

CHAPTER 4 **143**

From multiculturalism to super-diversity in the early years: An analysis of curriculum issues 143

4.1 Introduction 147
4.2 Curriculum reform in times of (super-)diversity 148
4.3 Methods 152
  4.3.1 Data collection 152
  4.3.2 Data analysis 154
4.4 Results 154
  4.4.1 Acculturation 154
  4.4.2 Anti-bias education 156
  4.4.3 Equity pedagogy 157
  4.4.4 Epistemology 158
  4.4.5 Intersectionality 160
4.5 Discussion and concluding remarks 161
4.6 References 163

CHAPTER 5 **173**

(De)constructing parental involvement in early childhood curricular frameworks 173

5.1 Introduction 177
5.2 Method 179
  5.2.1 Data selection 179
  5.2.2 Data analysis 181
5.3 Results 182
  5.3.1 Creating child-centred learning environments 182
  5.3.2 Monitoring developmental progress 184
  5.3.3 Negotiating pedagogical practice 186
  5.3.4 Ensuring smooth transitions 189
  5.3.5 Providing parenting support 192
5.4 Discussion 193
5.5 Implications for policy and practice 195
5.6 References 197

CHAPTER 6 **209**

General conclusion and discussion 209

6.1 Introduction 211
6.2 Main findings 212
  6.2.1 (De)constructing parental involvement in early childhood curricular frameworks 212
  6.2.2 Is everybody happy? Exploring the predictability of parent satisfaction with childcare 215
  6.2.3 The language of choice and the childcare choices of language minority families: A portrait of disadvantage 216
  6.2.4 From multiculturalism to super-diversity: an analysis of curriculum issues 217
6.3 Discussion 218
  6.3.1 Implications for policy and practice 218
  6.3.2 Limitations and directions for future research 221
6.4 References 224

English summary 231

Nederlandstalige samenvatting 235

Data storage fact sheets 241

CHAPTER 1

General introduction

1.1 Problem statement

> *“The nursery is but a temporal necessity. Many housewives currently work outside the home, but we may hope that this situation will improve.” (Velge, 1940 in: Vandenbroeck, 2009)*

As the first Secretary General of the *Nationaal Werk voor Kinderwelzijn* (1919-1948)[1], Henri Velge was a protagonist in policy debates on childcare provision in the first part of the twentieth century in Belgium. His conservative views on female labour market participation and non-parental childcare withheld successive governments from considering any pedagogical potential in childcare provision. In Velge’s eyes, childcare was a ‘necessary evil’ and only legitimate in the exceptional case of a mother unable to care for the child herself. Accordingly, the official discourse was one of discouragement and suspicion.

Nearly one century later, however, the childcare services to which Velge strongly opposed have become mainstream. Most recent estimates indicate that in Flanders the majority (55%) of children under the age of three years attend formal childcare (Kind en Gezin, 2019). Indeed, it seems unlikely that a prominent state official today would call unfavourable attention to childcare utilization. Instead, a radical shift in thinking about the needs of children and working parents has taken place. From the moment maternal employment numbers increased significantly, so too did the number of studies indicating that non-parental childcare not necessarily need to result in impaired functioning for children (Akgündüz et al., 2015; Burger, 2010; Camilli et al., 2010; Dalli et al., 2011; Melhuish, 2004; Melhuish et al., 2015; Mitchell et al., 2008; Van Belle, 2016; Vandenbroeck et al., 2018). The eventual consensus on whether out-of-home care helps or hinders children’s development is that it depends on the quality of such experiences.

Empirical evidence that high-quality childcare carries great potential to yield individual and societal benefits is accumulating for many decades now. According to Melhuish et al. (2015), positive effects are nowadays evidenced in culturally and socio-economically diverse countries, over a greater timespan and with fewer methodologic flaws. It is fair to say therefore that the evidence-base is quite robust, in particular with regard to children’s cognitive and socio-emotional development.[2] Short-term benefits are usually recorded at primary school entry, where teacher reports and performance tests provide evidence for heightened cognitive abilities (e.g. better attainment in language, pre-reading and early number concepts) and advanced behaviours crucial for successful adjustment to primary school (e.g. peer sociability, independence, concentration, co-operation, conformity) (Andersson, 1992; Broberg et al., 1997; Burger, 2010; Felfe & Lavile, 2018; Gormley et al., 2008; Lekhal et al., 2011; Melhuish et al., 2006; Melhuish et al., 2008; Penn, 2009; Sylva et al., 2004; Vandell et al., 2010; Votruba-Drzal et al., 2004, 2015). Studies with longitudinal follow-up found that positive effects persist throughout school careers with higher scores on performance tests and better school progress in general (Andersson, 1992; Belsky et al., 2007; Berlinski et al., 2009; Cortazar et al., 2019; Gorey, 2001; Havnes & Mogstad, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2008; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 1999;Taggart, Sylva et al., 2015; Vandell et al., 2010). Studies that followed children into adulthood furthermore reported long-term gains in a broad array of life domains, such as health and healthy behaviours, family income and employment, crime and social behaviours (Barnett, 2011; Barnett & Ackerman, 2006; Campbell et al., 2002; Chetty et al., 2011; Gorey, 2001; Havnes & Mogstad, 2011; Penn et al., 2006; Reynolds et al., 2011; Schweinhart et al., 2005).[3]

Adverse effects of low-quality childcare, on the other hand, are less pronounced, though long hours of exposure are known to be stress-provoking (Dettling et al., 2000; Geoffroy et al., 2006; Legendre, 2003; Sims, 2007; Sims et al., 2006; Vermeer & van IJzendoorn, 2006). Chronic or frequent activation of stress response systems (including elevated stress hormones such as cortisol) early in life, in turn, is associated with increased vulnerability to a range of ills, such as impaired learning and internalized (i.e. anxiety, vigilance) and externalized (i.e. anger, aggression) behaviour problems (Gunnar & Donzella, 2002; Gunnar et al., 2010; Luecken & Lemery, 2004; Shonkoff, 2011). To buffer against the early disruption evoked by so-called ‘toxic stress’, as well as to enable optimal learning and development, young children need to experience stable, stimulating and protective relationships with adults. Either way, an infant or toddler requires sensitive and responsive caregiving that is attuned to their subtle cues, allows for reciprocity in interaction and creates intersubjective understanding (Dalli et al., 2011; Shonkoff, 2011; Turp, 2006).

Against this backdrop, the quality debate is mainly concerned with questions of an essentially technical nature. As I will come to demonstrate by means of the Flemish research project called ‘Measuring and Monitoring Quality’ (MeMoQ), it is nowadays taken for granted to ponder questions such as: how can quality be operationalised? By what means can it be measured? How can it be assured and improved? The concept of quality itself, however, is hardly called into question. This is not to the liking of a group of critical scholars, also known as the 'reconceptualist movement'[4], who strongly opposes to the taken-for-grantedness of talking about quality when it comes down to the pedagogical work of childcare services and its evaluation. Quality, as they see it, is neither neutral nor natural, but saturated with values (e.g. a belief in objective, stable and universal means and ends) and complicit as a management tool in governing early childhood education (Dahlberg et al., 1999, 2007; Moss, 2005, 2007, 2014; Pence & Hix-Small, 2009; Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2008; Soto & Swadener, 2002). As one leading author argues, the pervasive use of the word quality "masks the political nature of education, the notion that education is first and foremost a political question" (Moss, 2014, p. 76). Instead of talking about what is desirable in childcare and why we think this, he regrets that we have absolved ourselves from responsibility and delegated to knowledgeable experts to tell us what we should think and do. A point I will return to throughout my work is that quality may recast everyone as reserves of exploitable human capital and as such disregards social values such as democracy, equity and diversity.

The aim of this dissertation is to broaden the debate about the pedagogical work of childcare services and its evaluation, away from an exclusive focus on technical questions about quality that keep other perspectives at bay. This is not to say that child development theory is irrelevant to my story. Rather, what my research defines is the threatening loss of perspective when so-called 'scientific truths' about young children become the only show in town. As the seminal work of Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), some forty years ago, suggests that strong and supportive links between children's home and childcare environment are conducive to optimal child development, it is my opinion that debates about quality cannot simply be held behind closed doors. Therefore, I want to gain insight into how the interaction between the public and private sphere can be nurtured within the pedagogical work of childcare services and its evaluation.

1.2 The pursuit of quality in Flanders: from necessary evil to the MeMoQ project

As mentioned before, the educational potential of childcare services in Flanders has long been disregarded by state officials. Vandenbroeck's (2009) *In verzekerde bewaring* sheds light on the public discourses that prevailed instead. To capture the zeitgeist of the mid- and late-19th century, when the first childcare services were founded by philanthropic and caritative providers, he describes how concerns about high child mortality rates legitimised prophylactic interventions. The government, though reluctant to encourage childcare utilization, increasingly committed itself to monitor and improve the hygienic conditions of childcare services. From the 1970s onwards, the attachment theory became more influential in the quality debate with speculations on the potentially adverse effects of insecure attachments during infancy. As the number of children in non-parental care began to rise, inspection became more stringent. The newly emerged concerns about children's developmental needs, however, were largely disregarded (e.g., focus on available space, hygienic caregiving).

According to Vandenbroeck (2009), it lasted until the second state reform and establishment of *Kind en Gezin* (currently known as *Agentschap Opgroeien Regie*) in 1987 before things really started to change. Under the *Kind en Gezin* administration, public accountability for the educational function of childcare provision finally grew. An important event in this regard was the implementation of a standardized evaluation tool to facilitate the inspection of pedagogical quality. Inspired by the emergence of scientific measurement scales such as the American Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (Harms et al., 1990), which increased credibility and capacity to make objective judgements about quality pedagogy, *Kind en Gezin* launched the so-called *Beoordelingsschaal voor het pedagogisch functioneren in kinderdagverblijven* in the public childcare sector. It focused on seven quality criteria (i.e., flexibility, individualisation, stimulation, structuring, support for children's autonomy, safety and freedom of movement) in need of caregivers' attention during the day. Three years later, in 1997, an alternative version of the observation scale was developed for supervision of private childcare providers (KWAPOI). However, the instruments became obsolete shortly after due to the implementation of a new decree on quality assurance.

The new decree on quality assurance heralded a period of deregulation whereby more responsibility for quality monitoring and improvement was given to local actors in the field. From 2004 onwards, public childcare provisions were expected to have a documented *kwaliteitshandboek* that contained an explicit statement of quality objectives and procedures relating to, among others, staff, infrastructure, finance, pedagogy, collaboration with parents and accessibility. While it was argued that this turnaround could make the pedagogical work of childcare services subject of debate between childcare providers and important stakeholders, Vandenbroeck (2009) concludes that such democratic involvement was largely kept at bay. Most childcare providers autonomously fulfilled the requirements of the management tool and restricted the voice options of parents to what was minimally expected (i.e. the measurement of parent satisfaction). Also, the role of the inspection agency changed significantly. Instead of using a standardized measurement scale to observe pedagogical practices, as was the case before, the new procedure was to audit whether there is a (mis)match between one's policy and practice.

To support childcare providers in the monitoring and improvement of their pedagogical quality, *Kind en Gezin* invested in the development and implementation of a process-oriented self-evaluation instrument (known as ZiKo or SiCs). Capitalising on the expertise developed at the Research Centre for Experiential Education (ECEGO), ZiKo focused on the observation and assessment of children's well-being and involvement and stimulated childcare staff to reflect on the offer, group climate, room for initiative, organisation and type of guidance (Laevers et al., 2005). Many providers with an interest in the project signed up for professional guidance by ECEGO, which provided the opportunity to conduct a large-scale study on the quality of children's lived experiences in Flemish childcare. Between 2006 and 2008, a total of 748 childcare settings were visited, covering more than thousand three hundred infant/toddler groups (N = 1386) and approximately eleven thousand children (N = 11014) (Laevers et al., 2016). The results suggested that children's well-being was generally higher than their involvement (on a five-point scale: M = 3.61 versus M = 3.27 respectively) and made the authors conclude that future quality improvements may seek to focus especially on providing a more stimulating environment for children.

The most recent episode in the government's pursuit of quality is a research project called 'Measuring and Monitoring Quality' (MeMoQ), which took off in November 2013 and lasted until the end of 2016. The Flemish Government commissioned the project as they felt, especially after a period of deregulation, the need to create more transparency and consistency in how pedagogical quality can be defined, operationalized, measured, monitored and improved. The project, worth over one million euro, was granted to Ghent University and Leuven University (ECEGO), who submitted a joint proposal on behalf of Prof. dr. Michel Vandenbroeck (Ghent University) and Prof. dr. Ferre Laevers (ECEGO). A central thesis within their proposal was that support within the sector is a necessary precondition for any new development to have a significant impact (Vandenbroeck et al., 2011). Therefore, a large group of stakeholders was involved throughout the project[5]; official expectations were clarified so that agencies involved in inspection, pedagogical support and education could become better aligned; inspection instruments were geared towards the appreciation of good practices (instead of focusing solely on minimal quality); and a sense of autonomy for childcare providers was safeguarded.

In what follows, I elaborate further on (my experiences with) this landmark study. The reader should keep in mind that all the work carried out during the MeMoQ project was a team effort.[6]

1.2.1 Curriculum development

In contrast to many other countries and regions (e.g., French-speaking Community of Belgium), there were no centrally coordinated pedagogical guidelines for childcare services in Flanders. According to the OECD (2001, 2006), who undertook a comprehensive analysis of this new policy trend, the development of a so-called pedagogical framework (elsewhere referred to as curriculum) can have many advantages: it can promote a more even level of quality across different age groups, regions and forms of provision; guide and support professional staff; and facilitate communication between staff and with parents. Moreover, where early childhood education and care is organised in a split system, like in Flanders, the development of a pedagogical framework helped broaden the traditional health care approach for under-threes. In other words, the first objective of MeMoQ was to seize this opportunity and to raise the professional status and visibility of childcare services, whom for too long had been (dis)regarded as pre-pedagogic.

As a starting point, we undertook a review of existing curricula to become more familiar with governmental guidance of early childhood education. The analysis was based on a convenience sample (i.e., restricted to documents which were easily accessible online or through our research networks), though reflective of a diversity of curricular approaches. We found, in line with Bennett's (2005) typology, a distinction between so-called 'social pedagogical' and 'pre-primary' or 'school readiness' curricula. The former approach, he argues, characterizes childcare services as places where children and adults learn to be, to know, to do and to live together. Broad guidelines are formulated and further responsibilities for curriculum and implementation are typically devolved to municipalities and services. The other approach, on the other hand, views childcare services mainly as places for learning and instruction where all children are expected to reach certain pre-defined levels of development and learning. However, we also noticed, as did Sylva et al. (2015), how curricula strived towards overcoming the strong dichotomy between an academic and holistic approach. More precisely, some curricula adopt a more comprehensive focus on the ‘whole child’ for the youngest children and a gradually increasing academic emphasis on the ‘learning child’ for children nearing primary school entry.

Next, we discussed with policy representatives and a range of stakeholders which content, outputs and pedagogical guidelines could reasonably be expected in Flanders. In so doing, the consensus grew that the pedagogical framework should by no means become an instrument of normalisation or a curriculum in the traditional sense. More appropriate would be to merely emphasise the conditions to create high quality childcare, without compromising on individual childcare providers' autonomy to make pedagogical choices nor on the ability to contextualize practices in line with the super-diverse reality. Detailed and expert-driven curricula are generally ill-suited for this purpose (Bennett, 2005; OECD, 2001, 2006; Tanner et al., 2006; UNESCO, 2004), so we chose to develop a short and flexible framework that creates a basis for local discussions about quality and how to achieve it. Centre stage is the recognition of children, parents and society as the main beneficiaries of childcare, for whom the document specifies goals, principles and practices to be taken into account by all professionals in the childcare sector. No details are provided about expected child development outcomes. Instead, the framework focuses on the pedagogical process and the importance of adequate adult-child relationships and rich learning environments that cover a variety of so-called ‘areas of experience’ (Kind en Gezin, 2014).

1.2.2 Baseline measurement of childcare quality

The second objective of the MeMoQ project was to draw up a representative portrait of childcare quality in Flanders. Priority was given to the observation of process quality, which the project proposal defined as “the quality of children’s lived experiences while interacting with the social and material environment” (Vandenbroeck et al., 2011, p. 22, own translation). Process quality indicators can be particularly informative with regard to the child development outcomes of childcare attendance (Melhuish et al., 2015; Slot, 2018) and it was key therefore to (also) use highly reliable and internationally validated measurement scales.

Measures of process quality

Given that ZiKo is well-established in Flemish childcare, there was no question that its scientific counterpart (the so-called Leuven Scales for Well-being and Involvement) would be used in the baseline study. In addition, a 15-item environment rating scale was developed by capitalizing on the expertise of ECEGO researchers.

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) was chosen to observe and assess adult-child interactions as it is theoretically grounded in well-supported developmental and educational theories. The CLASS framework emphasises the necessity of positive and affectionate relations with adults in order to establish secure attachments, providing the basis for young children to develop a sense of autonomy and competence and allowing for exploration of their environment and engaging in peer interactions (Slot et al., 2017). CLASS assumes that core characteristics of effective teacher-child interactions show continuity across age levels and across classrooms, although their exact behavioural manifestations may differ by children's age.[7] For the purpose of our research, two versions of the CLASS were used: the CLASS Infant (Hamre et al., 2014) and CLASS Toddler (La Paro et al., 2012). The CLASS Infant measure consists of four dimensions: relational climate, teacher sensitivity, facilitated exploration, and early language support. CLASS Toddler contains eight dimensions: positive climate, negative climate, teacher sensitivity, regard for child perspectives, behaviour guidance, facilitation of learning and development, quality of feedback and language modelling. Based on confirmatory factor analysis, which was used to check construct validity, the CLASS dimensions were clustered into two factors: emotional support and educational support.

Despite their relatively short lifespan, the CLASS Toddler and CLASS Infant rapidly won international scientific acclaim as a reliable and valid observation instrument (Barros et al., 2016; Jamison et al., 2014; La Paro et al., 2014; Perren et al., 2016; Slot et al., 2017). The study of Pastori and Pagani (2017) nonetheless suggests that cultural validity might be at stake when standard-based measures such as CLASS migrate out of their original context. To check whether the application of CLASS in Flanders gave rise to cross-cultural complexities, the issue was discussed with local experts in the field. The expert panel concluded that the use of CLASS, in combination with the other measurement scales, is off added value. Yet, some experts were concerned about the CLASS Toddler's emphasis on a caregiver's leading role and the fact that it largely disregards the value of peer learning.

Since application of CLASS instruments is subject to a mandatory reliability training offered by a licensed CLASS trainer, all data collectors followed training sessions provided by Pauline Slot (CLASS Toddler) and Jennifer LoCasale-Crouch (CLASS Infant). Training included a familiarisation with the CLASS framework and video observations followed by an intense discussion on correct scoring. Upon completion of the training, all observers were instructed to pass an online reliability test comprising of five videos to be watched and coded. All observers achieved at least 80% agreement within one scale point with the CLASS trainer on each dimension, as recommended by the developers of the CLASS. Similar reliability procedures were followed for the other observation instruments.

Questionnaires

Besides measurement scales of process quality, we used self-developed questionnaires to collect data from childcare providers and parents. The questionnaire for childcare providers contained questions about organisational aspects (e.g., history, capacity, workforce, funding), staff characteristics (e.g., age, experience, level of education), classroom characteristics (e.g., group size, adult/child-ratio), demographic characteristics of the children served (e.g., age, home language, disability), quality improvement strategies (e.g., staff meetings), partnerships, parental involvement (e.g., communication, participation in decision-making). Furthermore, childcare providers were asked to assess the pedagogical quality provided within their own childcare setting and to identify (pull and push) factors that contribute to job satisfaction. Based on this information, we hoped to identify institutional characteristics that explain variation in process quality (see e.g. Slot et al., 2015; Slot, 2018) and as such to make relevant policy recommendations.

A parent questionnaire was developed to give parents the opportunity to share their expectations, experiences and evaluations of childcare. The questionnaire contained three parts. In the first part, questions focused on parental characteristics (e.g., age, employment status, home language, partner status), as well as on information relating to the child (e.g., gender, age) and childcare utilization (e.g., prior experiences, frequency of attendance). The second part contained 29 five-point Likert scale items concerned with different stages in the childcare decision-making process (i.e. reasons to use formal childcare, experiences while searching for a childcare place and selection motives). The last part of the questionnaire elicited parental expectations, experiences and satisfaction with childcare.

Sampling procedures

A total of 400 childcare settings was selected for the baseline study through stratified random sampling. First, the entire population of 8276 licensed childcare settings in Flanders was divided in four homogenous subgroups based on childcare type (i.e. independent family daycare, family daycare under the auspices of an agency, private and public childcare centres). Next, 100 cases were randomly selected from each subgroup.[8]

All 400 selected childcare settings received a letter from the Flemish Minister for Welfare, Public Health and Family (Jo Vandeurzen) to explain the aim of the study and encourage participation.[9] Thereafter, we contacted each of them by phone to address any questions regarding their participation and to make practical arrangements. From the initial selection, 179 were unable to cooperate (e.g., due to database errors or illness). A majority of the remaining 221 childcare settings (N = 123, 55.7%) agreed to participate in the study. Additional random samples were drawn within each subgroup until the final sample of 400 childcare settings was completed.[10] In cases where childcare centres had multiple classrooms, data were collected in only a single randomly selected classroom. Classroom observations took place between August 2015 and April 2016, lasting from 8:30 am until 12 pm.

After childcare providers agreed to participate in the baseline study, they were asked to fill out a questionnaire themselves and to distribute questionnaires among all parents with a child in the selected classroom. Parent questionnaires were made available in four frequently encountered home languages for newborns in Flanders (i.e. Dutch, French, English and Turkish). Confidentiality of data processing was guaranteed in a brief statement that childcare providers would be denied access to parents' answers and that it was not our intention to evaluate individual childcare services (nor parents). In addition, parents were given the option of returning the questionnaire to the childcare provider in a sealed envelope or to communicate their answers more directly to the researchers via an online survey. By the end of April 2016, 3172 parents (64.8%) completed the survey on paper (N = 2823) or online (N = 349), whereas 375 childcare providers (93.8%) had provided information on institutional characteristics.

Results

Table 1 gives an overview of the average process quality that is provided by childcare services in Flanders. Based on our assessments of children's well-being, it can be estimated that childcare services in general provide a superficial level of child comfort (*M* = 3.36). The standard deviation is low (*SD* = 0.28), meaning that there is little variation between services. A closer inspection of the variance (not shown in the table) reveals that in a small proportion (7.4%) of the childcare sector some level of discomfort can be observed in children ($2.50 \leq M \leq 2.99$). Children give slightly more positive impressions of well-being ($3.00 \leq M \leq 3.49$) in about sixty-three percent (63.1%) of childcare services, though these conditions are labelled substandard within ZiKo. More convincing levels of comfort ($3.50 \leq M \leq 3.99$) can be found in twenty-seven percent (27.1%) of provisions and only few manage to provide children with fairly constant levels of enjoyment ($4.00 \leq M \leq 4.49$, 2.5%).

Children's level of involvement during their out-of-home-stay is clearly suboptimal. Childcare services, on average, receive a score of 2.72 on a five-point scale. If we use the norm adopted within ZiKo as the golden standard, only eight percent (!) of childcare services provide high quality. More precisely, passive and absent behaviour prevail in seven percent (7.7%) of childcare settings, meaning that one can hardly record any 'meaningful' activities by children ($1.50 \leq M \leq 1.99$). Children's level of activity is somewhat higher, though still reflective of little exploration and concentration ($2.00 \leq M \leq 2.99$), in over sixty percent of the sector (63.9%). Another twenty percent of provisions (20.6%) scores just below high quality standards ($3.00 \leq M \leq 3.49$). In other words, our observations suggest that it is rather exceptional to find a childcare setting where children in general feel triggered to explore and challenged to use their capacities.

Table 1. Means and variability for process quality dimensions based on weighted data (on a 5-point scale) (*N* = 400)

	M	SD	Min	Max
Well-being	3.36	0.28	2.57	4.38
Involvement	2.72	0.51	1.51	4.19
Emotional support (CLASS Infant)	3.63	0.64	2.00	5.00
Emotional support (CLASS Toddler)	3.60	0.60	1.52	4.79
Educational support (CLASS Infant)	2.45	0.78	1.04	4.54
Educational support (CLASS Toddler)	1.93	0.56	1.06	3.64
Environment	2.79	0.58	1.33	4.58

Observations of adult-child interactions brought forth that Flemish childcare services provide adequate quality as regards the socio-emotional aspects of caregiving. Although findings are similar for CLASS Infant (*M* = 3.63) and CLASS Toddler (*M* = 3.60), Table 2 suggests that childcare staff is generally less effective in the age specific behaviours captured by the CLASS Toddler dimensions ‘regard for child perspectives’ and ‘behaviour guidance’.[11] Our observations furthermore revealed that childcare staff in general interacts with children in a positive and respectful way, whereas they also show good awareness and responsiveness to all children in the classroom. Negative behaviour, such as a caregiver that loses his or her temper, hardly occurs (*M* = 6.85, *SD* = 0.29).

Table 2. Means and variability for indicators of emotional support based on weighted data (on a 7-point scale) (*N* = 400)

	M	SD	Min	Max
Relational climate (CLASS Infant)	5.11	0.80	3.25	7.00
Teacher sensitivity (CLASS Infant)	4.86	1.02	2.00	7.00
Positive climate (CLASS Toddler)	5.05	0.96	1.50	7.00
Negative climate (CLASS Toddler)	6.85	0.29	5.75	7.00
Teacher sensitivity (CLASS Toddler)	5.12	1.00	2.00	7.00
Regard for child perspectives (CLASS Toddler)	4.33	0.96	1.50	6.50
Behaviour guidance (CLASS Toddler)	4.77	1.00	1.75	7.00

The overall ineffectiveness of educational support for children, by contrast, is a major point of concern. Table 3 shows that childcare provisions in general struggle to meet quality standards on all criteria. Though it is an international phenomenon that emotional components receive higher quality ratings than educational ones, the discrepancy has hardly been this big (see Hulpia et al., 2016). It is crystal clear from our observations that children in Flemish childcare receive (too) little encouragement for exploration and learning. Caregivers furthermore do not provide frequent and high-quality language, nor do they effectively support and extend children's communication attempts. Following the CLASS Infant instrument, it is estimated that thirty percent of childcare services in Flanders (30.1%) provide minimal educational support to children ($1.00 \leq M \leq 1.99$). This figure is almost double as high (59.7%) when using the CLASS Toddler. Perhaps even more striking is the projection of CLASS Toddler that there would be no top-notch educational childcare practices in Flanders. Instead, the best (4.8%) are situated within the mid-high quality range ($3.00 \leq M \leq 3.99$).

Table 3. Means and variability for indicators of educational support based on weighted data (on a 7-point scale) (*N* = 400)

	M	SD	Min	Max
Facilitated exploration (CLASS Infant)	3.33	1.14	1.00	6.00
Early language support (CLASS Infant)	2.97	1.22	1.00	6.25
Facilitated learning and development (CLASS Toddler)	3.21	0.86	1.25	5.50
Quality of feedback (CLASS Toddler)	1.93	0.78	1.00	4.50
Language modelling (CLASS Toddler)	2.84	0.99	1.00	5.50

The environment ratings scale suggests that the average quality of learning environments in Flemish childcare can be situated somewhere in the low-mid range (*M* = 2.79). Table 4 explains that the problem is mainly caused by the limited attraction in children's immediate environment, as measured by items 1-6 (*M* = 2.70), as well as the restricted efforts to create a sense of belonging for children and parents and to promote respect for diversity. The scores on provision of additional materials and activities, as measured by items 7-9 (*M* = 3.26), and organisational effectiveness are on the other hand relatively fine. Overall, the quality of the total environment leaves much to be desired for in six percent of the Flemish childcare sector (1.00 ≤ *M* ≤ 1.99), whereas fifty-seven percent (57.3%) is only doing a slightly better job (2.00 ≤ *M* ≤ 2.99). One can expect more decent environmental conditions in thirty-six percent (36.6%) of the cases, though excellence (*M* > 4) is only obtained by few (2.5%).

Table 4. Means and variability for indicators of the environmental rating scale based on weighted data (on a 5-point scale) (*N* = 400)

	M	SD	Min	Max
Use of space	3.27	0.92	1	5
Spatial markers	2.56	1.15	1	5
Variety of play areas	2.08	1.18	1	5
Accessibility of materials	2.73	0.97	1	5
Richness of available materials	2.42	1.03	1	5
Suitability of available materials	3.17	1.19	1	5
Extensions (adding materials or activities)	3.25	1.13	1	5
Meaningfulness of extensions	3.21	1.33	1	5
Developmentally appropriateness of extensions	3.32	1.18	1	5
Personal spaces for children and families	1.80	1.00	1	5
Hospitality to parents	2.89	0.87	1	5
Visibility of diversities in materials or activities	1.19	0.56	1	5
Flexibility in planning	2.88	0.93	1	5
Use of available human resources	3.59	1.27	1	5
Room for children’s initiative	3.47	1.11	1	5

When comparing the results between different childcare types, process quality was rated more favourably in family daycare than in childcare centres.[12] Multivariate analyses, however, revealed that variations in process quality cannot be explained by childcare type as such. Consistent with what is generally assumed by scholars, we found that group size and adult-child ratio play an important role (Slot, 2018). The effect of both so-called ‘iron triangle’ characteristics is as expected: smaller group sizes and child-staff ratios are positively related to process quality, though the relation is not statistically significant for all quality dimensions. The third ‘iron triangle’ characteristic (i.e., pre-service qualification of staff) could not be confirmed, nor could quality improvement strategies (e.g., staff meetings, self-evaluations) be associated with quality. This outcome was unexpected (see e.g. Peeters et al., 2015;

Peleman et al., 2018), although it is important to consider that there was a lack of variation within each of these predictor variables.

Other features that one way or another helped explain variation in process quality were subsidy level, the proportion of children with a foreign home language, observation moment, type of activities and variation in areas of experience (Vandenbroeck et al., 2016). Taken together, the explanatory power of our model was strongest for adult-child interactions: independent variables explained approximately twenty-five percent of variance in emotional support (CLASS Infant: $R^2 = 0.25$; CLASS Toddler: $R^2 = 0.26$), twenty-one percent of variance in educational support as measured by CLASS Infant ($R^2 = 0.21$) and forty percent as measured by CLASS Toddler ($R^2 = 0.40$). A lower proportion of variance was explained for the quality of children's lived experiences (well-being: $R^2 = 0.13$; involvement: $R^2 = 0.13$), whereas the model hardly made any significant contribution to understanding differences in the quality of childcare environments ($R^2 = 0.05$).

1.2.3 Instruments for monitoring and improvement of childcare quality

The process quality measurement scales stood model for the development of two derivative instruments that allowed for quality monitoring (inspection) and improvement (self-evaluation). Yet, a straightforward application was deemed undesirable for two reasons. Firstly, our measures of process quality largely focus on children's developmental outcomes and disregard the role of childcare services in working with parents and diversity. This stood in stark contrast to the vision within the pedagogical framework and we, together with the 'advisory board', found it important to rectify this discrepancy. Hence, an extra (sixth) quality dimension was developed to elicit professionals' reflection on both these topical challenges. Also, the aforementioned issue with cultural validity of the CLASS Toddler was given further consideration. Given that the findings of the baseline study were more or less congruent with the expert panel's concern about CLASS Toddler's overemphasis on teacher-led behaviour in the educational support for children, we used the CLASS Infant as a basis for the operationalisation of educational support. In addition more attention was paid to the interaction between children.

Secondly, the development of monitoring and self-evaluation devices was considered useful only if supported by their prospective users. In this sense, we recruited pedagogical support agencies and coaches/supervisors to pilot the self-evaluation instrument within their (network of) childcare setting(s) and to assist in the amendment process (e.g., formulation of guidelines in the manual, user-friendly lay-out and terminology). Likewise, a delegation of inspectors was consulted at regular intervals to take stock of their user experiences while revising the instrument (e.g., adjustments to account for time constraints, clarification of observation guidelines and scoring procedures). We furthermore organized intensive reliability training sessions for all inspectors, comparable to the ones we experienced ourselves prior to the baseline study.

At the end of the MeMoQ project, the self-evaluation instrument was made publicly available on the website of *Kind en Gezin*.[13] Though its use is not mandatory, it is highly recommended by the Flemish inspection agency, whom since April 2018 is officially mandated to monitor the enforcement of a pedagogical norm. Childcare services who receive a low rating on any of the six quality dimensions are thereby referred to our self-evaluation instrument as it may help them to provide *Kind en Gezin* with a quality improvement plan. Even high-quality childcare services are recommended to use the self-evaluation tool as a means to guarantee continuation.

1.3 Beyond the pursuit of quality: re-politicization of early childhood education

As a starting point for my dissertation, I have argued that talking about quality is nowadays self-evident when it comes down to the pedagogical work of childcare services and its evaluation. To fully understand why working with quality makes perfect sense today, past and present editors of the ‘Contesting Early Childhood’ book series advise us to bear in mind that neoliberalism currently dominates politics in much of the world. Neoliberalism, they state, replaces politics and ethics with management and technology and helps distract attention from the difficult political struggles that are needed if a truly better world is to be achieved. So too with the story of quality and high returns, which argues for interventions in early childhood by following the evidence and applying what works (Moss et al., 2016).

If working with quality de-politicises early childhood education, critical scholars like Peter Moss (2005, 2007, 2014) wish to re-politicise the field and return attention to the political struggles. We must consider the fact that working with quality is a political and ethical choice, he continues, that renders reality amenable to certain kinds of actions and, by the same token, excludes alternative ways of understanding and speaking about the pedagogical work of childcare services. In this section, I elaborate further on this threatening loss of perspective and its implications for the relation between childcare and families. More specifically, I will explain how this relation is largely dominated (and constrained) by particular assumptions and values regarding parental involvement, commodification and equal opportunities.

1.3.1 Parental involvement

The call for parental involvement in early childhood education has been growing since Bronfenbrenner's (1979) influential Ecological System Theory. However, the burgeoning visibility of parents in scientific literature hardly incentivized the creation of equitable parent-staff relationships. As Hughes and Mac Naughton (1999, 2000) described two decades ago, professional and parent knowledge were often seen in binary opposition to each other. The former was believed to be developmental, objective, norm-referenced and applicable to all children, whereas parental knowledge of the child was anecdotal, subjective, ad hoc, individualised and applicable only to specific children. As such, the authors concluded, much of the scientific debate about parental involvement in the 1990s contributed to an expertise-based hierarchical relationship: parents needed to learn what is appropriate to teach their children and how best to do so, whereas parental knowledge was merely desired as a supplement to professionals' decision-making, rather than a necessary component of it.

Meanwhile, child-rearing advice literature, media articles on parenting and educational material given out to new parents campaigned against the lack of parental involvement in home learning activities. Wall (2004), for instance, recounts how parents were encouraged to conform to a model of intensive child-centred parenting by emphasising that their behaviour during the child's first years of life is a crucial determinant of the child's future intelligence and success. This interpellation is eloquently exemplified by expert discourses on the importance of so-called 'parenting quality' or the 'home learning environment', which tend to place the blame for problems on deficient caretakers and lend legitimacy to increasing social scrutiny of and intervention in families.

> *"For all children, the quality of the home learning environment is more important for intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education or income. What parents do is more important than who parents are. (…) All parents, including those with low income and/or*

> *few qualifications, can improve their children's progress and give them a better start at school by engaging in activities that engage and stretch the child's mind." (Melhuish et al., 2006, p. ii-iii)*

> *"(…) at the end of fifth grade (for cognitive and academic outcomes) and sixth grades (for social and behavioral outcomes), we found (…) evidence that parenting quality proved to be a far stronger and more consistent predictor of tested achievement and teacher-reported social functioning than was child-care experience. (…) Presuming, as seems likely, that links between parenting quality and child development are not entirely a function of shared biology, the parenting results emerging from this study of child care highlight the potential for interventions aimed at enhancing parenting to yield greater developmental benefits for children than ones geared toward modifying child care, perhaps by improving child-care quality. It is probably misguided, however, to pit these two intervention strategies against one another, especially because efforts made to enhance the quality of parenting do not preclude efforts to modify the child-care experience." (Belsky et al., 2007, p. 696-699)*

According to Paananen et al. (2015), a similar rhetoric is apparent in the OECD's well-known 'Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy', a rigorous international project to explore key elements of effective ECEC policy. In the first two reports, 'Starting Strong I' and 'Starting Strong II', the OECD (2001, 2006) still advocated an inclusive and participatory approach to quality improvement and assurance: "defining, ensuring, and monitoring quality should be a participatory and democratic process that engages staff, parents, and children" (OECD, 2001, p. 11). Within this vision, parental involvement implied "a two-way process of knowledge and information flowing freely both ways" (OECD, 2001, p. 117) and parents needed to be considered as "the central partners in policy and programme development in the field" (OECD, 2006, p. 53). However, the meaning of quality ceased to be pluralistic and local in 'Starting Strong III'. Parents were no longer described as partners in defining quality, but instead held responsible to ensure high-quality learning at home.

> *"Parental engagement – especially in ensuring high-quality children's learning at home and communicating with ECEC staff – is strongly associated with children's later academic success, high school*

> *completion, socio-emotional development and adaptation in society." (OECD, 2011, p. 12)*

Scholars like Wall (2004) or Ramaekers and Suissa (2010, 2012) raise concerns about this scientification of the parent-child relationship. On the one hand, these authors see no problem in recognizing the fact that parents perform a valuable function for society in producing and rearing the next generation. On the other hand, however, they warn for the normative interpretation of good (enough) parenting by means of which educational inequalities become the product of values and attitudes that parents hold. In sum, too little attention is given to the structural barriers that parents encounter and the responsibility of society to support parenting accordingly. The reconstruction of social problems as problems within the family may not only be unfair; as Hartas (2015) sees it, it risks to have little impact on the bigger picture as well. Despite the current orthodoxy of 'what parents do is more important than who parents are', she found that parenting behaviours did not make any substantive contribution to seven-year-olds' school outcomes in reading, maths and sciences. Her conclusion should not be misunderstood as if what parents do with their children does not matter at all. It does matter, she contends, but not as a mechanism to overcome educational and structural inequality. Next generations' social mobility would benefit from making a shift towards structural aspects, such as the differential access to resources and possibilities for social advancement and the gradual diminishing of the welfare state.

In my research, I wonder whether understandings of parental involvement lose validity when transported from one context to another. Although an instrumental logic prevails in the English-medium literature, its fixation on children's school-readiness might limit the scope for alternative perspectives on the shared responsibility for the upbringing of children between private and public sphere. To figure this out, I examined the rationales behind parental involvement in curricula from ten countries with varying pedagogical traditions.

1.3.2 Commodification

While the path towards high-quality childcare provision seems well-marked, it does not yet reach up to that standard in many countries (Barros et al., 2016; Bjørnestad & Os, 2018; Grammatikopoulos et al., 2014; La Paro et al., 2014; Vermeer et al., 2008). According to White and Friendly (2012), that is because of a problem with the kind of public investments that are made. Instead of investing in strong regulatory regimes capable of ensuring high-quality provision, governments tend to rely on market mechanisms in the governance of childcare provision. So, why would governments gamble on the market? According to Gallagher (2018), the market is purported to be the most ‘efficient’ means of meeting the changing needs of parents. Strengthening the ability of parents to choose and move between services is assumed to generate competitive pressures amongst providers, which, in turn, will increase quality and reduce costs. Those services which are capable of meeting change in parental demand are ought to succeed, whereas those that do not are assumed to become obsolete, ultimately allowing for a more responsive market environment.

The commodification of childcare is criticized, however, by scholars who argue that childcare relationships and parent behaviours cannot be understood in economic terms, driven by competition and calculation (Ball & Vincent, 2005; Moss, 2014; Penn, 2013; Plantenga, 2013). Childcare is not like any other commodity, foremost because the financial exchange is inadequate as a way of representing the complex relationships involved. It involves “putting a price on things beyond price” (Ball & Vincent, 2005, p. 15) and disregards the fact that, for parents, social relations may be at least as important as economic relations. Moreover, parents intuitively understand that childcare quality matters for child development (Barros & Leal, 2015; Cryer & Burchinal, 1997; Cryer et al., 2002; da Silva & Wise, 2006; Fenech, 2012; Grammatikopoulos et al., 2014; Harrist et al., 2007; Lehrer et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2001; Mocan, 2007), but their childcare decision-making may not be perfectly rational. In fact, the evidence suggests that parents suffer from a so-called imperfect rationality (Ball & Vincent, 2005; Cryer & Burchinal, 1997; Harbach, 2015, 2016; Mocan, 2007; Plantenga, 2013), meaning that they are not the autonomous and self-serving consumers who act in the spirit of the *homo economicus*.

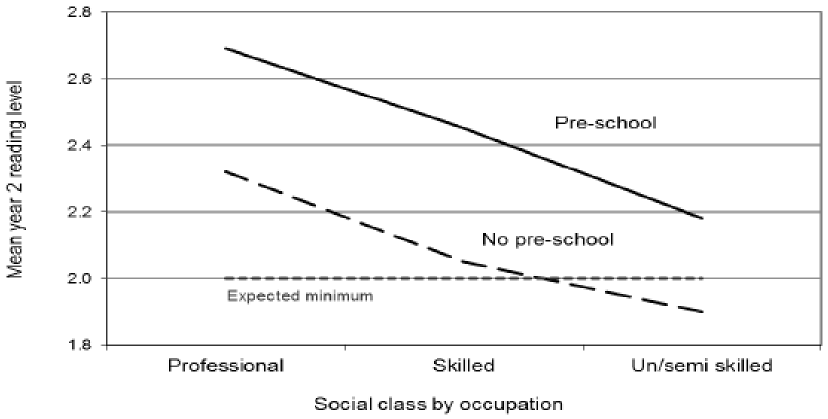
Notwithstanding that the commodification of childcare is most prevalent in liberal welfare states (e.g. U.S., U.K., Canada, New Zealand, Australia), the introduction of market mechanisms in the delivery of childcare services is considered elsewhere as well (Brennan et al., 2012; Lloyd & Penn, 2010). The Flemish Government too has not been immune for economic re-visioning of the childcare sector as it continues to allow private childcare providers to enter the market and, since the beginning of 2019 (cf. *Groeipakket*), compensates part of the (additional) costs for parents who choose for private instead of public childcare services. Moreover, the measurement of consumer satisfaction is formally encouraged and approached as an excellent strategy to involve parents.

Given that the conceptualisation of childcare relationships along economic lines is premised on the assumption that consumers or clients (parents) are a good judge of their own welfare, this dissertation aims to disentangle the factors that contribute to parent satisfaction with childcare in Flanders. Particular focus is given to process quality because governments tend to give parents some control over the future direction of childcare provision.

1.3.3 Equal opportunities

Under the social investment paradigm, support for children growing up in disadvantaged households cannot start too early. That is because these children may already exhibit poorer developmental functioning way before compulsory schooling begins (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1999; Hart & Risley, 2003; Hurt & Betancourt, 2016, 2017; McLoyd 1998). To prevent them from not reaching the threshold of necessary skills and preparation for primary school, participation in early childhood education is highly recommended. Indeed, the evidence suggests that it improves disadvantaged children's school readiness and, by implication, is capable of breaking the cycle of disadvantage (Becker et al., 2013; Buysse et al., 2014; Currie, 2001; Felfe & Lalive, 2018; Geoffroy et al., 2010; Gialamas et al., 2015; Gormley, 2008; Magnuson & Shager, 2010; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005; Magnuson et al., 2004, 2006; Sylva et al., 2004). Figure 1, which is retrieved from the 'Effective Provision of Pre-school Education' (EPPE) research project in England (see Sylva et al., 2004), illustrates this reasoning.

Figure 1. The influence of pre-school attendance on reading (age 7) by social class groups



The assumption that breaking the cycle of disadvantage is foremost a matter of equal opportunities is furthermore supported by neuroscience. Through the application of new research technologies, neuroscience contributed to a better understanding of the consequences of socioeconomic disparities for brain development (Neville et al., 2013) and produced an image of early childhood as a sensitive period for brain development that sets trajectories for physical and mental health, behaviour and learning throughout life (Blakemore & Frith, 2005; Council for Early Childhood Development 2010; Mustard 2006; National Scientific Council on The Developing Child 2007; Nelson, 2000; Shonkoff, 2011).

The social investment narrative is furthermore informed by the potential economic returns of investing in disadvantaged children. Three iconic randomised control trials with longitudinal follow-up in disadvantaged communities in the U.S. are worth mentioning in this vein: the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program (1962), the Abecedarian Program (1972) and the Child-Parent Center Program (1986). Each of these high-quality early childhood interventions has shown to yield substantive long-term effects, the monetary returns (i.e. earnings of human capital cultivation and savings associated with the reduction of poverty and inequality) of which surpass the initial costs by a wide extent. Other cost-benefit analyses similarly lend legitimacy to an economic reframing of childcare (Allen, 2011; Barnett & Ackerman, 2006; Cattan et al., 2014; Delalibera & Ferreira, 2019; Field, 2010; Lynch, 2004, 2005; Goodbody Economic Consultants, 2011; Penn et al., 2006; Van Huizen et al., 2016).[14] The most persuasive case is provided by the High/Scope Perry Preschool study with an average yield, by age 40, of $17 for every dollar spent (Schweinhart et al., 2005).[15] Off course, few eschewed the economic investment argument to garner extra support for public investments in early childhood education. Leading economist and Nobel Prize winner James Heckman (2006), for instance, argues that the rate of return on human capital investment declines at later stages in life and, by implication, recommends governments to prevent rather than repair and gradually move public funds to the early years. Early childhood education for disadvantaged children, he continues, is “a rare public policy initiative that promotes fairness and social justice and at the same time promotes productivity in the economy and in society at large.” (p. 1902).

While it is doubtful, to say the least, that there would be a relatively easy fix for many of the profound problems that confront our societies, interventions aiming at equalizing opportunities rather than outcomes are more likely to overcome political dissent. Under the social investment paradigm, however, any consideration of ‘the social’ must necessarily take into account the underlying assumption that the cause of social problems lies with individual failings. According to Moss (2014), this distracts attention from structural inequalities. He is particularly sceptical about the idea of a ‘level playing field’ in an economic and education system built on neoliberal values of competition, markets and individual choice. The oversimplification as if there would be only one field in need of levelling to give everyone an equal opportunity is misleading, he argues, because in reality there are numerous playing fields wherein middle-class parents are more likely to thrive because they are able to deploy more money and more cultural capital than disadvantaged groups.

In my research, I examine whether parental childcare decision-making is one of these other fields in need of levelling. Particular focus is given to differences between language minority and majority families in how they choose for a particular childcare setting and the quality that is obtained accordingly.

In another study, I focus on the importance of respect for diversity in the pedagogical work of childcare services. Given that childcare participation of disadvantaged groups is expressly desired nowadays, early childhood services are likely to become one of the places where super-diversity is at its most marked. In my opinion, this implies that its equalizing potential cannot solely be defined in terms of compensation for (adverse effects of) disadvantaged family background. Therefore, I analyse how the curriculum in different countries and regions around the world tries to accommodate the changing social reality.

1.4 Research questions

Inspired by reconceptualist philosophy and the apparent need to re-politicise debates about the pedagogical work of childcare services and its evaluation, the aim of this dissertation is to explore different ways to nurture the relation between childcare and families. Drawing upon the commodification literature, my first research question is related to the market assumption of consumer sovereignty, which entails that parents should be given control over the future development of childcare provision as they are a good judge of their own welfare. More precisely, I want to disentangle the factors that contribute to parent satisfaction with childcare in Flanders and see whether parent satisfaction is a quality indicator.

A second and third research question stem from the literature on equal opportunities, which tends to oversimplify (what it takes to break) the cycle of disadvantage and creates the impression that diversity is a problem. Against this backdrop, I question whether and how parental childcare decision-making reproduces social inequality in Flanders and how curricula may sensitize professionals to respectfully engage with issues of diversity.

The fourth and final research question is inspired by the literature on parental involvement and the current orthodoxy of 'what parents do is more important than who they are'. It questions what other meanings could be ascribed to parental involvement besides emphasizing parents' responsibility for the home learning environment.

> Research question 1: How are parent satisfaction and childcare quality related and what predicts parent satisfaction if it is not quality?
>
> Research question 2: How do parents from different (linguistic) backgrounds choose for a childcare setting and how is it related with the quality obtained?
>
> Research question 3: How do early childhood curricula accommodate (super-)diversity?
>
> Research question 4: How is parental involvement conceptualised in early childhood curricula?

1.5 Methodology

A combination of quantitative and qualitative research components, also known as a mixed-methods design, is deemed most appropriate to tackle the main research objective. The quantitative research component uses MeMoQ data to statistically analyse the relation between institutional (childcare) and personal (family) characteristics, whereas the qualitative component uses pedagogical frameworks to interpret meaning relevant to the relation between public and private sphere from the content of text data.

As such, I intend, as befits any social science (Bourdieu, 1984), to integrate both an objective and subjective perspective in my work. The former looks at society as social physics, as a social structure that can be observed from outside, that can be objectively measured and mapped out. Its pitfall however is that the map is often mistaken for reality. Indeed, Moss et al. (2016) argue that one reason to contest working with quality is because of “the paradigmatic position of the dominant discourse, the positivism that underlies and validates its story line” (p. 7). With natural science as an ideal, they state, this paradigm puts too much faith in the figure of the objective, rational and authoritative expert, able to muster the evidence that will reveal to us how things truly are and what we must do to change them. To avoid such reductionism, Bourdieu (1984) suggests to also take into account the perspective of the actors as being fully part of the social world. This subjectivist perspective considers the social reality as a fragile and continuous realization of competent actors constructing their social world, meaning that we need to unveil the mental representations of this social reality by the actors in their daily life (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

In what follows, I elaborate further on the quantitative and qualitative research methods that are applied throughout my work. Information on data collection and analysis is also provided in subsequent chapters, causing some overlap in descriptions of methodology.

1.5.1 Adopting a quantitative research stance

To answer the first two research questions, which focus on parent satisfaction and childcare decision-making, I undertook secondary analyses of MeMoQ data.

Data collection

Both quantitative studies rely on data collected through classroom observations of process quality (*N* = 400) and parental questionnaires (*N* = 3172). As mentioned earlier, these data were collected between August 2015 and April 2016 in the context of the MeMoQ baseline study. The Leuven Scales for Well-being and Involvement, CLASS Infant and Toddler and a self-developed environment rating scale were used to assess process quality. Parents with a child in one of the 400 observed classrooms were surveyed by means of a questionnaire. The questionnaire contained three parts. In the first part, questions focused on parental characteristics (e.g., age, employment status, home language, partner status), as well as on information relating to the child (e.g., gender, age) and childcare utilization (e.g., prior experiences, frequency of attendance). The second part contained 29 five-point Likert scale items concerned with the childcare decision-making process. Items related to three different stages in the choice process: initial motivations to use formal childcare (*N* = 10), experiences while searching for a childcare place (*N* = 9) and rationales for childcare selection (*N* = 10). Prior to the latter set of items, parents were asked about the childcare options available to them. If parents found no available childcare places elsewhere, they were invited to skip the items on childcare selection. The last part of the questionnaire elicited parental expectations, experiences and satisfaction with childcare. Five topics were addressed: children's learning experiences, caregiver behaviours, habituation, parental involvement and organizational features. For each topic, parents were given a list of items from which to choose the four most important, most satisfying and most unsatisfying aspects. The overall quality of their childcare setting with regard to each of the five topics was then rated on 5-point Likert scales. In addition, parents could assess the communication with their childcare in terms of the amount of information they receive about children's caregiving, their lived experiences and development, classroom events, internal operations and neighbourhood resources. The questionnaire ended with the opportunity to give a final appreciation of overall satisfaction on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (completely dissatisfied) to 5 (completely satisfied).

As Neuman (2014) recommends in his book 'Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches', the questionnaire was pilot tested with a small set of potential respondents. This way, we were able to identify items that caused confusion and required revisioning. Consultancy provided by *Huis van het Nederlands*, an organisation that supports foreign-speaking residents and organisations in coping with language issues, furthermore helped us rephrase questions in a more comprehensible way.

Data analysis

After data collection was completed, information from classroom observations and parental questionnaires was transferred to a computer-readable format for statistical analysis. This phase involved meticulous bookkeeping and labelling so as to avoid losing the data or ending up with worthless, inaccurate data (Neuman, 2014). Digitisation of data was checked for approximately 50% of observation records (i.e. quality ratings) and 10% of questionnaires.

In both studies, SPSS and STATA software packages were used to perform a series of multilevel regression analyses. This type of analysis is recommended for data with a hierarchical structure (Field, 2010), which, in my case, is evident because parents (level 1) are clustered or nested within childcare settings (level 2). In the study on parent satisfaction, a null model was estimated to statistically determine whether the grouping variable at level 2 significantly affected the intercept (mean) of the dependent variable at level 1. As it did, we needed to use multilevel modelling instead of a usual form of regression. Step-by-step inclusion of individual and institutional level predictors into the model allowed us to disentangle variation in parent satisfaction.

In the other quantitative study, MPLUS 6.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017) was used to conduct a more complex type of multilevel analysis. In contrast to classic multilevel analysis, where a dependent variable measured at the lower level is predicted by variables measured at that lower or a higher level, we wanted to assess whether language minority families have a higher chance to (have to) send their children to lower-quality childcare. In other words, we needed a type of multilevel analysis that allowed us to predict a dependent variable at the group level through independent variables measured at the lower individual level. To solve such an analysis, researchers often perform single-level analyses where data is disaggregated or aggregated. Such analyses, however, are prone to ecological or atomistic fallacies and yield inaccurate estimates of the standard errors of the model parameters because the hierarchical nature of the data is not respected (Subramanian et al., 2009). Therefore, we are dealing with a so-called micro-macro multilevel research question. Indeed, whereas individual background characteristics vary both within and between childcare institutions, the quality scores for these institutions only vary between services. As suggested by Foster-Johnson and Kromrey (2018), we used the adjusted-group-means analysis approach from Croon and van Veldhoven (2007) with White–Davidson–MacKinnon heteroscedasticity adjustment (robust standard errors) to predict our group-level outcomes with a focus on individual-level predictors.

1.5.2 Adopting a qualitative research stance

To answer the third and fourth research question, which are about the conceptualisations of respect for diversity and parental involvement, I conducted two cross-national curriculum analyses.

Data collection

As described before, several curricula were collected and read in the context of the MeMoQ project to get more familiar with the purpose of curriculum development. I chose to use a quasi-identical collection of curricula for my comparative work as it showed great potential to create ‘estrangement’ or the ability to see the unknown and therefore to distance ourselves from what is already known (Nóvoa, 2018). Indeed, the selected curricula were quite diverse along the following lines:

Paradigmatic diversity: Following Bennett's (2005) typology, one can distinguish – on the basis of, for example, different perceptions of the role of early childhood centres, curriculum development, focus of the programme, pedagogical strategies – a social pedagogical paradigm and a pre-primary paradigm in European early childhood education. In my sample, there are curricula from countries labelled by Bennett (2005) and Moss (2013) as typical for a social pedagogical approach (e.g. Sweden and Denmark) and a pre-primary paradigm (e.g. England, Ireland, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia). The collection furthermore includes the Berlin curriculum that is rooted within the German tradition of 'sozialpädagogik' and 'Bildung' and the curriculum from the French-speaking Community of Belgium that is marked by the typical psychoanalytical approach in French-speaking countries (Hoshi-Watanabe et al., 2015; Martin, 2010).

Diversity in status: Curricula in my sample have very different statuses. Some represent a proper compulsory curriculum, describing universal goals to be achieved (e.g. the Statutory Framework in England). Others are a vision that may serve as national guidelines and a source of inspiration, but do not have a legal status (e.g. in the Netherlands). Still others have the format of a law and are limited to a number of legal standards and principles rather than an elaborated text on how to proceed (e.g. in Denmark), or stress the underlying values of early childhood education rather than the practice (e.g. in Sweden and the Flemish Community of Belgium).

Diversity in welfare contexts: It has been argued that the meaning of early childhood education can hardly be analysed without acknowledging the political context in general and visions of the welfare state in particular (Moss, 2007; Vandenbroeck et al., 2010). According to the typology of Esping-Andersen (1990) and subsequent scholars (Scruggs & Allan, 2008), my sample contains countries that vary in welfare state constructions: Nordic countries (e.g. Sweden, Denmark), liberal welfare states (e.g. England, Ireland) and corporatist welfare states (e.g. Belgium, the Netherlands). Furthermore, I analysed the curriculum from countries in which childcare is predominantly private market oriented and therefore are believed to struggle with problems of poor quality (e.g. due to low qualification levels and salaries) or unequal access (e.g. Hong Kong and the Netherlands), as well as those from countries where childcare is publicly financed and considered a public good (e.g. Sweden, Denmark) or from those that adopt a mixed model (e.g. Belgium).

Diversity in age range: The sample covers a variety of age ranges, including curricula that exclusively focus on the youngest children (e.g. Flemish and French Communities of Belgium), that cover preschool children as well (e.g. England, Sweden, Berlin, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong), and that extend to 13 years (the Netherlands) or even 18 years (e.g. Denmark).

Diversity in thinking about diversity: According to Banks (2015), approaches of multicultural education differ between Western European nations (e.g. The Netherlands, England, Ireland), Western immigrant nations (e.g. Australia, New Zealand) and East Asian nations (e.g. China).

In sum, the sample contained curricula from England (Department for Education, 2012), Ireland (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d), Hong Kong (Curriculum Development Council, 2006), Australia (Council of Australian Governments, 2009), New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1996), the Netherlands (BKK, 2017; Boogaard et al., 2013; Singer & Kleerekoper, 2009; van Keulen & Singer, 2012), Denmark (Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs, 2007), Sweden (Skolverket, 2011), Berlin (Prott & Preissing, 2006) and both the Flemish and French Communities of Belgium (Kind en Gezin, 2014; Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance, 2002).

Data analysis

A different type of qualitative content analysis is used for each study. The study on respect for diversity uses a so-called 'directed approach', which Hsieh and Shannon (2005) recommend for researchers who use a theoretical framework or theory as guidance for initial coding. In this case, a theoretical framework that focuses on five dimensions of curriculum reform stood model for deductive category application (see chapter 4). First, all curricula were read and re-read entirely to highlight all text that on first impression appeared to represent (either implicitly or explicitly) one of the predetermined codes. Next, all highlighted passages were re-examined to determine if they represent a new category or a subcategory of an existing code. Broad statements were excluded from further scrutiny as we believe that each of the five dimensions requires deliberate attention and focus. As such, our directed approach to content analysis is able to support and extend existing theory on diversity and complexity in early childhood education.

For the study on the conceptualisation of parental involvement, I used a more conventional thematic analysis. Here, the coding categories are derived directly from the text data and this allows for the identification of overarching themes pertinent to the phenomenon of parental involvement (Howitt, 2010). Data analysis involved two phases. First, the selected curricula were read and re-read entirely to select sections of text that referred to parents and their involvement. General statements, implicit and explicit arguments were included. For example, fragments of curricula that simply stressed that parents are children's first educators or raised awareness of cultural differences regarding physical care practices (without specifying actions in this respect) were considered to be relevant. Likewise, sections of texts were selected when they mentioned the involvement of (extended) family, community, stakeholders, adults or carers. Second, the selected excerpts of the curricula were read and re-read to identify patterns within the data. Using NVivo 11 Pro, these patterns were then clustered into final themes – thereby going back-and-forward between both analytical stages to check and refine the themes – resulting in a rigorous explorative analysis of parental involvement. These themes were then used as the framework for reporting on the diverse rationales that are present within the selected curricula.

1.6 Chapter outline

To conclude this introductory chapter, I give a short overview of the chapters in this doctoral dissertation.

In the first chapter, it was shown that the move towards more effective (high-quality) childcare provision is presented as self-evident nowadays because of the cognitive and socio-emotional benefits for children. Although the pursuit of quality ostensibly shows no immediate risk or danger, the chapter brings to mind that it renders reality amenable to certain kinds of actions and, by the same token, excludes alternative ways of understanding and speaking about the pedagogical work of childcare services. As such, we come to the conclusion that the pursuit of quality stems from a human capital framework that carries the risk or danger of disregarding social values such as democracy, equity and diversity. To overcome this threatening loss of perspective, it is important to expand the exclusive focus on child development theory and to gain insight into how the relation between childcare and families can be nurtured. This dissertation aims to do so in four research manuscripts.[16]

In chapter 2, “Is everybody happy? Exploring the predictability of parent satisfaction with childcare in Flanders”, the doctoral study focuses on the mainstream measurement of parent satisfaction in Flanders. It starts by explaining that the governance of childcare provision in many countries and regions, such as in Flanders, is permeated by market mechanisms because of the belief that consumers or clients (parents) are the best judge of their own welfare. Taken from this perspective, we aim to unravel the factors that contribute to parent satisfaction with childcare. Particular focus is given to process quality as parents’ childcare judgments, especially in the absence of strong regulatory regimes capable of ensuring high-quality provision, are seen as an important indicator of quality.

Chapter 3, “The language of choice and the childcare choices of language minority families: A portrait of disadvantage”, addresses different aspects involved in parents’ choice of a specific childcare service. More precisely, we focus on differences between language minority and majority families in their reasons to use formal childcare, experiences while searching for a childcare place, selection motives and childcare quality obtained. The chapter argues that, due to the consistent increase in childcare participation rates in Flanders, the question how parents choose a childcare setting may become more significant for inequality than the question whether or not to use it. Therefore, we aim to unravel whether and how inequality occurs in and is reproduced by parental childcare decision-making in Flanders.

In chapter 4, “From multiculturalism to super-diversity in the early years: An analysis of curriculum issues”, the doctoral study focusses on childcare provision as an instrument to support social inclusion in a super-diverse society. More precisely, the chapter argues that the inclusion of migrant and ethnic minority children is not simply desirable to ‘compensate for the family’. When childcare becomes one of the places where super-diversity is at its most marked, it is equally desirable that diversity is treated with respect. We further relate this nuanced perspective on equal opportunities with theories of acculturation, anti-bias education, equity pedagogy, epistemology and intersectionality. Next, we analyse for each of these issues how curriculum guidelines in a variety of Western countries and regions sensitize practitioners to enhance migrants’ and ethnic minorities’ opportunities for participation and belonging.

Chapter 5, “(De)constructing parental involvement in early childhood curricular frameworks”, seeks to disentangle the rationales of parental involvement within a diverse sample of curriculum frameworks. The central question is whether different perspectives on educational partnerships exist as the English-medium literature creates the impression that parents are mainly there to support children's learning and development at home.

Chapter 6 concludes this doctoral dissertation with a synthesis of the main findings and a general reflection on the implications for policy and practice. Moreover, the limitations of the dissertation are discussed as well as directions for further research.

1.7 References

Akgündüz, Y. E., Ünver, Ö., Plantenga, J., & Nicaise, I. (2015). *The socio-economic dimension of early childhood education and care in Europe.* Utrecht: Utrecht University – CARE project.

Allen, G. (2011). *Early intervention: Smart investment, massive savings. The second independent report to her majesty's government.* London: Department for Work and Pensions and Cabinet Office.

Andersson, B.-E. (1992). Effect of day-care on cognitive and socioemotional competence of thirteen-year-old Swedish Schoolchildren. *Child Development, 63*(1), 20-36.

Ball, S. J., & Vincent, C. (2005). The 'childcare champion'? New Labour, social justice and the childcare market. *British Educational Research Journal, 31*, 557-570.

Banks, J. A. (2015). Multicultural education. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences 2nd Edition, 16*, 18-20.

Barnett, W. S. (2011). Effectiveness of early educational intervention. *SCIENCE, 333,* 975-978.

Barnett, W. S., & Ackerman, D. J. (2006). Cost, benefits, and long-term effects of early care and education programs: Recommendations and cautions for community developers. *COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Journal of the community development society, 37*(2), 86-100.

Barros, S., Cadima, J., Bryant, D. M., Coelho, V., Pinto, A. I., Pessanha, M., & Peixoto, C. (2016). Infant child care quality in Portugal: Associations with structural characteristics. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 37,* 118–130.

Barros, S., & Leal, T. B. (2015). Parents' and teachers' perceptions of quality in Portuguese childcare classrooms. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 30,* 209–226.

Becker, B., Klein, O., & Biedinger, N. (2013). The development of cognitive, language, and cultural skills from age 3 to 6: A comparison between children of Turkish origin and children of native-born German parents and the role of immigrant parents' acculturation to the receiving society. *American Educational Research Journal, 50*(3), 616-649.

Belsky, J., Vandell, D. L., Burchinal, M., Clarke-Stewart, K. A., McCartney, K., Owen, M. T., & NICHD Early Child Care Research Network. (2007). Are there long-term effects of early child care? *Child Development, 78*(2), 681-701.

Bennett, J. (2005). Curriculum Issues in National Policy-Making. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 13*(2), 5–23.

Berlinski, S., Galiani, S., & Gertler, P. (2009). The effect of pre-primary education on primary school performance. *Journal of Public Economics, 93,* 219-234.

Bjørnestad, E., & Os, E. (2018). Quality in Norwegian childcare for toddlers using ITERS-R. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 26*, 111–127.

Blakemore, S-J, Frith, U. (2005). The learning brain: Lessons for education: a précis. *Developmental Science, 8*(6), 459-465.

Boogaard, M., Hoex, J., van Daalen, M. & Gevers, M. (2013). *Pedagogisch kader gastouderopvang*. Amsterdam: Reed Business.

Bourdieu, P. (1994). *Homo Academicus.* Paris: Les Editions de Minuit.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *Réponses: Pour une anthropologie réflexive*. Paris: Seuil.

Brennan, D., Cass, B., Himmelweit, S., Szebehely, M. (2012). The marketisation of care: Rationales and consequences in Nordic and liberal care regimes. *Journal of European Social Policy, 22*(4), 377-391.

Broberg, A. G., Wessels, H., Lamb, M. E., & Hwang, C. P. (1997). Effects of day care on the development of cognitive abilities in 8-year-olds: A longitudinal study. *Developmental Psychology, 33*(1), 62-69.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Brooks-Gunn, J., Britto, P. R., & Brady, C. (1999). Struggling to make ends meet: Poverty and child development. In M. E. Lamb (Ed.) *Parenting and child development in "nontraditional" families* (pp. 279-304). Mahwah, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum Associates.

Burger, K. (2010). How does early childhood care and education affect cognitive development? An international review of the effects of early interventions for children from different social backgrounds. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 25*(2), 140-165.

Buysse, V., Peisner-Feinberg, E., Páez, M., Hammer, C. S., & Knowles, M. (2014). Effects of early education programs and practices on the development and learning of dual language learners: A review of the literature. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 29,* 765-785.

Camilli, G., Vargas, S., Ryan, S., & Barnett, W. S. (2010). Meta-analysis of the effects of early education interventions on cognitive and social development. *Teachers College Record, 112*(3), 579-620.

Campbell, F. A., Ramey, C. T., Pungello, E., Sparling, J., & Miller-Johnson, S. (2002). Early childhood education: Young adult outcomes from the Abecedarian Project. *Applied Developmental Science, 6*(1), 42-57.

Castro, D. C., Bryant, D. M., Peisner-Feinberg, E. S., & Skinner, M. L. (2004). Parent involvement in Head Start programs: The role of parent, teacher and classroom characteristics. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 19*, 413-430.

Cattan, S., Crawford, C., & Dearden, L. (2014). *The economic effects of pre-school education and quality. IFS Report R99.* London: Institute for Fiscal Studies.

Ceglowski, D., & Bacigalupa, C. (2002). Four perspectives on child care quality. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 30*(2), 87-92.

Chetty, R., Friedman, J. N., Hilger, N., Saez, E., Schanzenbach, D. W., & Yagan, D. (2011). How does your kindergarten classroom affect your earnings? Evidence from Project Star. *They Quarterly Journal of Economics, 126*(4), 1593-1660.

Cortazar, A., Molina, M. D. L. A., Sélman, J., & Manosalva, A. (2019). Early childhood education effects on school outcomes: Academic achievement, grade retention and school drop out. *Early Education and Development, 31*(3), 376-394.

Council for Early Child Development. (2010). *The SCIENCE of EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT.*

Council of Australian Governments. (2009). *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*.

Croon, M. A., & van Veldhoven, M. J. P. M. (2007). Predicting group-level outcome variables from variables measured at the individual level: A latent variable multilevel model. *Psychological Methods, 12*(1), 45–57.

Cryer, D., & Burchinal, M. (1997). Parents as child care consumers. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 12,* 35–58.

Cryer, D., Tietze, W., & Wessels, H. (2002). Parents' perceptions of their children's child care: A cross-national comparison. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 17,* 259–277.

Curriculum Development Council. (2006). *Guide to the Pre-Primary Curriculum*. Hong Kong: Curriculum Development Council.

Currie, J. (2001). Early childhood education programs. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 15*(2), 213-238.

da Silva, L., & Wise, S. (2006). Parent perspectives on childcare quality among a culturally diverse sample. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 31*(3), 6–14.

Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. (1999). *Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: Postmodern perspectives.* London: Falmer Press.

Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. (2007). *Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: Languages of evaluation. Second edition.* New York: Routledge.

Dalli, C., White, E. J., Rockel, J., Duhn, I., Buchanan, E., Davidson, S., … Wang, B. (2011). *Quality early childhood education for under-two-year-olds: What should it look like? A literature review.* Ministry of Education.

Delalibera, B. R., & Ferreira, P. C. (2019). Early childhood education and economic growth. *Journal of Economic Dynamics & Control, 98,* 82-104.

Department for Education. (2012). *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage: Setting the Standards for Learning, Development and Care for Children from Birth to Five*.

Dettling, A. C., Parker, S. W., Lane, S., Sebanc, A., & Gunnar, M. R. (2000). Quality of care and temperament determine changes in cortisol concentrations over the day for young children in childcare. *Psychoneuroendocrinology, 25,* 819-836.

Epstein, J. L. (1992). *School and family partnerships. Report No. 6*. Baltimore, MD: Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Felfe, C., & Lavile, R. (2018). Does early child care affect children's development? *Journal of Public Economics, 159*, 33-53.

Fenech, M. (2012). Discerning childcare quality: Parents as potential informants of policy beyond regulation. *Critical Studies in Education, 53*, 327–345.

Field, F. (2010). *The foundation years: Preventing poor children becoming poor adults. The report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances.* London: HM Government.

Forry, N., Isner, T. K., Daneri, M. P., & Tout, K. (2014). Child care decision making: Understanding priorities and processes used by low-income families in Minnesota. *Early Education and Development, 25,* 995-1015.

Foster-Johnson, L., & Kromrey, J. D. (2018). Predicting group-level outcome variables: An empirical comparison of analysis strategies. *Behavior Research Methods, 50*(6), 2461–2479.

Gallagher, A. (2018). The business of care: Marketization and the new geographies of childcare. *Progress in Human Geography, 42*(5), 706-722.

Geoffroy, M-C., Côté, S. M., Giguère, C-E., Dionne, G., Zelazo, P. D., Tremblay, R. E., ... Séguin, J. R. (2010). Closing the gap in academic readiness and achievement: The role of early childcare. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 51*(12), 1359-1367.

Geoffroy, M.-C., Côté, S. M., Parent, S., & Séguin, J. R. (2006). Daycare attendance, stress, and mental health. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 51*(9), 607-615.

Gialamas, A., Mittinty, M. N., Sawyer, M. G., Zubrick, S. R., & Lynch, J. (2015). Social inequalities in childcare quality and their effects on children's development at school entry: Findings from the longitudinal study of Australian children. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health, 69,* 841-848.

Goodbody Economic Consultants. (2011). *Children 2020: Cost-benefit analysis.* Dublin: Goodbody Economic Consultants.

Gorey, K. M. (2001). Early childhood education: A meta-analytic affirmation of the short- and long-term benefits of educational opportunity. *School Psychology Quarterly, 16*(1), 9-30.

Gormley, Jr., W. T. (2008). The effects of Oklahoma's pre-k program on Hispanic children. *Social Science Quarterly, 89*(4), 916-936.

Gormley Jr., W. T., Phillips, D., & Gayer, T. (2008). Preschool programs can boost school readiness. *SCIENCE, 320,* 1723-1724.

Grammatikopoulos, V., Gregoriadis, A., Tsigilis, N., & Zachopoulou, E. (2014). Parental conceptions of quality in Greek early childhood education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 22*(1), 134–148.

Greenwood, G. E., & Hickman, C. W. (1991). Research and practice in parent involvement: Implications for teacher education. *The Elementary School Journal, 91*(3), 279-288.

Gunnar, M. R., & Donzella, B. (2002). Social regulation of the cortisol levels in early human development. *Psychoneuroendocrinology, 27,* 199-220.

Gunnar, M. R., Kryzer, E., Van Ryzin, M. J., & Phillips, D. A. (2010). The rise in cortisol in family daycare: Associations with aspects of care quality, child behavior, and child sex. *Child Development, 81*(3), 851-869.

Hamre, B. K., La Paro, K. M., Pianta, R. C., & LoCasale-Crouch, J. (2014). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System. Manual. Infant.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Harbach, M. J. (2015). Childcare market failure. *Utah Law Review,* 2015*,* 659-719.

Harbach, M. J. (2016). Nudging Parents. *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice, 19*, 74-126.

Harms, T., Cryer, D., & Clifford, R. M. (1990). *Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale*. New York: Teacher College Press.

Harrist, A. W., Thompson, S. D., & Norris, D. J. (2007). Defining quality child care: Multiple stakeholder perspectives. *Early Education and Development, 18*, 305–336.

Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (2003). The early catastrophe: The 30 million word gap by age 3. *American Educator, 27*(1), 4-9.

Hartas, D. (2015). Parenting for social mobility? Home learning, parental warmth, class and educational outcomes. *Journal of Education Policy, 30*(1), 21-38.

Havnes, T., & Mogstad, M. (2011). No child left behind: Subsidized child care and children's long-run outcomes. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, 3*(2), 97-129.

Heckman, J. J. (2006). Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children. *SCIENCE, 312,* 1900-1902.

Henderson, A. T., Marburger, C. L., & Ooms, T. (1986). *Beyond the Bake Sale. An educator's guide to working with parents.* Columbia MD: The National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Hoshi-Watanabe, M., Musatti, T., Rayna, S., & Vandenbroeck, M. (2015). Origins and Rationale of Centres for Parents and Young Children Together. *Child and Family Social Work, 20*, 62-71.

Howitt, D. (2010). Thematic Analysis. In D. Howitt (Ed.), *Introduction to Qualitative Methods in Psychology* (pp. 163-186). Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Hsieh, H., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(9), 1277-1288.

Hughes, P., & MacNaughton, G. (1999). Who's the expert: Reconceptualising parent-staff relations in early education. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 24*(4), 27-32*.*

Hughes, P., & MacNaughton, G. (2000). Consensus, dissensus or community: The politics of parent involvement in early childhood education. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 1*(3), 241-258.

Hulpia, H., Vandenbroeck, M., Daems, M., Declercq, B., Janssen, J., Van Cleynenbreugel, C., & Laevers, F. (2016). *MeMoQ deelrapport 10: Emotionele en educatieve ondersteuning in de nulmeting.* Brussel – Gent – Leuven: Kind en Gezin – UGent – KU Leuven.

Hurt, H., & Betancourt, L M. (2016). Effect of socioeconomic status disparity on child language and neural outcome: how early is early? *Pediatric RESEARCH, 79*(1), 148-158.

Hurt, H., & Betancourt, L M. (2017). Turning 1 year of age in a low socioeconomic environment: A portrait of disadvantage. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics, 38*(7), 493-500.

Jamison, K. R., Cabell, S Q., LoCasale-Crouch, J., Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2014). CLASS-Infant: An observational measure for assessing teacher-infant interactions in center-based child care. *Early Education and Development, 25*(4), 553-572.

Katz, L. G. (1995). Five perspectives on the quality of early childhood programs. *Perspectives from ERIC/EECE: A Monograph Series, No. 1.*

Kind en Gezin. (2014). *Een pedagogisch raamwerk voor de kinderopvang van baby's en peuters.* Brussel: Kind en Gezin.

Kind en Gezin. (2019). *Het kind in Vlaanderen 2019.* Brussel: Kind en Gezin.

La Paro, K. M., Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2012). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System. Manual. Toddler.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

La Paro, K. M., Williamson, A. C., & Hatfield, B. (2014). Assessing quality in toddler classrooms using the CLASS-Toddler and the ITERS-R. *Early Education and Development, 25*(6), 875-893.

Laevers, F., Buyse, E., Daems, M., & Declercq, B. (2016). *Welbevinden en betrokkenheid als toetsstenen voor kwaliteit in de kinderopvang: Implicaties voor het monitoren van kwaliteit.* Stichting Bureau Kwaliteit Kinderopvang.

Laevers, F., Daems, M., De Bruyckere, G., Declercq, B., Moons, J., Silkens, K., … Van Kessel, M. (2005). *ZiKo: Zelfevaluatie-instrument voor welbevinden en betrokkenheid van kinderen in de opvang. Handleiding.* Leuven: Expertisecentrum Ervaringsgericht Onderwijs KULeuven i.s.m. Kind en Gezin.

Legendre, A. (2003). Environmental features influencing toddlers' bioemotional reactions in day care centers. *Environment and Behavior, 35*(4), 523-549.

Lehrer, J. S., Lemay, L., & Bigras, N. (2015). Parental perceptions of child care quality in centre-based and home-based settings: Associations with external quality ratings. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 47,* 481–497.

Lekhal, R., Zachrisson, H. D., Wang, M. V., Schjølberg, S., & von Soest, T. (2010). Does universally accessible child care protect children from late talking? Results from a Norwegian population-based prospective study. *Early Child Development and Care, 181*(8), 1007-1019.

Liu, W. P., Yeung, A. S., & Farmer, S. (2001). What do parents want from day care services? Perspectives from Australia. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 16,* 385–393.

Lloyd, E., & Penn, H. (2010). Why do childcare markets fail? Comparing England and the Netherlands. *Public Policy Research, 17*(1), 42-28.

Luecken, L. J., & Lemery, K. S. (2004). Early caregiving and physiological stress response. *Clinical Psychology Review, 24,* 171-191.

Lynch, R. G. (2004). *EXCEPTIONAL RETURNS: Economic, fiscal, and social benefits of investment in early childhood development.* Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute.

Lynch, R. G. (2005). *Early childhood investment yields big payoff*. San Francisco: WestEd.

Magnuson, K., Lahaie, C., & Waldfogel, J. (2006). Preschool and school readiness of children of immigrants. Social Science Quarterly, 87(5), 1241-1262.

Magnuson, K. A., Meyers, M. K., Ruhm, C. J., & Waldfogel, J. (2004). Inequality in preschool education and school readiness. American Educational Research Journal, 41(1), 115-157.

Magnuson, K. A., & Shager, H. (2010). Early education: Progress and promise for children from low-income families. *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*, 1186-1198.

Magnuson, K. A., & Waldfogel, J. (2005). Early childhood care and education: Effects on ethnic and racial gaps in school readiness. The Future of Children, 15(1), 169-196.

Martin, C. (2010). The Reframing of Family Policies in France: Processes and Actors. *Journal of European Social Policy, 20*(5), 410–421.

McLoyd, V. C. (1998). Socioeconomic disadvantage and child development. *American Psychologist, 53*(2), 185-204.

Melhuish, E. C. (2004). *A literature review of the impact of early years provision on young children, with emphasis given to children from disadvantaged backgrounds.* National Audit Office.

Melhuish, E., Ereky-Stevens, K., Petrogiannis, K., Ariescu, A., Penderi, E., Rentzou, K., … Leseman, P. (2015). *A review of research on the effects* *of early childhood education and care (ECEC) upon child development.* Utrecht: Utrecht University – CARE project.

Melhuish, E. C., Sylva, K., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B., Phan, M. B., & Malin, A. (2008). Preschool influences on mathematics achievement. *SCIENCE, 321,* 1161-1162.

Melhuish, E., Quinn, L., Hanna, K., Sylva, K., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Taggart, B. (2006). *Effective pre-school provision in Northern Ireland (EPPNI) summary report.* Department of Education.

Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whariki. He whariki matauranga mo nga mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early Childhood Curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs. (2007). *Act on Day-Care, After-School and Club Facilities, etc. for Children and Young People (Day-Care Facilities Act). Act no. 501 of 6 June 2007.*

Mitchell, L., Wylie, C., & Carr, M. (2008). *Outcomes of early childhood education: Literature review. Report to the ministry of education.* New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Mocan, N. (2007). Can consumers detect lemons? An empirical analysis of information asymmetry in the market for child care. *Journal of Population Economics, 20,* 743-780.

Morabito, C., Vandenbroeck, M., & Roose, R. (2013). 'The greatest of equalisers': A critical review of international organisations' views on early childhood care and education. *Journal of Social Policy, 42*(3), 451-467.

Moss, P. (2005). Section I: Theoretical examinations of quality: Making the narrative of quality stutter. *Early Education and Development, 16*(4), 405-420.

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. (2013). The Relationship Between Early Childhood and Compulsory Education: A Properly Political Question. In P. Moss (Ed.), *Early Childhood and Compulsory Education: Reconceptualising the Relationship* (pp. 2–50). London: Routledge.

Moss, P. (2014). *Transformative change and real utopias in early childhood education: A story of democracy, experimentation and potentiality.* New York: Routledge.

Moss, P., Dahlberg, G., Olsson, L. M., & Vandenbroeck, M. (2016). *Why contest early childhood?* Essay by past and present editors of the 'Contesting Early Childhood' series. Routledge.

Musatti, T. (2012). *Young children and their services: developing a European approach. Principle 7 – Evaluation: participatory, democratic and transparent. A Children in Europe policy paper.*

Mustard, J. F. (2006). Experience-based brain development: Scientific underpinnings of the importance of early child development in a global world. *Paediatrics & Child Health, 11*(9),571-572.

Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (1998-2017). *Mplus User's Guide. Eigth Edition.* Muthén & Muthén. Los Angeles, CA: Muthén & Muthén.

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2007). *The Science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do.* Cambridge: Harvard University.

New Economics Foundation. (2009). *A bit rich: Calculating the real value to society of different professions.* London: New Economics Foundation.

NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). (2009a). *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Guidelines for Good Practice.* Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). (2009b). *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Key Messages From the Research Papers.* Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). (2009c). *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Principles and Themes.* Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). (2009d). *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. User Guide.* Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

Nelson, C. (2000). Neural plasticity and human development: The role of early experience in sculpting memory systems. *Developmental Science, 3*(2), 115-136.

Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (7th Edition). Boston: Pearson.

Neville, H., Stevens, C., Pakulak, E., & Bell, T. A. (2013). Commentary: Neurocognitive consequences of socioeconomic disparities. *Developmental Science, 16*(5), 708-712.

Nóvoa, A. (2018). Comparing Southern Europe: The difference, the public, and the common. *Comparative Education, 54*(4), 548-561.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2001). *Starting Strong I: Early childhood education and care. Education and Skills*. Paris: OECD.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2006). *Starting Strong II: Early childhood education and care*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2011). *Starting Strong III: A quality toolbox for early childhood education and care*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

ONE (Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance). (2002). *Accueillir les Tout-Petits. Oser la Qualité. Un Référentiel Psycho-Pédagogique pour des Milieux d'Accueil de Qualité.* Bruxelles: Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance.

Paananen, M., Kumpulainen, K., & Lipponen, L. (2015). Quality drift within a narrative of investment in early childhood education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 23*(5), 690-705.

Pastori, G., & Pagani, V. (2017). Is validation always valid? Cross-cultural complexities of standard-based instruments migrating out of their context. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 25,* 682-697.

Peeters, J., Cameron, C., Lazzari, A., Peleman, B., Budginaité, I., Hauari, I., & Siarova, H. (2015). *Early childhood care: Working conditions, training and quality of services – A systematic review.* Eurofound Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Peisner-Feinberg, E. S., Burchinal, M. R., Clifford, R. M., Yazejian, M., Culkin, M. L., Zelazo, J., … Rustici, J. (1999). *The children of the cost, quality, and outcomes study go to school: Technical report.* Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute.

Peleman, B., Lazzari, A., Budginaité, I., Siarova, H., Hauari, H., Peeters, J., & Cameron, C. (2018). Continuous professional development and ECEC quality: Findings form a European systematic literature review. *European Journal of Education, 53*(1), 9-22.

Pence, A., & Hix-Small, H. (2009). Global children in the shadow of the global child. *International Critical Childhood Policy Studies 2*(1), 75-91.

Pence, A., & Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (2008). Discourses on quality care: The *Investing 'Quality'* project and the Canadian experience. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 9*(3), 241-255.

Penn, H. (2009). *Early childhood education and care: Key lessons from research for policy makers.* Network of Experts in Social Sciences of Education and training.

Penn, H. (2013). Childcare markets: do they work? In E. Lloyd & H. Penn (Eds.), *Childcare markets: Can they deliver an equitable service?* (pp. 19-42). Bristol: Policy Press

Penn, H., Burton, V., Lloyd, E., Potter, S., Sayeed, Z., & Mugford, M., (2006). Early years: What is known about the long-term economic impact of centre-based early childhood interventions? Technical report. In: *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

Perren, S., Frei, D., & Herrmann, S. (2016). Pädagogische Qualität in frühkindlichen Bildungs- und Betreuungseinrichtungen in der Schweiz: Erste Erfahrungen und Befunde mit dem CLASS Toddler Beobachtungsverfahren. *Frühe Bildung, 5*(1), 3-12.

Plantenga, J. (2013). Local providers and loyal parents: competition and consumer choice in the Dutch childcare market. In E. Lloyd & H. Penn (Eds.), *Childcare markets: Can they deliver an equitable service?* (pp. 63-78). Bristol: Policy Press

Ramaekers, S., & Suissa, J. (2010). Wanneer is 'goed' ook 'goed genoeg'? Enkele kanttekeningen bij de verwetenschappelijking van de ouder-kindrelatie. *Signaal, 19*(72), 4-21.

Ramaekers, S., & Suissa, J. (2012). *The claims of parenting: Reasons, responsibility and society.* Dordrecht: Springer.

Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Ou, S.-R., Ateage, I. A., & White, B. A. B. (2011). School-based early childhood education and age-28 well-being: Effects by timing, dosage, and subgroups. *SCIENCE, 333,* 360-364.

Prott, R., & Preissing, C. (2006). *Bridging Diversity - An Early Childhood Curriculum*. Berlin: verlag das netz.

Schweinhart, L. J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W. S., Belfield, C. R., & Nores, M. (2005). *The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through age 40: Summary, conclusions, and frequently asked questions.* HighScope.

Scopelliti, M. & Musatti, T. (2013). Parents' view of child care quality: Values, evaluations, and satisfaction. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 22,* 1025–1038.

Scruggs, L. A., & Allan, J. P. (2008). Social Stratification and Welfare Regimes for the Twenty-First Century: Revisiting the Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism. *World Politics, 60*(4), 642–664.

Shonkoff, J. P. (2011). Protecting brains, not simply stimulating minds. *SCIENCE, 333,* 982-983.

Sims, M. (2007). The determinants of quality care: review and research report. In E. Hill, B. Pocock, & A. Elliott (Eds.). *Kids count: better early childhood education and care in Australia* (pp. 220-241). Sydney, N.S.W.: Sydney University Press.

Sims, M., Guilfoyle, A., & Parry, T. S. (2006). Children's cortisol levels and quality of child care provision. *Child: Care Health and Development, 32*(4), 451-466.

Singer, E., & Kleerekoper, L.. (2009). *Pedagogisch Kader Kindercentra 0-4 jaar*. Maarssen: Elsevier gezondheidszorg.

Skolverket. (2011). *Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 98. Revised 2010*. Stockholm: Skolverket.

Slot, P. (2018). *Structural characteristics and process quality in early childhood education and care: A literature review*. OECD Education Working Papers*,* No. 176. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Slot, P., Boom, J., Verhagen, J., & Leseman, P. (2017). Measurement properties of the CLASS Toddler in ECEC in The Netherlands. *Journal of applied developmental psychology, 48*, 79–91.

Slot, P., Lerkkanen, M.-K., & Leseman, P. (2015). *The relations between structural quality and process quality in European early childhood education and care provisions: Secondary analyses of large scale studies in five countries*. Utrecht: Utrecht University - CARE project.

Soto, L. D., & Swadener, B. B. (2002). Toward liberatory early childhood theory, research and praxis: Decolonizing a field. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 3*(1), 38-66.

Subramanian, S. V., Jones, K., Kaddour, A., & Krieger, N. (2009). Revisiting Robinson: The perils of individualistic and ecologic fallacy. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, *38*(2), 342–360; author reply 370-373.

Sylva, K., K. Ereky-Stevens, & Aricescu, A.-M. (2015). *Overview of European ECEC Curricula and Curriculum Template.* Utrecht: Utrecht University – CARE Project.

Sylva, C., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I, & Taggart, B. (2004). *The effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project: Final report. A longitudinal study funded by the DfES 1997-2004.* University College London.

Taggart, B., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., & Siraj, I. (2015). *Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education project (EPPSE 3-16+): How pre-school influences children and young people's attainment and developmental outcomes over time. Research brief.* University College London.

Teppers, E., Schepers W., & Van Regenmortel, T. (2019). *Het gebruik van en de behoefte aan kinderopvang voor baby's en peuters jonger dan 3 jaar in het Vlaamse Gewest.* Steunpunt Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Gezin.

Tanner, E., Welsh, E., & Lewis, J. (2006). The quality-defining process in early years services: A case study. *Children & Society, 20*(1)*,* 4-16.

Turp, M. (2006). Why love matters: How affection shapes a baby's brain. Book review. *Infant Observation, 9*(3), 305-309.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation). (2004). *Curriculum in early childhood education and care. UNESCO policy brief on early childhood.* Paris: UNESCO.

van Belle, J. (2016). *Early childhood education and care (ECEC) and its long-term effects on educational and labour market outcomes.* RAND Europe.

van Huizen, T., Duhms, L., & Plantenga, J. (2016). *A cost-benefit analysis of universal preschool education: Evidence from a Spanish reform* (Discussion Paper Series 16-11). Utrecht University.

van Keulen, A., & Singer, E. (2012). *Samen verschillend: Pedagogisch kader diversiteit in kindercentra 0-13 jaar*. Amsterdam: Reed Business.

Vandell, D. L., Belsky, J., Burchinal, M., Vandergrift, N., & Steinberg, L. (2010). Do effect of early childcare extend to age 15 years? Results from the NICHD study on early child care and youth development. *Child Development, 81*(3), 737-756.

Vandenbroeck, M. (2009). *In verzekerde bewaring: Honderdvijftig jaar kinderen, ouders en kinderopvang* (2nd ed.). Amsterdam: SWP.

Vandenbroeck, M., Coussée, F., & Bradt, L. (2010). The Social and Political Construction of Early Childhood Education. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 58*(2), 139–153.

Vandenbroeck, M., Laevers, F., de Droogh, L., & Declercq, B. (2011). *Vooronderzoek in functie van de ontwikkeling van een instrument voor het meten van de pedagogische kwaliteit in de voorschoolse kinderopvang: Eindrapport.* Gent & Leuven: Universiteit Gent & Expertisecentrum Ervaringsgericht Onderwijs.

Vandenbroeck, M., Lenaerts, K., & Beblavý, M. (2018). *Benefits of early childhood education and care and the conditions for obtaining them. EENEE analytical report no. 32, prepared for the European Commission.* European Expert Network on Economics of Education.

Vermeer, H. J., & van IJzendoorn, M. H. (2006). Children's elevated cortisol levels at daycare: A review and meta-analysis. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 21,* 390-401.

Vermeer, H. J., Ijzendoorn, M. H., de Kruif, R. E. L., Fukkink, R. G., Tavecchio, L. W. C., Riksen-Walraven, J. M., & van Zeijl, J. (2008). Child care in The Netherlands: Trends in quality over the Years 1995-2005. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 169*(4), 360-385.

Votruba-Drzal, E., Coley, R. L., & Chase-Lansdale, P. L. (2004). Child care and low-income children's development: Direct and moderated effects. *Child development, 75*(1), 296-312.

Votruba-Drzal, E., Coley, R. L., Collins, M., & Miller, P. (2015). Center-based preschool and school readiness skills of children from immigrant families. *Early Education and Development, 26*(4), 549-573.

Wall, G. (2004). Is your child's brain potential maximized? Mothering in an age of new brain research. *Atlantis, 28*(2), 41-50.

White, L. A., & Friendly, M. (2012). Public funding, private delivery: States, markets, and early childhood education and care in liberal welfare states

– A comparison of Australia, the UK, Quebec, and New Zealand. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice, 14*(4), 292-310.

1.8 Notes

[1] The *Nationaal Werk voor Kinderwelzijn* (NWK) was founded in 1919 to support and encourage child protection in private households and public or private institutions for child-rearing, -support and -protection, including through the dissemination and application of scientific methods of child hygiene and through subsidies and supervision of facilities for child hygiene. In 1980, the NWK was split as part of the second state reform. Its Flemish successor, *Kind en Gezin*, was established as a public institution by decree of 29 May 1984 and took off in 1987 (Vandenbroeck, 2009).

[2] It should be noted, however, that most of the evidence relates to preschool attendance when children are 3 to 6 years old. The literature pertaining to children's cognitive and behavioural proficiencies after infant and toddler care is less abundant and conclusive.

[3] While it is known that positive effects of childcare attendance decline over time, the magnitude and persistence of effects may differ greatly. Barnett (2011), for instance, points out that effects of two major U.S. public programs (i.e. Head Start and Early Head Start) start small and disappear shortly after school entry, whereas effects of two iconic smaller scale interventions (i.e. High/Scope Perry Preschool and Abecedarian) are relatively large and long-lasting. Other studies, such as those by Andersson (1992) and Broberg et al. (1997), suggest that childcare produces so-called 'sleeper effects' or delayed effects that appear later in life despite the fade-out of initial gains. Or, as Barnett (2011) comments regarding the latter, despite a catch-up that offsets the advantage.

[4] The 'reconceptualist movement' is an international network that is both critiquing the dominant discourse and exploring and creating alternative narratives. It comprises the 'Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education' (R.E.C.E.) movement, as well as the resistance provided by, among others, the 'Contesting Early Childhood' book series and those involved in early childhood education in Reggio Emilia (Italy).

[5] This so-called 'advisory board' consisted of representatives of the governmental agencies *Kind en Gezin* and *Zorginspectie*, public and private

childcare providers (both centre-based and home-based), parents, education and vocational training centres and pedagogical support agencies.

[6] A whole team of researchers has devoted enormous effort to realise the ambitious goals of the project in a timely manner. Part of this work is further been used in the context of my doctoral study and, therefore, I owe a word of thanks to the project supervisors Prof. dr. Michel Vandenbroeck (Ghent University) and Prof. dr. Ferre Laevers (ECEGO) and all members of the research team: Hester Hulpia (Gent University), Charlotte Bastiaen (Gent University), Charlotte Van Cleynenbreugel (ECEGO), Mieke Daems (ECEGO), Bart Declercq (ECEGO) and Hanne Vanmierlo (ECEGO).

[7] The terminology used by CLASS (e.g., ‘teachers’, ‘classroom’) may seem a bit odd within the Flemish childcare context. However, it is the one that prevails within the English-medium literature and I decided therefore to use different terms interchangeably (e.g., ‘adult’, ‘teacher’, ‘caregiver’, ‘practitioner’, ‘staff’ and ‘professional’ or ‘classroom’ and ‘group’).

[8] As these sample sizes are not proportional to the size of each childcare type in the total population, a weighing was applied in order to extrapolate conclusions to the entire childcare sector in Flanders. Weighing coefficients reflected the proportion of childcare arrangements provided for by each childcare type: independent family daycare (5.4%), family daycare under the auspices of an agency (32.6%), private and public childcare centres (38.6% and 23.4% respectively).

[9] Various initiatives were undertaken to encourage participation in the baseline study. Members of the ‘advisory board’, for instance, campaigned within their networks to enhance childcare providers’ willingness to participate and family daycare agencies were actively involved as intermediaries.

[10] Sampling of independent family daycare providers may have been biased as, in the end, 42.9% of our invitations to participate in the baseline study were rejected. Less reluctance was encountered in other subgroups, with refusal rates of 9.1% for public childcare settings, 16.7% for private childcare centres and 21.3% for independent family daycare providers.

[11] Both CLASS measures have a hierarchical structure: at the highest level are the domains (in our case: emotional and educational support) that are based on dimensions. Dimensions in turn are based on three or four behavioural

indicators. The indicators specify the concrete and observable behaviours of teachers that observers can rate during the observation period (on 5-point scales). Indicator scores help observers to assign a score to the dimensions (on 7-point scales), which are then averaged over dimensions into a domain score. In the MeMoQ project, however, we used indicator scores to calculate domain scores. This means that scores for emotional support and educational support are reported on a 5-point instead of 7-point scale.

[12] Overall, process quality ratings were higher in family daycare for children's well-being (M = 3.44 versus M = 3.32) and involvement (M = 2.89 versus M = 2.62), as well as for effective adult-child interactions in terms of emotional support (CLASS Toddler: M = 3.76 versus M = 3.50; CLASS Infant: M = 3.85 versus M = 3.49) and educational support (CLASS Toddler: M = 2.03 versus M = 1.87; CLASS Infant: M = 2.73 versus M = 2.27). The environment rating scale, by contrast, yielded few meaningful differences (M = 2.76 versus M = 2.81).

[13] More information on the MeMoQ self-evaluation tool can be retrieved from the *Kind en Gezin* website: https://www.kindengezin.be/kinderopvang/sector-babys-en-peuters/pedagogische-aanpak/memoq-zelfevaluatie-instrument/

[14] Although these endlessly recycled studies highlight the social welfare potential of early childhood education, little is said about its equalizing potential. As Morabito, Vandenbroeck and Roose (2013) rightly point out, these studies tell us something about the positive effects of early childhood interventions for poor children compared to poor children who stayed at home. No comparison is made between the outcomes of poor and rich children and no conclusion can be drawn therefore on whether it is truly an equalizer.

[15] One can find other (more conservative) ratings across studies. What is more important here is that they all point in a similar direction: the benefits to society outweigh the costs. Barnett & Ackerman (2006), for instance, found at least thirty-eight studies in the U.S. alone that project positive economic results. It could even be argued that childcare workers contribute more to the economy than accountants and bankers (New Economics Foundation, 2009).

[16] Currently, one out of four manuscripts (Chapter 5) has been published in a peer-reviewed journal, namely in the *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* (Vol. 26, Issue 6). Two other manuscripts are currently under revision by *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* (Chapter 2) and *Early Education*

and Development (Chapter 3). A fourth manuscript will be adapted to submit to a special issue in *Comparative Education* (Chapter 4)

.

CHAPTER 2

Is everybody happy? Exploring the predictability of parent satisfaction with childcare in Flanders

Abstract

There is no question that high-quality childcare benefits children and society at large. Meanwhile, market mechanisms have permeated the governance of childcare provision in many countries and regions, including Flanders. This study examines one of the basic principles of the market, that is the belief that consumers or clients (parents) are a good judge of their own welfare and that client satisfaction is a quality criterion. More precisely, we aim to explore the factors that contribute to parent satisfaction with childcare. Particular focus is given to process quality. Data were drawn from the MeMoQ project, the first rigorous baseline study of childcare quality in Flanders. Process quality was assessed in 383 infant/toddler childcare settings and survey data were collected from 2650 parents. Findings from multilevel models indicate that parent satisfaction is only modestly associated with process quality, as well as with childcare type. On a more personal level, parent satisfaction is predicted by partner status, frequency of attendance, migrant status, and how parents perceived their options in childcare. The explanatory power of our models is limited and parent satisfaction with childcare thus remains a kind of mystery. Yet, we found little evidence to assume that parents will drive quality improvement.

Based on Janssen, J., Spruyt, B., & Vandenbroeck, M. (re-submitted for peer review). Is everybody happy? Exploring the predictability of parent satisfaction with childcare in Flanders. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*.

2.1 Introduction

Today, there is widespread consensus on the potential socioeconomic benefits of childcare provision. Cost-benefit analyses even suggest that returns on investment can be substantial (Allen, 2011; Barnett & Ackerman, 2006; Cattan et al., 2014; Goodbody Economic Consultants, 2011; Lynch, 2004, 2005; Prentice, 2009; Schweinhart et al., 2005). Alongside immediate returns of parent employment and job creation, the rhetoric of returns is largely built upon an understanding of the 'investable' child. Indeed, longitudinal data suggest that investing in children makes good economic sense as early childhood experiences may have lifelong effects for their future social and economic functioning, a notion that furthermore won neuroscientific acclaim (Blakemore & Frith, 2005; Mustard, 2007; National Scientific Council on The Developing Child 2007; Nelson, 2000; Shonkoff, 2011). These individual benefits, in turn, are believed to spill over to society at large in a variety of ways, such as through better educational attainment, less need for remedial education, reduced unemployment and welfare-dependency, less anti-social behaviour and crime, less teenage pregnancy, less health problems, etcetera.

The child development outcomes of childcare attendance, as well as its positive externalities, are largely determined by the quality of childcare provision. However, many countries lack strong regulatory regimes capable of ensuring high-quality provision and, instead, rely on market mechanisms to determine the future direction of childcare provision. A gamble, in particular because childcare is not like any other commodity (Ball & Vincent, 2005; Moss, 2014; Penn, 2013; Plantenga, 2013). Conventional and behavioural market failure theory, which we elaborate on in turn, provides a battery of arguments to assume that childcare markets fail in their objective to create higher quality provisions at lower costs. This study focuses on one of the basic principles of the market, that is the belief that consumers or clients (parents) are the best judge of their own welfare. Therefore, we aim to disentangle the factors that contribute to parent satisfaction with childcare in Flanders. Particular focus is given to process quality because parents, especially in the absence of strong regulatory mechanisms capable of ensuring high-quality provision, are given responsibility for prudent decision-making on behalf of their child.

2.2 Parents' imperfect rationality

Though parents intuitively understand that childcare quality matters (Barros & Leal, 2015; Cryer & Burchinal, 1997; Cryer et al., 2002; da Silva & Wise, 2006; Fenech, 2012; Grammatikopoulos et al., 2014; Harrist et al., 2007; Lehrer et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2001; Mocan, 2007), there are several reasons to believe that their so-called market behaviour may not drive quality improvement in the market. A frequently encountered imperfection is caused by information asymmetry. It implies that parents have few reliable clues about daily life in childcare settings since children, not parents, are the direct recipients of a childcare service. Studies indeed suggest that parents have difficulties to monitor certain quality features (Barros & Leal, 2015; Cryer & Burchinal, 1997; Cryer et al., 2002; Grammatikopoulos et al., 2014; Hu et al., 2017; Kim & Smith, 2007; Mocan, 2007), though information gaps are also present for the structural features of a childcare setting. In a study by Shpancer et al. (2002), for instance, parents were only able to answer 45% of questions about general and group-specific characteristics of their own childcare correctly. Most parents are also unaware of the structural characteristics that matter for process quality and make assumptions when in fact there is no empirical evidence to support it (Mocan, 2007).

Even in the absence of information asymmetries, the existence of positive externalities (or spillovers) is expected to drive failure in the market. Harbach (2015) contends that the benefits of high-quality childcare spill over to society at large, whereas families typically are unwilling to pay a price commensurate with its overall value. Parents consider only the private benefits of childcare and hence may demand not as much of the resource as would be socially optimal. This is not to say that parents do not value child development, but rather that what constitutes quality may be perceived differently from a parental viewpoint (Ceglowski & Bacigalupa, 2002; Katz, 1993). As childcare choices are multi-party decisions, they almost inevitably rest on multiple ambivalences. Parents may seek a sense of safety and trust in a childcare provider (Garrity & Canavan, 2017; Lowe & Weisner, 2004; Mensing et al., 2000), notwithstanding the fact that they might also be sensitive to convenience factors such as price, accessibility and flexibility (Early & Burchinal, 2001; Sandstrom et al., 2012).

Parents' market behaviour is furthermore distorted by reliance on heuristics and vulnerability to bias. In this regard, Harbach (2016) describes how parents use information that is vivid, salient, common or familiar whilst overlooking other information. A so-called representativeness heuristic comes into play, for instance, when parents perceive family daycare as substitute mothering (Bauters & Vandenbroeck, 2017) or “family like” (O’Connell, 2010) and on the basis thereof hold few educational expectations. Mocan (2007) equally referred to such categorical judgment when stating that race-matching between ethnic minority parents and classroom teachers creates a “misplaced trust”. The effects of flawed judgments, Harbach (2016) continues, can further be exacerbated by unrealistic optimism, one of the most recognized self-serving biases. Indeed, it is well-known that parents overestimate the classroom quality experienced by their child (Barros & Leal, 2015; Bassok et al., 2018; Cryer & Burchinal, 1997; Cryer et al., 2002; Grammatikopoulos et al., 2014; Howe et al., 2013; Hu et al., 2017; Mocan, 2007), perhaps because of an emotional desire to alleviate anxieties about possible child-related risks of out-of-home care (Ball & Vincent, 2005; Cryer & Burchinal, 1997; Lamb & Ahnert, 2006).

Parents furthermore are vulnerable to a so-called ‘status quo bias’, meaning that they have a low propensity to switch once opted for a certain childcare provider. According to Plantenga (2013), this is caused by high switching costs: when weighing a change, perceived physical and informational investments might encourage parents to adhere to existing choices. Indeed, it is anything but obvious to find (alternative) childcare arrangements in some areas (Vandenbroeck et al., 2008) and for some groups (Abrassart & Bonoli, 2015; Karoly & Gonzalez, 2011; Lazzari & Vandenbroeck, 2012; Pavolini & Van Lancker, 2018; Sandstrom et al., 2012; Van Lancker & Ghysels, 2016). The fact that parents will have to rationalize the change not just for themselves, but also for their child, no doubt adds to parent-perceived switching costs. Trying an alternative supplier to some extent may feel like a gamble and Plantenga (2013) beliefs that the psychological costs of switching are likely to get higher the longer a particular childcare service is used and the more familiar and safe children feel in the setting. Loyalty displayed towards childcare providers is thus related to both the nature of the sector and loyalty to the child.

2.3 The present study

In this study, we examine what factors contribute to parent satisfaction with childcare in Flanders. Particular focus is given to process quality, which is an important condition to obtain the child development benefits of childcare attendance (Melhuish et al., 2015; Slot, 2018). Based on previous research, we hypothesize that parent satisfaction with childcare in Flanders is symptomatic of parents’ imperfect rationality. Indeed, previous studies have documented the prevalence of high levels of parent satisfaction with childcare (Bassok et al., 2018; Jang et al., 2014; Lehrer et al., 2015; Kim & Smith, 2007; McNaughton, 1994; Scopelliti & Musatti, 2013; Teleki & Buck-Gomez, 2002), even when the quality of childcare provision is known to be suboptimal (Barros et al., 2016; Bjørnestad & Os, 2018; Grammatikopoulos et al., 2014; La Paro et al., 2014; Vermeer et al., 2008). However, studies that empirically support this apparent disconnect remain scarce, certainly with regard to infant and toddler care.

2.3.1 Research context

Flanders is known for its diverse childcare landscape. Approximately one-third of childcare places is provided by small-scale licensed family daycare providers and two-thirds by centre-based childcare. In over 70% of arrangements, parental fees are shaped by income (Kind & Gezin, 2019). The coverage of formal childcare provision for under-threes is wider in Flanders than in many other countries: when making abstraction of preschool entrants at two-and-a-half years of age, 76.6% of children between the age of three months and three years attend formal childcare (Teppers et al., 2019). A central legislation and monitoring system warrants that structural quality variables (e.g. staff–child ratio) do not vary considerably across different childcare types. Minimal quality standards nonetheless fall short of evidence-based recommendations and the profession has a rather low profile and status. In terms of minimum qualification levels, for instance, top-level regulations in Flanders determine that childcare workers need an ISCED level 3 qualification (three years of upper secondary education and one year in vocational training), which is lower than in many other European countries (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019). In fact, the Flemish government allows certification based on previously acquired competences to remedy the dire shortage of childcare workers.

Interestingly, the measurement of parent satisfaction is mandatory in Flemish childcare policy. According to the Flemish Government’s (2012) decree on the organization of childcare for infants and toddlers in Flanders, every licensed provider is required to involve families, including through the “periodic evaluation of their satisfaction and the communication” (author’s own translation, p. 5). In this case, parents are involved as consumers rather than partners of childcare services and it is relevant to explore what information can be gleaned from this narrow operationalization of ‘participatory’ service quality evaluation.

2.3.2 Methods

Sampling procedure

Data collection took place in the context of a three-year research project on Measuring and Monitoring Quality in Flemish childcare (MeMoQ), commissioned by the governmental licensing organization Kind en Gezin (*Child and Family*). More precisely, data were drawn from the project's baseline study on process quality in 400 childcare settings. Sampling contained two phases. First, Kind en Gezin provided a list of all 8276 licensed childcare settings in Flanders, which allowed us to randomly select 200 family daycare providers and as many childcare centres. All 400 selected childcare settings received a letter to elaborate on the aim of the study and were then contacted by phone to address any questions regarding their participation. From the initial selection, 179 were unable to cooperate (e.g., due to database errors and illness). A majority of the remaining 221 childcare settings (*N* = 123, 55.7%) agreed to participate in the study. Additional random samples were drawn within each subgroup until the final sample of 400 childcare settings was completed. In cases where childcare centres had multiple classrooms, data were collected in one randomly selected classroom. Observations took place between August 2015 and April 2016, lasting from 8:30 am until 12 pm.

Second, participating childcare providers were asked to distribute a questionnaire to all parents with a child in the designated classroom. The questionnaire was designed to solicit parent-perceived strengths and weaknesses regarding their childcare, and to rate their overall satisfaction. To maximise response, questionnaires were made available in four frequently encountered home languages for newborns in Flanders (i.e. Dutch, French, English and Turkish). Confidentiality of data processing was guaranteed in a brief statement that childcare providers would be denied access to parents' answers, nor would data be used to evaluate individual childcare providers. In addition, parents were given the option of returning the questionnaire to the childcare provider in a sealed envelope or to communicate their answers more directly to the researchers via an online survey. By the end of April 2016, 3,172 parents (64.8%) from 384 childcare settings completed the survey on paper (*N* = 2,823) or online (*N* = 349). The average response rate per childcare setting was 68.6%. In 87.5% of cases, the mother filled out the questionnaire (father = 9.8%; both parents = 2.7%).

After deleting cases with missing values on one of the variables included in the analyses, 2650 respondents (clustered in 383 childcare settings) remained in the current study. The SPSS and STATA software packages were used to analyse the data.

2.3.3 Measures

Process quality

Three observational measures were used to assess process quality: the Leuven Scales for Well-being and Involvement (direct assessment of children's experiences), the Classroom Assessment Scoring System or CLASS (adult–child interactions) and a self-developed environmental rating scale (educational resources in the learning environment). In order to base quality assessments on a representative set of classroom situations, the total observation time per classroom was divided into separate observation cycles wherein the Leuven Scales and CLASS were used alternatingly (four times each). The environment was assessed only once, at the very end of the entire observation.

The Leuven Scales for Well-being and Involvement are two commonly applied process-oriented self-evaluation measures in Flemish childcare (Laevers, 2007). When assessing children's well-being, observers focus on signals of comfort, enjoyment, spontaneity, vitality, and self-confidence, which indicate that basic needs are fulfilled. The concept of involvement refers to children's engagement in activities: being concentrated, absorbed, fascinated, and operating at the very limits of their capacities. In line with the conventional procedure for data collection (see Laevers & Declercq, 2018), a 'scanning procedure' was used to take snapshots of children's well-being and involvement at four different moments during the morning. A sample of five children was selected randomly before each observation cycle and subjected to consecutive one-minute observations per child. Scores for individual children's well-being and involvement were assigned on a five-point scale immediately after each observation. These individual scores were ultimately averaged to indicate the quality of children's experiences at the classroom level.

Adult–child interactions were measured with CLASS. CLASS Infant (Hamre et al., 2014) was used when the majority of children in the classroom was aged under 18 months. It focuses on four dimensions of adult–child interactions: relational climate, teacher sensitivity, facilitated exploration, and early language support. CLASS Toddler (La Paro et al., 2012) was used when the majority of children in a classroom exceeded the age of 18 months. It consists of eight dimensions of teacher–child interaction: positive climate, negative climate, teacher sensitivity, regard for child perspectives, behaviour guidance, facilitation of learning and development, quality of feedback and language modelling. Four observations of 20 minutes were conducted during the morning, unless all children went to bed before the fourth cycle was completed (11 times). Observation and scoring took place in accordance with the official CLASS Manual procedures and were intensively rehearsed during prior training sessions. After each observation cycle, a series of indicators were scored on ordinal scales with five levels, varying from 'low' (1), 'low/mid' (2), 'mid' (3), 'mid/high' (4), to 'high' (5). A low score is given when the specified behaviour is not or hardly observed; a midscore is given when the behaviour occurred sometimes; a high score indicates a prevalent occurrence of the behaviour. These scores are then combined to assign a score on the aforementioned (7-spoint scale) dimensions. The CLASS Manual provides clear guidelines on how to weigh these indicator ratings in assigning a dimension score. For example, when all indicators are scored in the midrange, the dimension score would be exactly in the midrange, or a 4.

A rating scale was developed to assess the richness of educational resources that children had been exposed to during a full morning observation. Data collectors scored 15 indicators, covering both material (e.g., accessibility of play materials, diversity in learning experiences) and immaterial (e.g., children's agency in daily routine) aspects of the learning environment. Each indicator was scored on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from low to high quality. A mean score was calculated for the learning environment on the basis of all 15 indicators (α = .81).

Parent questionnaire

A parent questionnaire from CNRI Rome (Di Giandomenico et al., 2008) was altered to the Flemish context in close collaboration with different stakeholder groups, including representatives of parent associations. The first part of the questionnaire intended to obtain general information about (both) parents, children and childcare use. Hardly all questions had limited response possibilities, except when asking about age (parents and child) and childcare quantity (duration in months and intensity in days/week). Answer categories were developed for questions about gender (two categories: male or female), partner status (two categories: yes or no), country of birth (two categories: Belgium or abroad), home language(s) (three categories: monolingual Dutch, multilingual Dutch or foreign), employment status (four categories: unemployed, temporarily unemployed, part-time or fulltime), prior experience with childcare (three categories: no, other setting or similar setting) and availability of childcare options (two categories: able versus unable to choose between available childcare places at different locations). In case of foreign home language(s) and country of birth, parents were asked to clarify their answer. Information on parents' countries of birth were later-on combined to compute a new family variable on migration status (three categories: all parents born in Belgium, mixed origin, immigrant families). So too for employment status, whereby abstraction is made of differences in employment intensity (three categories: both parents work, one parent works, no parents work).

In the last part of the questionnaire, parents rated the communication with their childcare on (five) 5-point scales regarding the amount of information they received about children's caregiving, their lived experiences and development, classroom events, internal operations and neighbourhood resources. At the end of the questionnaire parents gave a final appreciation of overall satisfaction on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (completely dissatisfied) to 5 (completely satisfied).

Reliability and validity

A team of seven observers was recruited for data collection. Prior to observation in childcare settings, all data collectors were trained and certified to ensure the reliability and comparability of quality ratings. Training included video observations followed by an intense discussion on correct scoring with accredited trainers. Upon completion of the training, all observers were instructed to pass an online reliability test comprising of five videos to be watched and coded. At least 80% reliability with the master codes was required to be certified as a reliable observer. Teachstone reliability procedures were used to obtain CLASS Infant certification, whereas a Dutch reliability test administered by Pauline Slot was completed to become a certified CLASS Toddler observer.

Following previous research on the construct validity of CLASS Toddler (Slot et al., 2017), we conducted confirmatory factor analysis on indicator level in Lavaan. A two-factor structure showed the best fit (χ^2 1199.85; *CFI* 0.886; *TLI* 0.087; *RMSEA* 0.077; *SRMR* 0.059). The first factor was labelled "emotional support" and consisted of indicators from the dimensions of positive climate, teacher sensitivity, regard for child perspectives and behaviour guidance (α =

.89).[1] The second factor was labelled “educational support” and consisted of indicators from the dimensions of facilitation of learning and development, quality of feedback, and language modelling (α = .84). Since we aimed at using both CLASS Infant and Toddler scores interchangeably, we tested a two-factor structure for the CLASS Infant data and found a reasonable fit (χ^2 320.69; *CFI* 0.93; *TLI* 0.910; *SRMR* 0.05). The first factor is labelled “emotional support” and consists of all indicators under the dimensions of relational climate and teacher sensitivity (α = .85)[2]. The second factor is called “educational support” and contains the indicators of the dimensions of facilitated exploration and early language support (α = .86). Scores for emotional support and educational support are reported on a 5-point rating scale, as they represent the mean score of its indicators.

Given the potential cross-cultural complexities arising from standard-based instruments migrating out of their original context (see Pastori & Pagani, 2017), the application of CLASS in Flanders was discussed by a panel composed of local experts in the field. The expert panel agreed that the use of CLASS, in combination with the other well-established quality measures in Flanders, was off added value. Nevertheless, some experts cautioned about a possible cultural bias in CLASS Toddler’s (over)emphasis on adult-led learning.

All measures of process quality as well as the parent questionnaire were piloted in 120 locations. During 48 visits, observation was undertaken in pairs, with scores exceeding the 80% threshold of interrater reliability. During actual data collection, reliability checks were conducted for 44 of 400 observation visits (11%). Nearly all 709 compared scores for well-being and involvement fell within the acceptable deviation range of 0.5 (*N* = 701, 99%; *N* = 686, 97% respectively). High levels of agreement between paired observers were also found for CLASS Infant and Toddler dimension scores: not one of the 240 compared CLASS Infant dimension scores deviated greater than one and a difference of more than one occurred only in three out of 928 times for CLASS Toddler dimensions. Interrater reliability for the 657 indicator scores of the environmental scale was acceptable with 470 identical scores (71.5%), 152 scores with a tolerable one-point deviation (23.1%) and 35 scores (5.3%) exceeding the threshold.

---

[1] All indicators of the dimension ‘negative climate’ were excluded due to a low standard deviation, high skewness and high kurtosis, as negative behaviour hardly occurred during observations.

[2] The indicator ‘lack of adult negativity’ was excluded due to a very low standard deviation, high skewness and high kurtosis, as negative behaviour hardly occurred during observations.

2.4 Results

2.4.1 Descriptives

Dependent variables

In accordance with the Flemish Governments' policy prescription, we estimated multilevel models for two measures of satisfaction separately: parents' overall satisfaction with childcare and satisfaction with the communication processes. The former was measured with one 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely dissatisfied) to 5 (completely satisfied). Consistent with other studies, overall satisfaction with childcare was high (M = 4.67, $S.D.$ = 0.53, Min = 1, Max = 5). Parents' overall satisfaction was negatively skewed (-1.546) as only 58 parents (2.2%) expressed some form of dissatisfaction with their childcare setting: two reported being very unsatisfied, seven rather dissatisfied, and 49 had mixed feelings.

The measure of parent satisfaction with communication was measured with five 5-point scale items concerned with the amount of information available to parents. In general, parents felt particularly well-informed about the caregiving of their child (M = 4.20, $S.D.$ = 0.86). Updates on children's lived experiences and development (M = 3.72, $S.D.$ = 0.96), classroom events (M = 3.37, $S.D.$ = 1.12) and internal operations (M = 3.10, $S.D.$ = 1.16) were provided in sufficient extent, in contrast to news about neighbourhood resources (M = 2.27, $S.D.$ = 1.22). For each individual item, scores varied from 1 to 5. We created a general indicator of satisfaction with the communication process that reflected the mean score on the five items (M = 3.34, $S.D.$ = 0.79, Min = 1.00, Max = 5.00, α = 0.794).

As both satisfaction measures are strongly associated ($r = 0.456$; $p < 0.001$), it is reasonable to assume that they have similar predictors. The more nuanced measure of satisfaction with communication than complements the findings of our more general measure of overall satisfaction.

Independent variables

Both measures of parent satisfaction with childcare were predicted by independent variables on two levels: the family and the childcare setting. Demographic information showed that over ninety-five percent of children grew up in two-parent families (96.7%). The mean age of the parent(s) within a family ranged from 20 to 60 (M = 33.58, $S.D.$ = 4.26). In most families, both parents were employed (85.3%). Families with one working parent (13.5%) and especially those with no working parents were rather exceptional (1.2%). Most children were raised monolingually in Dutch (83.7%), whereas about twelve percent lived in multilingual Dutch-speaking families (12.3%) and four percent in foreign-speaking households (4.0%). The linguistic diversity in our sample was quite large as 51 different home languages were registered. Families were run predominantly by Belgium-born parents (86.4%). Representation of families with mixed origins (8.4%) and immigrant families (5.2%) was far lower, nonetheless reflecting a diversity of 87 different countries of birth.

Characteristics of childcare utilization showed that 81.8% of parents were able to find available childcare places at multiple locations, whereas the others (18.2%) felt severely constrained in their 'choice'. Forty-five percent of parents had no prior experience with childcare utilization (45.9%), thirty-two percent had already used the current childcare provider before (32.8%) and twenty-one percent was familiar with another childcare provider (21.2%). Regarding the latter category, almost half of the parents recently switched childcare providers. The mean duration of childcare utilization (current provider) is about twelve months or one year (*M* = 12.63, *S.D.* = 7.65, *Min* = 0, *Max* = 39). The average intensity of childcare utilization was three-and-a-half days per week (*M* = 3.51, *S.D.* = 1.06, *Min* = 0.5, *Max* = 7.0).

Regarding the Level 2 features of the childcare setting, 50.4% of parents used a family daycare provider (49.6% centre-based) and in 50.9% of childcare arrangements the provider was affiliated with a professional organization (49.1% without such backing). Settings from all four successive subsidy levels were represented in the sample. About twenty-seven percent of parents were recruited in the 'zero' subsidy group (27.2%), meaning that their childcare provider was licensed but receives no public funding. Twelve-and-a-half percent used a provider that was granted a 'basic' subsidy in return for a minimal operation of 220 days per year, the hiring of staff with decent knowledge of the Dutch language and compliance with minimum qualification standards. The majority of parents payed 'income-based' fees (57.4%), indicating that their childcare received a subsidy to cover salaries and working costs and, in addition to the foregoing criteria, was bound by certain priority enrolment criteria. Only a fraction of parents used childcare that belonged to the 'plus' subsidy group (2.9%), meaning that providers are expected to give priority access to vulnerable families (at least 30% of enrolled children should have a disadvantaged background) and to offer them additional services.

For all 383 childcare settings, five indicators of process quality were judged on a 5-point scale. Quality ratings for children's well-being ranged from 2.58 to 4.38 (*M* = 3.39, *S.D.* = 0.29), whereas those for children's involvement varied from 1.51 to 4.19 (*M* = 2.76, *S.D.* = 0.52). The quality of adult-child interactions extended between 1.52 to 5.00 for emotional support (*M* = 3.65, *S.D.* = 0.61) and between 1.04 to 4.58 for educational support (*M* = 2.18, *S.D.* = 0.69). The quality of the childcare environment ranged from 1.33 to 4.58 (*M* = 2.78, *S.D.* = 0.57). Quality indicators were found to be strongly correlated (0.268 < *r's* < 0.725) and an explorative factor analysis (principal axis factoring) revealed one underlying factor with an eigenvalue above 1 (2.900; 58% explained variance). Therefore, we constructed a general index that reflected the mean score on the five separate quality measures, which can be seen as a generalized indicator of quality (*M* = 2.95, *S.D.* = 0.41, *Min* = 1.86, *Max* = 4.24, *α* = 0.799). For a full correlation table of the quality indicators, see Table 5 (at the end of this chapter).

2.4.2 Multilevel regression models

Multilevel regression models were used to predict general satisfaction with childcare and satisfaction with the communication processes between the family and the childcare setting, while taking the nested structure of the data into account (i.e., multiple parents within one childcare setting).[3] As the results for both dependent variables were similar (see Table 6 and Table 7 at the end of this chapter), we discuss them together.

First, we estimated a model that only included a constant (null model) and decomposed the variance between the individual and institutional level. In general, about 12.01% (general satisfaction) to 17.38% (satisfaction with communication) of the total variance could be attributed to the between-institutions level (87.99% and 82.62% respectively is within-institutions variance).

Next, individual level predictors were added (Model 1). For both outcomes, we found that single parents were more satisfied (*B* = 0.190 and *B* = 0.312 for general satisfaction and satisfaction with communication, respectively). Satisfaction was higher when parents had several childcare options from which to choose (*B* = 0.154 and *B* = 0.149 for general satisfaction and satisfaction with communication, respectively). General satisfaction was lower among parents from a household where all parents were born abroad (*B* = -0.140). The same pattern was found for satisfaction with communication processes (*B* = -0.112), although the parameter estimate here was not significant. As this model also includes the home language and none of the indicators had a significant effect, this suggests the lower *general* satisfaction among immigrants is related to factors other than those associated with communication processes. Finally, people whose child attended childcare more frequently were more satisfied with the communication processes (*B* = 0.037). A similar pattern was observed for general satisfaction with childcare, although this effect only became significant in further models. Interestingly, many of the individual level characteristics (age, employment status, and previous exposure to a childcare setting) were not related to any of the satisfaction measures.

---

[3] While preparing this paper we also re-estimated the model with an ordered logistic model. This did not affect the substantial conclusions. Results are available upon request.

In Model 2 and Model 3, we introduced indicators referring to the institutional level (Level 2). In Model 2, structural characteristics were introduced. Parents using family daycare were more satisfied (in general and with the communication processes) compared to those using centre-based childcare (*B* = 0.119 and *B* = 0.338 respectively). Further models show that this relationship remained after considering experts' quality indicators.

In Models 3 to 8, the experts' quality indicators were added. As explained earlier, the different quality indicators turned out to be substantially correlated. Entering these indicators simultaneously in the model, leads to problems of multicollinearity,[4] so a two-step procedure was followed to assess the relevance of the quality as judged by trained observers. First, we added the composed indicator of overall process quality. As Model 3 shows, satisfaction among parents was higher when their child attended daycare that was also identified as better by experts (*B* = 0.120 and *B* = 0.224 for general satisfaction and satisfaction with communication respectively). Second, a series of models (Models 4 to 8) were estimated in which each individual quality indicator was entered. A comparison of these models allows assessment of the relative weight of each of the different quality measures. For both satisfaction outcomes, we found that emotional support, educational support, and the learning environment were most predictive.

---

[4] While the level of explained variance increased significantly, none of the point estimates of the separate quality indicators turned out to be significant. This indicates that it is the common variance of the different indicators that is most strongly related to the dependent variables (rather than the idiosyncratic part of the variance on each indicator separately).

2.5 Conclusion

In this article, we explain differences in parent satisfaction with childcare. Explanations were sought in differences between families (Level 1) and between childcare settings (Level 2), with a particular focus on process quality. In the first place, the results confirm earlier conclusions about the prevalence of high parent satisfaction rates (Bassok et al., 2018; Jang et al., 2014; Lehrer et al., 2015; Kim & Smith, 2007; McNaughton, 1994; Scopelliti & Musatti, 2013; Teleki & Buck-Gomez, 2002). Nevertheless, some differences exist and the findings support a multilevel model for explaining variation in parent satisfaction with childcare. Satisfaction varies modestly at the between-institutions level as a function of process quality and childcare type, whereas small effects were found within institutions for partner status, frequency of attendance, childcare options, and migration status.

Against our expectation, parent satisfaction is modestly related to process quality. The effect parameter of the general process quality indicator is stronger than each of the separate parameter estimates of its constituting components, suggesting that it is the common variance between the individual quality indicators (as captured by the general indicator) which matters most. Any speculation on why parents with children in higher quality classrooms are slightly more satisfied is dangerous. Parents are not present for observations during the day and while it is generally believed that the information asymmetry inflates quality ratings of parents (Camehl et al., 2018; Cryer & Burchinal, 1997; Mocan, 2007), further research is needed in order to understand the modest rationality of parent satisfaction.

Consistent with previous research (Fantuzzo et al., 2006; Kelesidou et al., 2017), our findings highlight significant program differences in parent satisfaction. More precisely, satisfaction is higher in family daycare than in childcare centres. Again, the models do not offer any explanation for the findings. Our literature review presents two hypotheses for further research. The first is related to the significance of trust in parental evaluations of childcare providers (Garrity & Canavan, 2017; Lowe & Weisner, 2004; Mensing et al., 2000). Taken from this perspective, higher satisfaction with family daycare could reflect a selection-effect whereby anxious parents are more reluctant to use family daycare (e.g., due to limited social control). Conversely, structural characteristics of family daycare (e.g., small group size and a homelike domestic interior) could facilitate enhanced contact and the development of a more personal bond, thereby offsetting issues of vulnerability or trustworthiness. A second plausible explanation would be that higher satisfaction with family daycare is the outcome of the so-called representativeness heuristic. As explained before, previous studies suggest that parents have a tendency to perceive family daycare as substitute mothering (Bauters & Vandenbroeck, 2017) or ‘family like’ (O’Connell, 2010) and therefore adopt lower professional or educational evaluation standards.

Two demographic variables, partner status and migration status, are modestly associated with parent satisfaction. The significance of partner status was already brought to the fore by Fantuzzo et al. (2006), though they found single parents to be less satisfied with childcare. The authors claimed that lower satisfaction (with teacher contact) might be due to single parents’ greater burden to comply with teacher expectations of involvement and participation. Although little is known about such expectations in Flemish childcare, this theory is not supported by our findings. On the contrary, single-parent families in our study report higher satisfaction with childcare than two-parent families and might therefore experience childcare more as a resiliency factor. To explain the (weak) association between parent satisfaction and migration status, further research could clarify whether cultural identity is at stake. Bearing in mind that for immigrant parents the use of formal childcare might not be their most desired choice (Obeng, 2007), lower satisfaction with childcare could be the reflection of their compromise. Related to this, it could be worthwhile to investigate how immigrant parents experience the negotiation of belonging and difference with childcare staff (e.g., in feeding and sleep practices) (De Gioia, 2009; O’Connell, 2010).

A small part of the within-institutions variance in parent satisfaction is explained by childcare intensity. To understand why parents are more satisfied when a child attends a childcare setting for more days per week, future research could investigate whether parents from infrequently attending children are more worried about the fact that children’s settling-in processes take time (Ahnert et al., 2004; Datler et al., 2012; Fein et al., 1993). In addition, one may want to account for the possibility that parent-staff and/or child-staff relationships are more easily maintained through frequent attendance.

The results furthermore suggest that part of the within-institutions variance in parent satisfaction is determined by different experiences with the accessibility of childcare provisions. Parents in this study were more positive about their childcare if given the choice between childcare places at different locations. The ability to consider a range of options might be off value since it allows preferences to be expressed, which, in turn, strengthens the conviction that the chosen childcare setting suits them best. Meanwhile, parents who had no choice options may feel disempowered to make a change, experiencing what Plantenga (2013) calls higher switching costs.

2.6 Limitations

Our study is marked by several limitations and caution is needed therefore when interpreting the results. First, data on childcare utilization in Flanders is scant and largely insufficient to determine whether our sample demographics differ from that of the population from which it was drawn. This is not problematic as we aimed to explore predictors of parent satisfaction with childcare in Flanders rather than to make extrapolations for the entire population of formal childcare users. It should be said, however, that immigrant and foreign-speaking parents were slightly overrepresented in the listwise deletion of cases with missing values.

Second, Level 1 predictors only explained 1.6% of within-institutions variance. Future research should collect more information about families and their childcare utilization so as to significantly enhance understanding of the factors that contribute to parent satisfaction with childcare. For instance, we were unable to construct a variable on socio-economic status, while it is assumed to be a good predictor of parent satisfaction (Barnes et al., 2006; Kelesidou et al., 2017). Furthermore, it may be worthwhile to search for predictors beyond the conventional family demographics, such as in childcare expectations, child-rearing practices and beliefs, personality, child temperament, staff-parent contact, etcetera.

Third, parent satisfaction with childcare was measured in a very broad sense, using a single 5-point Likert scale for overall satisfaction and a more nuanced scale for satisfaction with communication. More research is needed to determine whether these scales are predictive of parents’ market behaviour, such as one could expect, at least intuitively, with regard to child retention at a childcare provider (Keiningham et al., 2006; Meyers, 1993).

2.7 Discussion

The results suggest that variables at both the individual and institutional level significantly enhance our understanding of parent satisfaction with childcare. However, the explanatory power of the models remains limited (total variance explained: 4.6% of overall satisfaction and 6.5% of satisfaction with communication) and the true meaning of parent satisfaction thus remains a kind of mystery. What this study has shown, nevertheless, is that only a small percentage of the total variance in parent satisfaction with childcare is located at the institutional level, about one third of which is explained by Level 2 predictors such as process quality. It is crystal clear therefore that parents are not the rational utility maximisers that act in the spirit of the *homo economicus*. In other words, there is little evidence to assume that parents will drive quality improvement and the potential socioeconomic benefits of childcare provision will probably fail to materialize if parents' childcare judgments determine the future direction of childcare provision.

To end with, we wish to stress that the format of parents’ childcare judgments and participatory evaluation may be seen otherwise. Indeed, just as the commodification of childcare, the measurement of parent satisfaction is controversial. Critics such as Musatti (2013) and colleagues (Scopelliti & Musatti, 2013) argue that it ignores the complexity of childcare relations by positioning parents as mere consumers or clients of a service. Participatory evaluation, they argue, should entail an ongoing process of meaning making wherein everyone can make judgments about the value of what goes on in childcare. The ostensibly rhetorical question of parent satisfaction seems ill-suited to create this kind of reciprocity as one is likely to come to the conclusion that everybody is happy.

2.8 References

Abrassart, A., & Bonoli, G. (2015). Availability, cost or culture? Obstacles to childcare services for low-income families. *Journal of Social Policy, 44*, 787-806.

Ahnert, L., Gunnar, M. R., Lamb, M. E., & Barthel, M. (2004). Transition to child care: Associations with infant-mother attachment, infant negative emotion, and cortisol elevations. *Child Development, 75,* 639-650.

Allen, G. (2011). *Early intervention: Smart investment, massive savings.* London: HM Government.

Ball, S. J., & Vincent, C. (2005). The ‘childcare champion’? New Labour, social justice and the childcare market. *British Educational Research Journal, 31*, 557-570.

Barnett, S. W., & Ackerman, D. J. (2006). Costs, benefits and long-term effects of early care and education programs: Recommendations and cautions for community developers. *COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Journal of the Community Development Society, 37*(2), 86-100.

Barros, S., Cadima, J., Bryant, D. M., Coelho, V., Pinto, A. I., Pessanha, M., & Peixoto, C. (2016). Infant child care quality in Portugal: Associations with structural characteristics. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 37,* 118–130.

Barros, S., & Leal, T. B. (2015). Parents’ and teachers’ perceptions of quality in Portuguese childcare classrooms. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 30,* 209–226.

Bassok, D., Markowitz, A. J., Player, D., & Zagardo, M. (2018). Are parents’ ratings and satisfaction with preschools related to program features? *AERA Open, 4*(1), 1–17.

Bauters, V., & Vandenbroeck, M. (2017). The professionalization of family day care in Flanders, France and Germany. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 25,* 386–397.

Bjørnestad, E., & Os, E. (2018). Quality in Norwegian childcare for toddlers using ITERS-R. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 26*, 111–127.

Blakemore, S. J., & Frith, U. (2005). The learning brain: Lessons for education. A précis. *Developmental Science, 8*(6), 459-471.

Camehl, G. F., Schober, P. S., Spiess, C. K. (2018). Information asymmetries between parents and educators in German childcare institutions. *Education Economics, 26,* 624-646.

Cattan, S., Crawford, C., & Dearden, L. (2014). *The economic effects of pre-school education and quality. IFS Report R99.* London: Institute for Fiscal Studies.

Ceglowski, D., & Bacigalupa, C. (2002). Four perspectives on child care quality. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 30*, 87–92.

Cryer, D., & Burchinal, M. (1997). Parents as child care consumers. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 12,* 35–58.

Cryer, D., Tietze, W., & Wessels, H. (2002). Parents' perceptions of their children's child care: A cross-national comparison. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 17,* 259–277.

da Silva, L., & Wise, S. (2006). Parent perspectives on childcare quality among a culturally diverse sample. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 31*(3), 6–14.

Datler, W., Ereky-Stevens, K., Hover-Reisner, N., & Malmberg, L-E. (2012). Toddlers' transition to out-of-home day care: Settling into a new care environment. *Infant Behavior & Development, 35,* 439–451.

De Gioia, K. (2009). Parent and staff expectations for continuity of home practices in the child care setting for families with diverse cultural backgrounds. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 34*(3), 9–17.

Di Giandomenico, I., Musatti, T., & Picchio, M. (2008). I ruolo della valutazione di un Sistema integrato di servizi per l'infanzia. *Rassegna Italiana di Valutazione, 40,* 89-106.

Fantuzzo, J., Perry, M. A., & Childs, S. (2006). Parent satisfaction with educational experiences scale: A multivariate examination of parent satisfaction with early childhood education programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 21,* 142–152.

Fein, G. G., Gariboldi, A., & Boni R. (1993). The adjustment of infants and toddlers to group care: The first 6 months. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 8*, 1–14.

Fenech, M. (2012). Discerning childcare quality: Parents as potential informants of policy beyond regulation. *Critical Studies in Education, 53*, 327–345.

Flemish Government. (2012). *Decreet van 20 april 2012 (BS 15 juni 2012) houdende de organisatie van kinderopvang van baby's en peuters.*

Garrity, S., & Canavan, J. (2017). Trust, responsiveness and communities of care: An ethnographic study of the significance and development of parent-caregiver relationships in Irish early years settings. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 25,* 747–767.

Goodbody Economic Consultants. (2011). *Children 2020: Cost-benefit analysis.* Dublin: Goodbody Economic Consultants.

Grammatikopoulos, V., Gregoriadis, A., Tsigilis, N., & Zachopoulou, E. (2014). Parental conceptions of quality in Greek early childhood education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 22*(1), 134–148.

Hamre, B. K., La Paro, K. M., Pianta, R. C., & LoCasale-Crouch, J. (2014). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System. Manual. Infant.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Harbach, M. J. (2015). Childcare market failure. *Utah Law Review,* 2015*,* 659-719.

Harbach, M. J. (2016). Nudging Parents. *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice, 19*, 74-126.

Harrist, A. W., Thompson, S. D., & Norris, D. J. (2007). Defining quality child care: Multiple stakeholder perspectives. *Early Education and Development, 18*, 305–336.

Howe, N., Jacobs, E., Vukelich, G., & Recchia, H. (2013). Canadian parents' knowledge and satisfaction regarding their child's day-care experience. *Journal of Early Childhood Research, 11*, 133–148.

Hu, B. Y., Zhou, Y., & Li, K. (2017). Variations in Chinese parental conceptions of early childhood education quality. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 25*, 519–540.

Jang, L-F., Moore, L., & Lin, Y-M. (2014). Parents' perspectives on child care quality and satisfaction in Taiwan. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education, 3*(5), 3–19.

Karoly, L. A., & Gonzalez, G. C. (2011). Early care and education for children in immigrant families. *The Future of Children, 21*(1), 71-101.

Katz, L. G. (1993). Five perspectives on quality in early childhood programs. *Perspectives from ERIC/EECE: A Monograph Series, No. 1*.

Keiningham, T. L., Aksoy, L., Andreassen, T. W., & Estrin, D. (2006). Does parent satisfaction with a childcare provider matter for loyalty? *Journal of Consumer Marketing, 23,* 470-479.

Kelesidou, S., Chatzikou, M., Tsiamagka, E., Koutra, E., Abakoumkin, G., & Tseliou, E. (2017). The role of parents' educational level and centre type in parent satisfaction with early childhood care centres: A study in Greece. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 25,* 768–783.

Kim, Y. K., & Smith, A. K. (2007). Providing a critical service today for tomorrow's consumers: A relational model of customer evaluations and responses in the child care industry. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 14*, 232-245.

Kind & Gezin. (2019). *Jaarverslag 2018.* Brussel: Kind & Gezin.

La Paro, K. M., Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2012). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System. Manual. Toddler.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

La Paro, K. M., Williamson, A. C., & Hatfield, B. (2014). Assessing quality in toddler classrooms using the CLASS-Toddler and the ITERS-R. *Early Education and Development, 25,* 875–893.

Laevers, F. (2007). *Well-being and involvement in care settings. A process-oriented self-evaluation instrument (SiCs)*. Brussel: Kind & Gezin.

Laevers, F., & Declercq, B. (2018). How well-being and involvement fit into the commitment to children's rights. *European Journal of Education, 53,* 325–335.

Lamb, M. E., & Ahnert, L. (2006). Nonparental child care: Context, concepts, correlates, and consequences. In K. A. Renninger, I. E. Sigel, W. Damon, & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Child psychology in practice* (pp. 950–1016). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Lazzari, A., & Vandenbroeck, M. (2012). Literature review of the participation of disadvantaged children and families in ECEC services in Europe. In Bennett, J. (Ed.), *Early childhood education and care (ECEC) for children from disadvantaged backgrounds: Findings from a European literature review and two case studies. Study commissioned by the Directorate General for Education and Culture.* Brussels: European Commission.

Lehrer, J. S., Lemay, L., & Bigras, N. (2015). Parental perceptions of child care quality in centre-based and home-based settings: Associations with external quality ratings. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 47,* 481–497.

Liu, W. P., Yeung, A. S., & Farmer, S. (2001). What do parents want from day care services? Perspectives from Australia. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 16,* 385–393.

Lowe, E. D., & Weisner, T. S. (2004). 'You have to push it – who's gonna raise your kids?': situating child care and child care subsidy use in the daily routines of lower income groups. *Children and Youth Services Review, 26,* 143-171.

Lynch, R. G. (2004). *EXCEPTIONAL RETURNS: Economic, fiscal, and social benefits of investment in early childhood development.* Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute.

Lynch, R. G. (2005). *Early childhood investment yields big payoff*. San Francisco: WestEd.

McNaughton, D. (1994). Measuring parent satisfaction with early childhood intervention programs: Current practice, problems, and future perspectives. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 14*, 26–48.

Melhuish, E., Ereky-Stevens, K., Petrogiannis, K., Ariescu, A., Penderi, E., Rentzou, K., … Leseman, P. (2015). *A review of research on the effects of early childhood education and care (ECEC) upon child development.* Utrecht: Utrecht University - CARE project.

Mensing, J. F., French, D., Fuller, B., & Kagan, S. L. (2000). Child care selection under welfare reform: How mothers balance work requirements and parenting. *Early Education and Development, 11,* 573–595.

Meyers, M. K. (1993). Child care and JOBS employment and training program: What difference does quality make? *Journal of Marriage and Family, 55,* 767-783.

Mocan, N. (2007). Can consumers detect lemons? An empirical analysis of information asymmetry in the market for child care. *Journal of Population Economics, 20,* 743–780.

Moss, P. (2014). *Transformative change and real utopias in early childhood education: A story of democracy, experimentation and potentiality.* Oxon: Routledge.

Musatti, T. (2012). *Young children and their services: developing a European approach. Principle 7 – Evaluation: participatory, democratic and transparent. A Children in Europe policy paper.*

Mustard, F. (2007). Experience-based Brain Development: Scientific Underpinnings of the Importance of Early Child Development in a Global World. In M. E. Young, & L. M. Richardson (Eds.), *Early Child Development From Measurement to Action: A Priority for Growth and Equity* (pp. 43–84). Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2007). *The Science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do.* Cambridge: Harvard University.

Nelson, C. A. (2000). Neural plasticity and human development: The role of early experience in sculpting memory systems. *Developmental Science, 3*(2), 115-136.

Obeng, S. M. (2007). Immigrants families and childcare preferences: Do immigrants' cultures influence their childcare decisions? *Early Childhood Education Journal, 34*, 259–264.

O'Connell (2010). (How) is childminding family like? Family day care, food and the reproduction of identity at the public/private interface. *The Sociological Review, 58,* 563–586.

Pastori, G., & Pagani, V. (2017). Is validation always valid? Cross-cultural complexities of standard-based instruments migrating out of their context. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 25,* 682-697.

Pavolini, E., & Van Lancker, W. (2018). The Matthew effect in childcare use: A matter of policies or preferences? *Journal of European Public Policy, 25,* 878-893.

Penn, H. (2013). Childcare markets: do they work? In E. Lloyd & H. Penn (Eds.), *Childcare markets: Can they deliver an equitable service?* (pp. 19-42). Bristol: Policy Press.

Plantenga, J. (2013). Local providers and loyal parents: competition and consumer choice in the Dutch childcare market. In E. Lloyd & H. Penn (Eds.), *Childcare markets: Can they deliver an equitable service?* (pp. 63-78). Bristol: Policy Press.

Prentice, S. (2009). High stakes: The "investable" child and the economic reframing of childcare. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 34,* 687-710.

Sandstrom, H., Giesen, L., & Chaudry, A. (2012). *How contextual constraints affect low-income working parents' child care choices. Perspectives on low-income working families, Brief 22.* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

Schweinhart, L. J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W. S., Belfield, C. R., & Nores, M. (2005). *The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 40: Summary, conclusions and frequently asked questions.* Ypsilanti: High/Scope Press.

Scopelliti, M. & Musatti, T. (2013). Parents' view of child care quality: Values, evaluations, and satisfaction. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 22,* 1025–1038.

Shonkoff, J. P. (2011). Protecting brains, not simply stimulating minds. *SCIENCE*, 333, 982-983.

Shpancer, N., Bowden, J., Ferrell, M., Pavlik, S., Robinson, M., Schwind, J., … Young, J. (2002). The gap: Parental knowledge about daycare. *Early Child Development and Care, 172,* 635–642.

Slot, P. (2018). *Structural characteristics and process quality in early childhood education and care: A literature review.* OECD Education Working Papers, No. 176. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Slot, P., Boom, J., Verhagen, J., & Leseman, P. (2017). Measurement properties of the CLASS Toddler in ECEC in The Netherlands. *Journal of applied developmental psychology, 48*, 79–91.

Teleki, J. K., & Buck-Gomez, S. (2002). Child care and early education: Satisfaction with services among rural families. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 29*(3), 161–166.

Teppers, E., Schepers W., & Van Regenmortel, T. (2019). *Het gebruik van en de behoefte aan kinderopvang voor baby's en peuters jonger dan 3 jaar in het Vlaamse Gewest.* Leuven: Steunpunt Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Gezin.

Van Lancker, W., & Ghysels, J. (2016). Explaining patterns of inequality in childcare service use across 31 developed economies: A welfare state perspective. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology, 57*, 310-337.

Vandenbroeck, M., De Visscher, S., & Van Nuffel, K. (2008). Mothers' search for infant child care: The dynamic relationship between availability and desirability in a continental european welfare state. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 23,* 245-258.

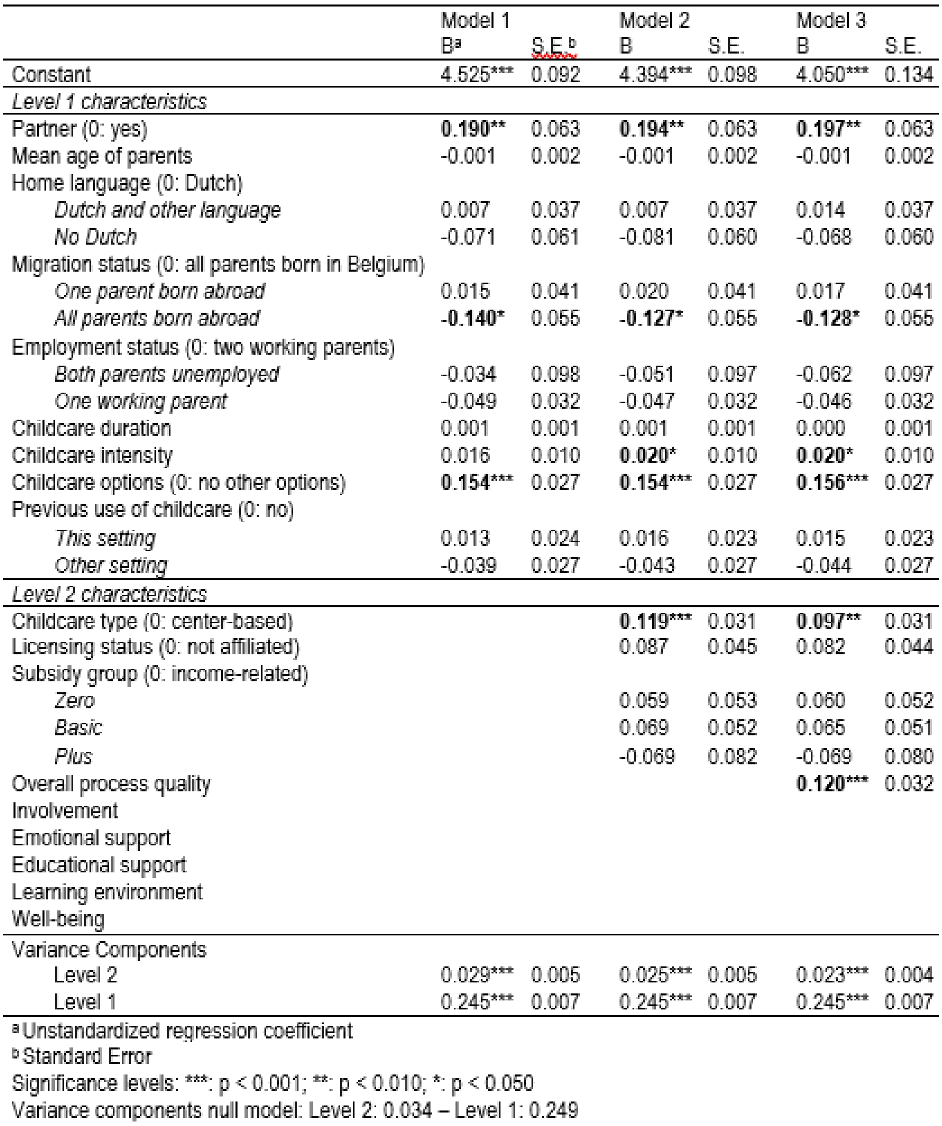
Vermeer, H. J., Ijzendoorn, M. H., de Kruif, R. E. L., Fukkink, R. G., Tavecchio, L. W. C., Riksen-Walraven, J. M., & van Zeijl, J. (2008). Child care in The Netherlands: Trends in quality over the Years 1995-2005. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 169*(4), 360-385.

Table 5. Full correlation table for process quality dimensions

	Well-being	Involvement	Emotional support	Educational support	Environment
Well-being	1	.725**	.477**	.364**	.268**
Involvement	.725**	1	.494**	.340**	.358**
Emotional support	.477**	.494**	1	.684**	.569**
Educational support	.364**	.340**	.684**	1	.433**
Environment	.268**	.358**	.569**	.433**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 6. Results of multilevel regression analysis on overall satisfaction



	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B[a]	S.E.[b]	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Constant	4.525***	0.092	4.394***	0.098	4.050***	0.134
Level 1 characteristics						
Partner (0: yes)	**0.190****	0.063	**0.194****	0.063	**0.197****	0.063
Mean age of parents	-0.001	0.002	-0.001	0.002	-0.001	0.002
Home language (0: Dutch)						
Dutch and other language	0.007	0.037	0.007	0.037	0.014	0.037
No Dutch	-0.071	0.061	-0.081	0.060	-0.068	0.060
Migration status (0: all parents born in Belgium)						
One parent born abroad	0.015	0.041	0.020	0.041	0.017	0.041
All parents born abroad	**-0.140***	0.055	**-0.127***	0.055	**-0.128***	0.055
Employment status (0: two working parents)						
Both parents unemployed	-0.034	0.098	-0.051	0.097	-0.062	0.097
One working parent	-0.049	0.032	-0.047	0.032	-0.046	0.032
Childcare duration	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.001
Childcare intensity	0.016	0.010	**0.020***	0.010	**0.020***	0.010
Childcare options (0: no other options)	**0.154*****	0.027	**0.154*****	0.027	**0.156*****	0.027
Previous use of childcare (0: no)						
This setting	0.013	0.024	0.016	0.023	0.015	0.023
Other setting	-0.039	0.027	-0.043	0.027	-0.044	0.027
Level 2 characteristics						
Childcare type (0: center-based)			**0.119*****	0.031	**0.097****	0.031
Licensing status (0: not affiliated)			0.087	0.045	0.082	0.044
Subsidy group (0: income-related)						
Zero			0.059	0.053	0.060	0.052
Basic			0.069	0.052	0.065	0.051
Plus			-0.069	0.082	-0.069	0.080
Overall process quality					**0.120*****	0.032
Involvement						
Emotional support						
Educational support						
Learning environment						
Well-being						
Variance Components						
Level 2	0.029***	0.005	0.025***	0.005	0.023***	0.004
Level 1	0.245***	0.007	0.245***	0.007	0.245***	0.007

[a] Unstandardized regression coefficient

[b] Standard Error

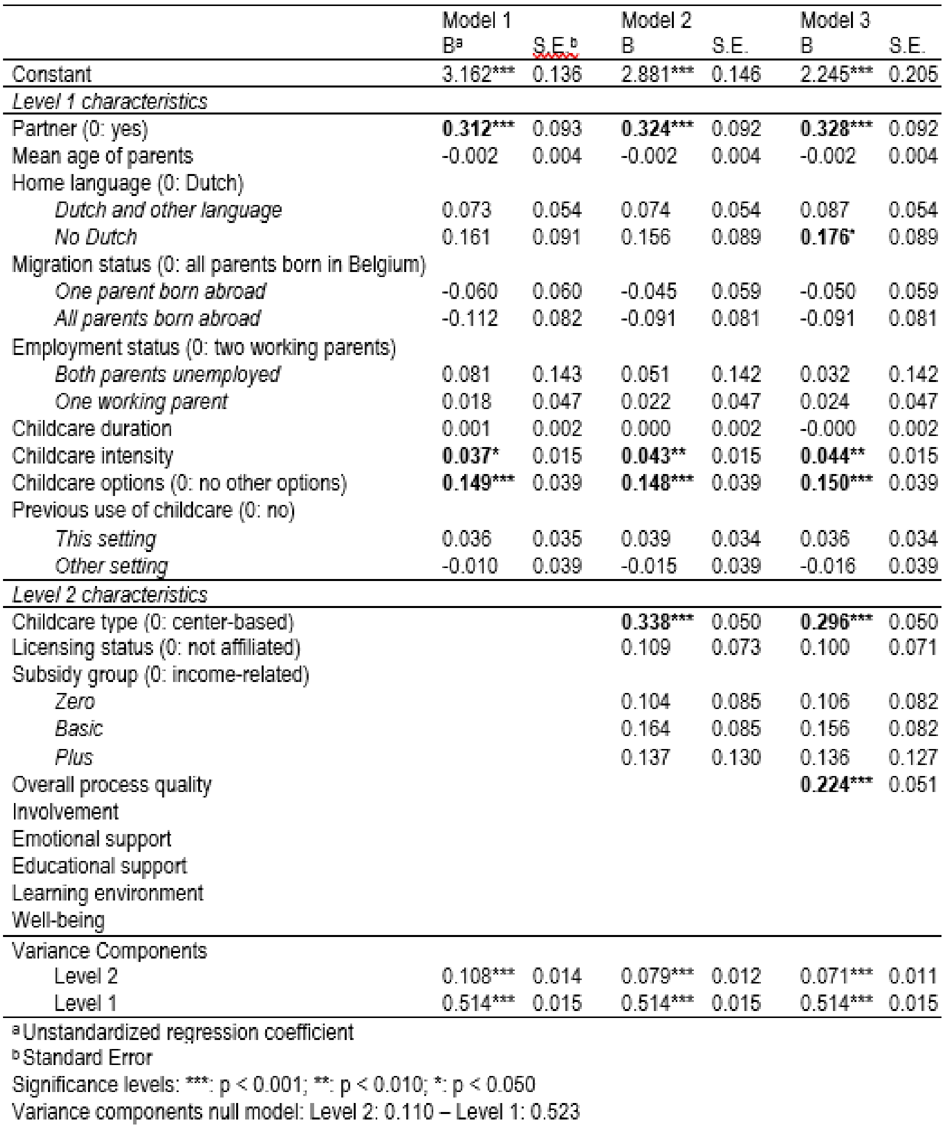
Significance levels: ***: p < 0.001; **: p < 0.010; *: p < 0.050

Variance components null model: Level 2: 0.034 – Level 1: 0.249

with childcare (*N* = 2650)

Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
4.301***	0.119	4.094***	0.123	4.256***	0.106	4.160***	0.117	4.311***	0.190
0.197**	0.063	**0.196****	0.063	**0.193****	0.063	**0.196****	0.063	**0.195****	0.063
-0.001	0.002	-0.001	0.002	-0.001	0.002	-0.001	0.002	-0.001	0.002
0.008	0.037	0.013	0.037	0.014	0.037	0.012	0.037	0.007	0.037
-0.077	0.060	-0.076	0.060	-0.073	0.060	-0.070	0.060	-0.079	0.061
0.019	0.041	0.018	0.041	0.018	0.041	0.019	0.041	0.020	0.041
-0.129*	0.055	**-0.125***	0.055	**-0.127***	0.055	**-0.126***	0.055	**-0.128***	0.055
-0.053	0.097	-0.056	0.097	-0.062	0.097	-0.062	0.097	-0.052	0.097
-0.047	0.032	-0.046	0.032	-0.046	0.032	-0.047	0.032	-0.047	0.032
0.001	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001
0.020*	0.010	**0.020***	0.010	**0.020***	0.010	**0.020***	0.010	**0.020***	0.010
0.154***	0.027	**0.157*****	0.027	**0.155*****	0.027	**0.155*****	0.027	**0.154*****	0.027
0.016	0.023	0.015	0.023	0.014	0.023	0.015	0.023	0.016	0.023
-0.043	0.027	-0.044	0.027	-0.044	0.027	-0.044	0.027	-0.043	0.027
0.110***	0.032	**0.094****	0.031	**0.099****	0.031	**0.124*****	0.031	**0.116*****	0.032
0.083	0.045	0.079	0.044	**0.087***	0.045	**0.088***	0.045	0.085	0.046
0.057	0.053	0.059	0.051	0.065	0.052	0.067	0.052	0.057	0.053
0.068	0.052	0.061	0.051	0.066	0.051	0.071	0.051	0.069	0.052
-0.075	0.082	-0.067	0.080	-0.058	0.081	-0.078	0.081	-0.067	0.082
0.036	0.026								
		0.086***	0.021						
				0.064***	0.019				
						0.084***	0.023		
								0.025	0.049
0.025***	0.005	0.022***	0.004	0.023***	0.004	0.023***	0.004	0.025***	0.005
0.245***	0.007	0.245***	0.007	0.245***	0.007	0.244***	0.007	0.245***	0.007

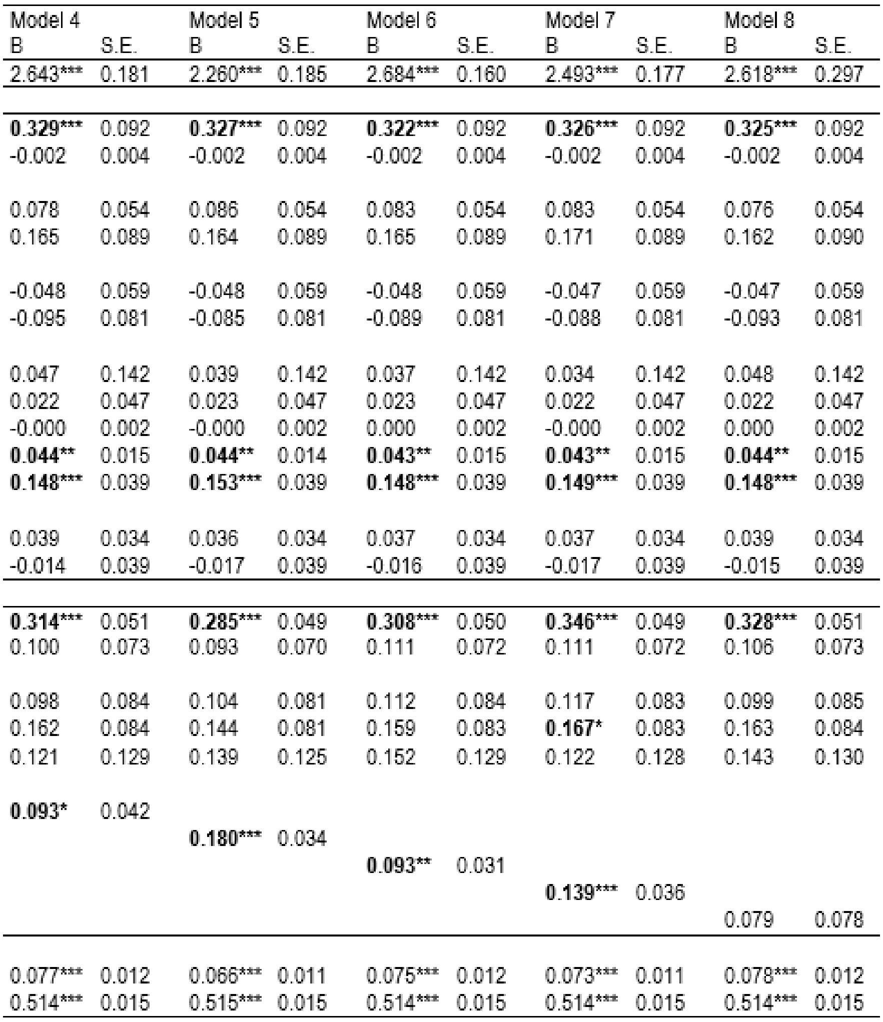
Table 7. Results of multilevel regression analysis on satisfaction with (*N* = 2650)



	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B[a]	S.E.[b]	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Constant	3.162***	0.136	2.881***	0.146	2.245***	0.205
Level 1 characteristics						
Partner (0: yes)	**0.312******	0.093	**0.324******	0.092	**0.328******	0.092
Mean age of parents	-0.002	0.004	-0.002	0.004	-0.002	0.004
Home language (0: Dutch)						
Dutch and other language	0.073	0.054	0.074	0.054	0.087	0.054
No Dutch	0.161	0.091	0.156	0.089	**0.176***	0.089
Migration status (0: all parents born in Belgium)						
One parent born abroad	-0.060	0.060	-0.045	0.059	-0.050	0.059
All parents born abroad	-0.112	0.082	-0.091	0.081	-0.091	0.081
Employment status (0: two working parents)						
Both parents unemployed	0.081	0.143	0.051	0.142	0.032	0.142
One working parent	0.018	0.047	0.022	0.047	0.024	0.047
Childcare duration	0.001	0.002	0.000	0.002	-0.000	0.002
Childcare intensity	**0.037***	0.015	**0.043****	0.015	**0.044****	0.015
Childcare options (0: no other options)	**0.149******	0.039	**0.148******	0.039	**0.150******	0.039
Previous use of childcare (0: no)						
This setting	0.036	0.035	0.039	0.034	0.036	0.034
Other setting	-0.010	0.039	-0.015	0.039	-0.016	0.039
Level 2 characteristics						
Childcare type (0: center-based)			**0.338******	0.050	**0.296******	0.050
Licensing status (0: not affiliated)			0.109	0.073	0.100	0.071
Subsidy group (0: income-related)						
Zero			0.104	0.085	0.106	0.082
Basic			0.164	0.085	0.156	0.082
Plus			0.137	0.130	0.136	0.127
Overall process quality					**0.224******	0.051
Involvement						
Emotional support						
Educational support						
Learning environment						
Well-being						
Variance Components						
Level 2	0.108***	0.014	0.079***	0.012	0.071***	0.011
Level 1	0.514***	0.015	0.514***	0.015	0.514***	0.015

[a] Unstandardized regression coefficient
[b] Standard Error
Significance levels: ***: $p < 0.001$; **: $p < 0.010$; *: $p < 0.050$
Variance components null model: Level 2: 0.110 – Level 1: 0.523

communication processes between the family and childcare setting



Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
2.643***	0.181	2.260***	0.185	2.684***	0.160	2.493***	0.177	2.618***	0.297
0.329***	0.092	**0.327*****	0.092	**0.322*****	0.092	**0.326*****	0.092	**0.325*****	0.092
-0.002	0.004	-0.002	0.004	-0.002	0.004	-0.002	0.004	-0.002	0.004
0.078	0.054	0.086	0.054	0.083	0.054	0.083	0.054	0.076	0.054
0.165	0.089	0.164	0.089	0.165	0.089	0.171	0.089	0.162	0.090
-0.048	0.059	-0.048	0.059	-0.048	0.059	-0.047	0.059	-0.047	0.059
-0.095	0.081	-0.085	0.081	-0.089	0.081	-0.088	0.081	-0.093	0.081
0.047	0.142	0.039	0.142	0.037	0.142	0.034	0.142	0.048	0.142
0.022	0.047	0.023	0.047	0.023	0.047	0.022	0.047	0.022	0.047
-0.000	0.002	-0.000	0.002	0.000	0.002	-0.000	0.002	0.000	0.002
0.044**	0.015	**0.044****	0.014	**0.043****	0.015	**0.043****	0.015	**0.044****	0.015
0.148***	0.039	**0.153*****	0.039	**0.148*****	0.039	**0.149*****	0.039	**0.148*****	0.039
0.039	0.034	0.036	0.034	0.037	0.034	0.037	0.034	0.039	0.034
-0.014	0.039	-0.017	0.039	-0.016	0.039	-0.017	0.039	-0.015	0.039
0.314***	0.051	**0.285*****	0.049	**0.308*****	0.050	**0.346*****	0.049	**0.328*****	0.051
0.100	0.073	0.093	0.070	0.111	0.072	0.111	0.072	0.106	0.073
0.098	0.084	0.104	0.081	0.112	0.084	0.117	0.083	0.099	0.085
0.162	0.084	0.144	0.081	0.159	0.083	**0.167***	0.083	0.163	0.084
0.121	0.129	0.139	0.125	0.152	0.129	0.122	0.128	0.143	0.130
0.093*	0.042								
		0.180***	0.034						
				0.093**	0.031				
						0.139***	0.036		
								0.079	0.078
0.077***	0.012	0.066***	0.011	0.075***	0.012	0.073***	0.011	0.078***	0.012
0.514***	0.015	0.515***	0.015	0.514***	0.015	0.514***	0.015	0.514***	0.015

CHAPTER 3

The language of choice and the childcare choices of language minority families: A portrait of disadvantage

Abstract

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is nowadays framed as a promising avenue to break the cycle of disadvantage. However, its alleged equalizing potential is jeopardized when high-quality ECEC services are inaccessible for those who need them most. The present study examines how parents make childcare choices in the strongly state-subsidized childcare system of Flanders. Particular focus is given to differences between language minority and majority families in order to determine whether parental childcare decision-making reproduces social inequality. A series of multilevel regression models are estimated based on data from 2791 parents nested in 381 infant/toddler classrooms. The results suggest that home language predicts reasons to use childcare, experiences while searching for childcare, selection motives and childcare quality obtained. Effects for the different domains are modest but highly consistent and as such add up to a chain of disadvantage. In conclusion, the issue of home language warrants further attention if childcare provision wants to live up to its ambitious equalizing potential.

Based on Janssen, J., Spruyt, B., Van Droogenbroeck, F., & Vandenbroeck, M. (submitted for peer review). The language of choice and the childcare choices of language minority families: A portrait of disadvantage. *Early Education and Development*.

3.1 Introduction

Under the social investment paradigm, support for children growing up in disadvantaged households cannot start too early. That is because these children may already exhibit poorer developmental functioning way before compulsory schooling begins (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1999; Hart & Risley, 1995; Hurt & Betancourt, 2016, 2017; McLoyd 1998). To prevent them from not reaching the threshold of necessary skills and preparation for primary school, participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is highly recommended. Indeed, the evidence suggests that ECEC improves disadvantaged children's school readiness and, by implication, is capable of breaking the cycle of disadvantage (Becker et al., 2013; Buysse et al., 2014; Currie, 2001; Felfe & Lalive, 2018; Geoffroy et al., 2010; Gialamas et al., 2015; Gormley, 2008; Magnuson & Shager, 2010; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005; Magnuson et al., 2004, 2006; Sylva et al., 2004).

Importantly, disadvantaged children need to experience high-quality caregiving if they are to reap the alleged developmental benefits of ECEC attendance (Akgündüz et al., 2015; Barnett & Ackermann, 2006; Dalli et al., 2011; Melhuish, 2004; Melhuish et al., 2015; Van Belle, 2016; Vandenbroeck et al., 2018; Watamura et al., 2011). Scholars at both sides of the Atlantic, however, point out that children who are likely to benefit most from ECEC are more likely to attend lower quality services (Dowsett et al., 2008; Gambaro et al., 2015; Greenberg, 2011; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005; Stahl et al., 2018; Torquati et al., 2011). The present study draws on these critical insights and examines whether aspects of parental childcare decision-making can explain why disadvantaged children are prone to the so-called double jeopardy of poor quality home and childcare environments.

3.2 Parental childcare decision-making

A major point of concern in research on parental childcare decisions is that it may exacerbate inequalities in childhood. In the first place, this so-called *Matthew effect* occurs because disadvantaged children, for a number of reasons, are less likely to be enrolled in formal childcare than their more privileged peers (Karoly & Gonzalez, 2011; Pavolini & Van Lancker, 2018; Sandstrom et al., 2012; Vandenbroeck & Lazzari, 2014). The review undertaken by Meyers and Jordan (2006), for instance, concludes that childcare choices can best be understood as contextualized patterns of action or accommodations “to family and employment demands, social and cultural expectations, available information, and financial, social and other resources” (p. 64) that often reproduce other forms of economic and social stratification.

As the evidence suggests that many disadvantaged families are convinced that using formal childcare (if available and affordable) is the best thing to do, the path towards a more equal distribution of the benefits of childcare provision seems well marked. Most countries, however, lack strong regulatory regimes capable of ensuring high-quality provision and instead rely on parents to make prudent decisions on behalf of their child when searching for a childcare place. For instance, studies have documented how governments tend to strengthen the ability of parents to choose and move between settings hoping that it will generate competitive pressures amongst providers that eventually will increase quality and reduce costs (Brennan et al., 2012; Gallagher, 2018; Lloyd & Penn, 2010, 2012; Moss, 2009; White & Friendly, 2012; Yuen, 2015). Scholars concerned with quality have criticized this so-called ‘gamble on the market’ (Lloyd & Penn, 2010, 2012; Penn, 2011), partly because the language of choice may mask structural inequalities (Ball, 1993; Moss, 2009, 2014).

Research on how parents choose for a particular childcare setting suggests that the language of choice may indeed be unfair. The factorial survey used by Shlay (2010) and colleagues (Shlay et al., 2005), for instance, reveals that disadvantaged parents are more likely to choose lower quality childcare because high-quality childcare is neither available nor affordable in their communities. While they found little evidence of different preferences or an inaccurate understanding of quality, others did. Mocan (2007), for instance, found ethnic minority parents’ assessment of childcare quality to be inflated when caregivers were of the same race and hence posits that either there is a preference for race-matching or there could simply be a ‘misplaced trust’. It is furthermore documented in some studies that disadvantaged families tend to prioritize pragmatic childcare attributes that do not directly affect children’s development (Kim & Fram, 2009; Peyton et al., 2001). Various explanations as to why they may compromise on quality criteria have been put forward. Some authors point to a lack of knowledge about child development and the possible benefits of childcare attendance (Greenberg, 2011), whereas others stress family income and the higher burden of childcare costs (Early & Burchinal, 2001; Sandstrom et al., 2012) or the need for stable and flexible childcare arrangements due to unconventional and unpredictable work schedules (Early & Burchinal, 2001; Han, 2004; Sandstrom et al., 2012).

In sum, the extant literature on parental childcare decision-making suggests that demand-side as well as supply-side factors (and their interactions) may contribute to the unequal uptake of high-quality childcare services. This means that previous research findings cannot simply be extrapolated from one childcare system to another. Given the scarcity of research in countries with a strongly state-subsidized childcare system, the present study aims to unravel the different aspects involved in the choice of a specific childcare service and to assess whether and how childcare decision-making reproduces social inequality in Flanders (Flemish Community of Belgium).

3.3 The present study

The present study attempts to build on prior research by investigating two lines of inquiry: (1) whether there are significant differences in parental childcare decision-making according to home language, and (2) whether language minority families have a higher chance to (have to) send their children to lower-quality childcare services. We hypothesized that home language would have associations with parental childcare decision-making as well as with childcare quality. We also expected that parental childcare decision-making can explain the association between home language and quality.

We chose to focus on home language because, as Vertovec (2007) points out, migrants' and ethnic minorities' opportunities for participation and belonging in mainstream society are the longer the less determined by migration status as such. In this regard, we observe that Dutch language proficiency is seen as a major asset in Flanders and its mainstream institutions. The results from the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA), for instance, show a persistent incapability of the Flemish education system to redress large differences in educational performance between children that speak Dutch at home and those with another home language (Danhier & Jacobs, 2017). Despite the social pressure on linguistic assimilation and the monolingual ideology of mainstream institutions, linguistic complexity is not kept at bay. On the contrary, the proportion of newborns with a foreign-speaking mother in Flanders increased to 30% over recent years (Kind & Gezin, 2019).

3.3.1 Research context

ECEC in Flanders is organized in a split system, whereby preschools (2,5-6y) fall under the auspices of the Department of Education and childcare settings (0-

3y) are a Welfare-related policy matter. In contrast to preschools, there is no universal access to childcare provision and parents pay a significant amount of the operation costs, either by means of means-tested parent fees (in over 70% of arrangements) or through a fixed price. Childcare participation of under-threes, however, steadily increased over recent years (see Kind & Gezin, 2019, for an overview from 2007 till 2019: 42.9% - 43.9% - 44.5% - 47.2% - 48.4% - 49.4% - 50.1% - 51.6% - no data - 51.9% - 52.6% - 54.6% - 55.0%). A recent study on childcare utilization and needs in Flanders estimated that, when children in preschools are disregarded, 76.6% of children between the age of three months and three years attend a childcare service, whereas even more could be accommodated (Teppers et al., 2019). The unmet childcare needs are highest among disadvantaged families, though this problem may soon belong to the past if the Flemish Government (2013) fulfils its commitment to provide childcare for all families who need it. From this it follows that the question how parents choose a childcare setting may become more significant for inequality than the question whether or not to use it.

Important for children and parents is the central legislation and monitoring system because it warrants that structural quality variables (e.g. adult/child-ratio) do not vary considerably across different childcare types. Minimal quality standards for family daycare providers and childcare centres nonetheless fall short of evidence-based recommendations and the profession has a rather low profile and status. In terms of minimum qualification levels, for instance, top-level regulations in Flanders determine that childcare workers need an ISCED level 3 qualification (three years of upper secondary education and one year in vocational training), which is lower than in many other European countries (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019). In fact, the Flemish government allows certification based on previously acquired competences to remedy the dire shortage of childcare workers.

3.3.2 Method

Sample

This study used the sample from a large-scale baseline study on process quality in Flemish childcare, commissioned by the governmental licensing organization *Kind en Gezin* (*Child and Family*). Sampling contained two phases. First, *Kind en Gezin* provided a list of all 8276 licensed childcare settings in Flanders, which allowed us to randomly select 200 family daycare providers and as many childcare centres. All 400 selected childcare settings received a letter to elaborate on the aim of the study and were then contacted by phone to address any questions regarding their participation. From the initial selection, 179 were unable to cooperate (e.g., due to database errors and illness). A majority of the remaining 221 childcare settings (*N* = 123, 55.7%) agreed to participate in the study. Additional random samples were drawn within each subgroup until the final sample of 400 childcare settings was completed. If a childcare setting had multiple classrooms, data were collected in only a single randomly selected classroom. Second, participating childcare providers were asked to distribute a questionnaire to all parents with a child in the selected classroom. A total of 3172 parents (64.8%) linked with 384 childcare settings participated in the study.

Due to missing values on one of the variables included in the analyses, the final sample for the current study consists of 2791 parents that were linked to 381 infant/toddler classrooms. Parents were predominantly female (87.5%) with an average age of 33 years. Most had used formal childcare before (54.1%), sixty percent of which had stayed loyal to their previous childcare provider. The vast majority of respondents had a partner (96.7%) with whom they formed a dual-earner family (85.0%). Children were one-and-a-half-year-old on average, attending childcare for 13 months on a basis of three-and-a-half days per week. They were growing up in linguistically diverse households, with 83.3% raised by exclusively Dutch-speaking parents, 12.6% by multilingual Dutch-speaking parents, and the remaining by foreign-speaking parents (4.1%). The sample contained a total of 62 different home languages. No information was collected on family income or level of education as it could have a deterrent effect on respondents.

Data collection

Data collection took place between August 2015 and April 2016. All classroom observations of process quality lasted from 8:30 until 12:00 and followed a standardized observation protocol to maximize comparability of quality ratings across settings. Inter-rater reliability was assured since all observers received reliability training by licensed trainers and completed the accreditation process prior to data collection. Data on process quality were collected in classrooms with an average group size of 8 children, ranging from 1 to 23. The average adult-child ratio was 1:5 and ranged from 1:1 to 1:14.

To maximize response, questionnaires were made available in four frequently encountered home languages for newborns in Flanders (i.e. Dutch, French, English and Turkish). Confidentiality of data processing was guaranteed in a brief statement that data would be processed anonymously and not used to evaluate or inform individual childcare providers. In addition, all parents were given the option of returning the questionnaire to the childcare provider in a sealed envelope (*N* = 2444) or to communicate their answers more directly to the researchers via an online survey (*N* = 347).

3.3.3 Measures

Parents' childcare decision-making

Parents' childcare decision-making was measured by their retrospective ratings of three features of the choice process: (1) reasons to use formal childcare, (2) experiences while searching for childcare, and (3) selection motives. The questionnaire asked parents to rate items such as "I decided to use childcare because my child learns to be with other children", "I was worried about not finding a childcare place" and "I chose this particular childcare setting because it has a good infrastructure for children". Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 [strongly disagree] – 2 [disagree] – 3 [partly agree, partly disagree] – 4 [agree] – 5 [strongly agree]). Some items were reverse-coded so that lower scores indicated higher ratings. Parents were asked to respond to 29 Likert scale items in total, except when they experienced no childcare options. In that case, parents skipped (10) items on selection motives.

Process quality

Process quality is a particularly informative measure of the alleged child development benefits of childcare attendance (Melhuish et al., 2015; Slot, 2018) and was measured by three standardized measurement scales: (1) Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), (2) Leuven Scales for Well-being and Involvement, and (3) an environmental rating scale. The former was used to evaluate effective teacher-child interactions. The CLASS Infant (Hamre et al., 2014) was applied in classrooms with a majority of children under 18 months old. It assesses four quality dimensions: relational climate, teacher sensitivity, facilitated exploration, and early language support. CLASS Toddler (La Paro et al., 2012) was used when the majority of children in a classroom exceeded the age of 18 months. It focuses on eight dimensions of childcare quality, namely positive climate, negative climate, teacher sensitivity, regard for child perspectives, behaviour guidance, facilitation of learning and development, quality of feedback and language modelling. Four CLASS observation cycles –

each lasting 20 minutes – were conducted within each classroom, unless all children went to bed before the last cycle was completed (11 times).

In addition to CLASS, observers used the Leuven Scales for Well-being and Involvement to capture the quality of children's lived experiences during the morning. Both scales are commonly applied as process-oriented self-evaluation measures in Flemish childcare (Laevers, 2007), but equally used as variables for research purposes (see e.g. Ebbeck et al., 2012). When assessing children's well-being, observers focused on signals of comfort, enjoyment, spontaneity, vitality, and self-confidence, which indicate that basic needs are fulfilled. The concept of involvement is based on Csikszentmihayli's (1979) state of flow and used to assess children's engagement in activities: being concentrated, absorbed, fascinated, and operating at the very limits of their capacities. In line with the conventional "scanning procedure" (see Laevers & Declercq, 2018), snapshots of children's well-being and involvement were taken at four different moments during the morning. A sample of five children was selected randomly before each observation cycle and subjected to consecutive one-minute observations per child. Scores for individual children's well-being and involvement were assigned on a five-point scale immediately after each observation.

Ultimately, observers rated the quality of the learning environment that children experienced during a full morning observation. They used a self-developed 15-item rating scale (e.g., accessibility of play materials, diversity in learning experiences, children's agency in daily routine) wherein each indicator was scored on a 5-point scale, ranging from low- (1) to mid- (3) and high-level (5) quality.

Reliability checks were conducted for classroom observations undertaken in pairs (*N* = 44, 11%). Nearly all 709 compared scores for well-being and involvement fell within the acceptable deviation range of 0.5 (*N* = 701, 99%; *N* = 686, 97% respectively). High levels of agreement between paired observers were also found for CLASS Infant and Toddler dimension scores: not one of the 240 compared CLASS Infant dimension scores deviated greater than one and a difference of more than one occurred only in three out of 928 times for CLASS Toddler dimensions. Interrater reliability for the 710 indicator scores of the environmental scale was acceptable with 470 identical scores (66.2%) and 152 scores with a one-point deviation (21.4%). Observation scores thus largely exceeded the 80% threshold of interrater reliability and therefore were deemed comparable for the whole sample.

3.3.4 Analysis

A principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted to compress data on parental childcare decision-making using SPSS 25. Extracted components were used as outcome variables in multilevel linear regression to assess whether there are significant differences in parental childcare decision-making according to home language (*RQ1*). Using STATA, two multilevel regression models were estimated for each component separately. The first model contained home language as the only predictor variable, whereas the second also included various control variables. In addition, a logistic multilevel regression was performed to assess whether foreign-speaking parents have a lower chance to experience childcare options.

To examine whether language minority families have a higher chance to (have to) send their children to lower-quality childcare services (*RQ2*), micro-macro multilevel regressions were performed using MPLUS 6.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017). Indeed, whereas individual background characteristics vary both within and between childcare institutions, the quality scores for these institutions only vary between services. As suggested by Foster-Johnson and Kromrey (2018), we used the adjusted-group-means analysis approach from Croon and van Veldhoven (2007) with White–Davidson–MacKinnon heteroscedasticity adjustment (robust standard errors) to predict our group-level outcomes with a focus on individual-level predictors.

Variable construction

Parental childcare decision-making

From the questionnaires we infer that parents foremost make formal childcare arrangements because of work or other (pre-)vocational activities (*M* = 4.71, *SD* = 0.90). Positive child outcomes too are an important driver of childcare utilization. More precisely, parents desire opportunities for children to socialize with peers (*M* = 4.54, *SD* = 0.71), a smooth transition to preschool (*M* = 4.33, *SD* = 0.91), support for children’s intellectual development (*M* = 4.20, *SD* = 0.89), children learning to feel safe outside the home (*M* = 4.12, *SD* = 0.99), increased ability to cope with rules (*M* = 4.05, *SD* = 1.04) and to be around other adults (*M* = 3.74, *SD* = 1.17). Less important are motives that refer to the unavailability or undesirability of informal childcare arrangements (*M* = 3.17, *SD* = 1.35; *M* = 3.13, *SD* = 1.36 respectively).

After running a PCA with oblique rotation (oblimin) on these items, two components were retained in the final analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = .89 (‘great’ according to Field, 2009), and all KMO values for individual items were above the acceptable limit of .50 (Field, 2009). Bartlett’s test of sphericity χ^2 (36) = 9600.45, $p < .001$, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. Two components had eigenvalues over Kaiser’s criterion of 1 and in combination explained 58.46% of the variance. Table 8 shows the factor loadings after rotation. The items that cluster on the same component suggest that component 1 represents an interest in child development and component 2 a practical necessity.

Table 8. Summary of principal component analysis results for reasons to use formal childcare (*N* = 2791)

	Rotated factor loadings	
Item	**Child development**	**Practical necessity**
My child learns to cope with rules	**.85**	0.04
My child learns to feel safe in another environment	**.83**	0.03
My child learns to be around other children	**.82**	-0.04
It is a good preparation for preschool	**.81**	-0.02
It supports the intellectual development of my child	**.81**	-0.04
My child learns to be around other adults	**.77**	0.02
Kith and kin could not care for my child	-.11	**.73**
I was working, following an education or training	-0.03	**.63**
I did not want kith and kin to care for my child	0.12	**.58**
Eigenvalues	4.01	1.25
% of variance	44.53	13.93

The second battery of items tapped into parents’ experiences while searching for childcare. The responses reveal a general anxiety among parents to find an available childcare place (*M* = 2.27, *SD* = 1.26). Yet, most of them are rather optimistic about the amount of childcare choices available to them (*M* = 3.53, *SD* = 1.32). Parents are fairly self-conscious about what they can expect from childcare (*M* = 3.77, *SD* = 1.12), what they are looking for in a childcare setting (*M* = 3.96, *SD* = 1.01) and determined to ask questions during visits (*M* = 4.69, *SD* = 0.67). Once children are enrolled in a childcare setting, parents generally feel relieved (*M* = 4.17, *SD* = 0.93) and confident that it will benefit the child (*M* = 4.37, *SD* = 0.77). Few seem to have had second thoughts (*M* = 4.36, *SD* = 1.06).

After running a PCA with oblique rotation (oblimin) on these items, two components were retained in the final analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = .72 (‘good’ according to Field, 2009), and all KMO values for individual items were above the acceptable limit of .50 (Field, 2009). Bartlett’s test of sphericity χ^2 (28) = 3780.04, p < .001, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. Two components had eigenvalues over Kaiser’s criterion of 1 and in combination explained 51% of the variance. Table 9 shows the factor loadings after rotation. The items that cluster on the same component suggest that component 1 represents self-confidence and component 2 perceived unavailability of childcare places.

Table 9. Summary of principal component analysis results for experiences whilst searching for childcare (*N* = 2791)

Item	Rotated factor loadings	
	Self-confidence	Perceived unavailability of childcare
I did not have second thoughts after enrolment	**.74**	-0.01
I was confident that my choice would be of added value to my child	**.74**	.29
I knew what to expect from childcare	**.68**	-.21
I felt comfortable in asking questions during my visit to a childcare setting	**.51**	-.06
I knew what I was looking for	**.51**	.06
I was worried about not finding a childcare place	-.17	**.79**
I felt relieved after enrolling my child	.36	**.76**
I found the offer to be limited	-.47	**.53**
Eigenvalues	2.51	1.57
% of variance	31.43	19.58

A third set of items wondered how parents whom had different childcare options motivated their selection. In this regard, childcare choices are strongly determined by impressions of childcare staff (*M* = 4.66, *SD* = 0.55), practical convenience (*M* = 4.51, *SD* = 0.83), applied working methods (*M* = 4.49, *SD* = 0.67), well-being of other children in the setting (*M* = 4.45, *SD* = 0.75), child-friendly infrastructure (*M* = 4.35, *SD* = 0.78), reputation (*M* = 4.31, *SD* = 0.85) and staff continuity (*M* = 4.26, *SD* = 0.97). Flexibility (*M* = 4.03, *SD* = 1.04) and group size (*M* = 3.88, *SD* = 1.04) are important criteria as well, though less decisive on average. Childcare costs, on the other hand, are given far less consideration (*M* = 2.74, *SD* = 1.35).

A good one-factor solution could only be found when the items on practical convenience, flexibility and affordability were excluded from the analysis. This factor, as well as the excluded items, are retained in the final analysis. The

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = .84 ('great' according to Field, 2009), and all KMO values for individual items were above the acceptable limit of .50 (Field, 2009). Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2 (21) = 4032.18, p < .001, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. One component had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1 and explained 46.54% of the variance. Table 10 shows the factor loadings and suggests that the component represents perceived quality of the childcare setting.

Table 10. Summary of principal component analysis results for selection motives (*N* = 2099)

	Factor loadings
Item	**Perceived quality**
I like their working methods	**.78**
The staff gave me a good impression	**.76**
The children seemed happy to be there	**.74**
It has a good reputation	**.66**
It has a good infrastructure for children	**.64**
There is continuity in who cares for my child	**.59**
The group size appealed to me	**.56**
Eigenvalues	3.26
% of variance	46.54

As the within-factor loadings of all items in each of the distinguished scales varied considerably (Tables 8-10), we decided to not use averaged scales but to generate the factor scores and use these in the further analyses. Using averaged scales would treat each item as having equal weight in the composite, resulting in scales that have more variance overlap.

Process quality

Process quality variables were constructed prior to the present study. In accordance with previous research with CLASS Toddler (Slot et al., 2017), a confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the indicator level in Lavaan. A two-factor structure showed the best fit (χ^2 1199.85; *CFI* 0.886; *TLI* 0.087;

RMSEA 0.077; *SRMR* 0.059). The first factor was labelled 'emotional support' and consisted of indicators from the dimensions of positive climate, teacher sensitivity, regard for child perspectives and behaviour guidance ($\alpha = .89$).[5] The second factor was labelled 'educational support' and consisted of indicators from the dimensions of facilitation of learning and development, quality of feedback, and language modelling ($\alpha = .84$). Since we aimed at using both CLASS Infant and Toddler scores interchangeably, we tested a two-factor structure for the CLASS Infant data and found a reasonable fit (χ^2 320.69; *CFI* 0.93; *TLI* 0.910; *SRMR* 0.05). The first factor was labelled 'emotional support' and consists of all indicators under the dimensions of relational climate and teacher sensitivity ($\alpha = .85$).[6] The second factor was called 'educational support' and contains the indicators of the dimensions of facilitated exploration and early language support ($\alpha = .86$). Classroom scores for emotional support and educational support were obtained by averaging indicator scores and therefore reported on a five-point scale. For well-being and involvement, classroom scores were calculated based on the mean score of individual children's experiences. The overall quality of the learning environment was generated by taking the average score of all 15 indicators ($\alpha = .81$).

On average, the 381 provisions represented in the parent sample provided children with adequate emotional support (*M* = 3.66, *SD* = 0.61, *Min* = 1.52, *Max* = 5.00) and children's well-being was fairly acceptable as well (*M* = 3.39, *SD* = 0.29, *Min* = 2.58, *Max* = 4.38). However, less satisfactory results were obtained for the quality of the learning environment (*M* = 2.79, *SD* = 0.57, *Min* = 1.33, *Max* = 4.58), children's involvement (*M* = 2.76, *SD* = 0.52, *Min* = 1.51, *Max* = 4.19) and especially educational support (*M* = 2.19, *SD* = 0.69, *Min* = 1.04, *Max* = 4.58). Quality measures were found to be strongly correlated ($0.264 < r's < 0.725$) and an explorative factor analysis (principal axis factoring) revealed one underlying factor with an eigenvalue above 1 (2.900; 57.96% explained variance). Therefore, we constructed a general index that reflected the mean score on the five separate quality measures, which can be seen as a generalized indicator of process quality (*M* = 2.96, *SD* = 0.41, $\alpha = 0.80$).

---

[5] All indicators of the dimension 'negative climate' were excluded due to a low standard deviation, high skewness and high kurtosis, as negative behaviour hardly occurred during observations.

[6] The indicator 'lack of adult negativity' was excluded due to a very low standard deviation, high skewness and high kurtosis, as adult negativity hardly occurred during observations.

3.4 Results

3.4.1 Inequality in parental childcare decision-making

A series of multilevel regression analyses were estimated to assess whether home language predicts parental childcare decision-making in terms of reasons to use formal childcare, experiences while searching for childcare and selection motives. The results of the multilevel regression are displayed in Table 11 (at the end of this chapter) and indicate that four out of five decision-making components are related with home language. Compared to monolingual Dutch-speaking families, foreign-speaking families motivate childcare utilization slightly more as a decision that benefits children's development (*b* = 0.05**) and as a practical necessity (*b* = 0.05**). Differences between these groups remained significant after other family factors were controlled for (see Models 2, *b* = 0.06** and *b* = 0.06** respectively). Foreign-speaking parents are also more likely to feel less confident (*b* = -0.04*) and more constrained in childcare options (*b* = 0.06**) than monolingual Dutch-speaking families. Yet, the former relation seized to be significant once other variables in the model were held constant, whereas the latter slightly strengthened (*b* = -0.04 and *b* = 0.07*** respectively).

To examine whether home language predicted the odds of having a choice between childcare providers, a multilevel logistic regression analysis was conducted. The results suggest that there is a rather strong inequality in the odds of choice (see Table 12, at the end of this chapter). Having a foreign home language, as is the case in multilingual Dutch-speaking families (Odds Ratio [OR] = 0.65**) and foreign-speaking families (OR = 0.46**), significantly decreased the odds of choice. In other words, monolingual Dutch-speaking families have 2.17 greater odds of experiencing childcare options than foreign-speaking families and 1.54 greater odds of choice than multilingual Dutch-speaking families. The same pattern of disadvantage reoccurred once other variables were controlled for (OR = 0.71* and OR = 0.52** respectively).

Next, multilevel regression analyses were used to determine if home language predicts the selection motives of parents that experienced choice options. Table 12 indicates that there is no relation between home language and choosing for a particular childcare setting because of its perceived quality. However, we also ran the analysis with selection motives (items) that were dropped during PCA and found a significant effect of home language on the relative weight given to financial considerations. More precisely, multilingual Dutch-speaking families (*b* = 0.08***) and foreign-speaking families (*b* = 0.13***) are more inclined to choose for the most affordable option than monolingual Dutch-speaking families, even after controlling for other variables in the model (*b* = 0.09*** and *b* = 0.13*** respectively). Other selection motives (i.e. flexibility and practical convenience) could not be predicted by home language.

3.4.2 Reproduction of inequality through parental childcare decision-making

Usually in multilevel modelling, macro-micro analysis is used where a lower level dependent variable is predicted by independent variables measured at the same or a higher level (Croon & van Veldhoven, 2007). For our purposes we used, the lesser known, micro-macro multilevel analysis where the dependent variable is measured at the group level (e.g., quality scores of childcare institutions) and is predicted by independent variables measured at the lower individual level (e.g., language spoken in the family). We conducted micro-macro multilevel regression analyses to examine whether families with a foreign home language (have to) enrol their children in childcare settings of inferior process quality (see Table 13, at the end of this chapter). The results confirmed that multilingual Dutch-speaking families use childcare settings with a significantly lower overall quality rating than their monolingual Dutch-speaking counterparts (*b* = -0.19**). Quality disadvantage occurs in terms of adult-child interactions and environment, meaning that children from multilingual Dutch-speaking families are more likely to experience fewer emotional support (*b* = -0.21**), educational support (*b* = -0.19*) and environmental stimuli (*b* = -0.13+). No disparities were found in children's well-being and involvement, nor between foreign-speaking and monolingual Dutch-speaking families.

A similar pattern of disadvantage was found after inclusion of personal and childcare decision-making variables in the model. In other words, our results suggest that quality disadvantage experienced by multilingual Dutch-speaking families cannot be explained by parents' childcare decision-making. In fact, parents' self-confidence while searching for childcare is the only decision-making component able to predict process quality. Reasons to use formal childcare, parent-perceived unavailability of childcare places and having choice options have little or no relationship with childcare quality.

To examine whether selection motives predict process quality, we reran micro-macro multilevel analyses on the reduced sample of parents with childcare options at their disposal. The results are displayed in Table 14 (at the end of this chapter) and suggest that selection motives explain part of the quality disadvantage. Indeed, the drawback in overall process quality experienced by multilingual Dutch-speaking parents decreases when controlling for the extent that parents choose a childcare setting based on its perceived quality (*b* = 0.43***) and its practical convenience (*b* = -0.31**).

3.5 Discussion and conclusion

Since formal childcare provision is framed as a promising avenue to break the cycle of disadvantage, the issue of non-participation has garnered substantial scholarly attention. In regions such as Flanders, however, childcare participation rates continue to increase and the question whether or not to use childcare gradually becomes less significant for inequality. How parents choose a particular childcare setting, by contrast, may become more relevant. Therefore, our study examined differences in childcare decision-making between language minority families (i.e. multilingual Dutch-speaking families and foreign-speaking families) and language majority families (i.e. monolingual Dutch-speaking families) in terms of reasons to use childcare, experiences while searching for childcare, selection motives and quality obtained. Results suggest that families who send their child to formal childcare have many things in common, though small inequalities were found in all domains of the decision-making process.

In what follows, we further elaborate on this chain of disadvantage and as such draw attention to the fact that breaking the cycle of disadvantage is not a matter of one big barrier or field in need of levelling. Rather, social inequality presents itself as a multidimensional problem that persists because new inequalities may arise in an attempt to tackle old ones ((in)equality in uptake of formal childcare > (in)equality in choice options > (in)equality in selection motives > inequality in childcare quality). The language of choice, however, masks such structural inequalities.

3.5.1 Reasons to use childcare

Parents generally perceive childcare choices as multi-party decisions. Results suggest that childcare utilization is a practical necessity for most parents, whereas child development too is a strong motivation to make formal childcare arrangements. Interestingly, both arguments are slightly more pronounced by foreign-speaking parents than by monolingual and multilingual Dutch-speaking families.

The finding that foreign-speaking families more strongly desire the child development outcomes of childcare attendance corresponds with previous research findings at higher echelons of the education system. Indeed, migrant populations generally perceive schools as the social mobility instrument par excellence and hence have high expectations regarding its outcomes (Brinbaum & Cebolla-Boado, 2007; Teney et al., 2013). A similar rhetoric is posited by immigrant parents in ECEC (Tobin & Kurban, 2010; Vesely, 2013), who struggle with a self-perceived lack of cultural resources to support the child's language development and academic preparation. Previous research also provides a plausible explanation on why childcare utilization is more of a practical necessity for foreign-speaking parents. The studies by Obeng (2006) and Vesely (2013), for instance, highlight that maternal employment is the most important reason for immigrant parents to use formal childcare. In this regard, Wall and José (2004) suggest that managing work and care can be a more difficult challenge for immigrant families as first-generation migrants in particular may lack close kin networks to support childcare.

3.5.2 Experiences while searching for childcare

Parents generally are self-confident or determined when searching for childcare and to a certain extent also worry whether they will find an available childcare place. However, foreign-speaking families are slightly more worried and less self-confident in the search process than monolingual Dutch-speaking families, although home language itself has no effect on self-confidence. In addition, choice options are distributed unequally, with lower odds of having different childcare providers to choose from for families who are less able to speak the dominant language. More precisely, monolingual Dutch-speaking families were more than twice as likely to experience choice options than foreign-speaking families. This pattern reappeared to a somewhat smaller extent when monolingual Dutch-speaking families were compared with multilingual Dutch-speaking parents.

Based on previous research, we are able to formulate some hypotheses for foreign-speaking parents' elevated levels of worriedness and lower probability of having choice options. It is argued in several studies, for instance, that immigrant and language minority families face unique obstacles such as language barriers and information gaps and thus suffer from a lack of navigational capital (Karoly & Gonzalez, 2011; Sandstrom et al., 2012; Vandenbroeck & Lazzari, 2014; Vesely et al., 2013). In addition, Vandenbroeck et al. (2008) have shown that Flemish childcare providers' relative autonomous policies on access and the unequal distribution of (subsidized) childcare provisions across regions have an exclusionary effect.

3.5.3 Selection motives

Inequality in childcare decision-making is also present when parents have childcare options at their disposal. While almost all parents tend to select their childcare setting based on its perceived quality and practical convenience, the results suggest that language minority families in general and foreign-speaking families in particular are more inclined to choose for the most affordable option than language majority families.

Interpretation is made difficult due to the lack of information on family income. Indeed, we are unable to determine whether the specificity of language minority families' selection motives stems from a higher burden of childcare costs. What is known, however, is that formal childcare in Flanders is relatively expensive when compared to many other European countries (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019). Perhaps, language minority families find the quality and practical convenience of alternatives to be largely equivalent and therefore decide to save on childcare costs.

3.5.4 Quality obtained

While families in general use childcare services of mediocre quality, multilingual Dutch-speaking families use lower quality childcare than monolingual Dutch-speaking families. Interestingly, parental childcare decision-making cannot (fully) explain the quality gap. In other words, the disadvantage occurs even when selection motives are equal. That is because of a substantial overlap in monolingual and multilingual Dutch-speaking families' childcare decision-making. Moreover, the few decision-making factors that differ between these groups (i.e. childcare options and financial considerations) do not predict process quality.

The results suggest that we may look for a more direct relation between home language and process quality. In this vein, Gambaro et al. (2015) stress that it can genuinely be more difficult to deliver outstanding provision in a setting where a higher percentage of children come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The study by Hulpia et al. (2016) suggests that this assumption holds true in Flanders, albeit further research is needed to see why there may be no such risk for children from foreign-speaking families.

3.5.5 Implications for policy and practice

This study suggests that, in a strongly state-funded childcare system, parental childcare choices are not a mechanism through which social inequality is reproduced. We have shown that language minority families and foreign-speaking families in particular experience more constraints in making childcare choices, but these inconveniences seem not to explain why their children are prone to the double jeopardy of poor quality home and childcare environments. That is at least the situation for now, before the upcoming public disclosure of inspection reports in Flanders. While the idea of nudging parents into more favourable childcare choices starts to garner public attention (see Harbach, 2016), we wish to emphasize that there is a real danger of creating new inequalities in an attempt to tackle old ones. It would not surprise us if it were, as Meijer (2007) suggests, predominantly higher-educated (and/or Dutch-speaking) parents who are able to capitalize on this kind of ‘abstract’ information, not to mention the dilemma for parents who have no choice but to make a suboptimal childcare arrangement. Indeed, the government should consider that the language of choice masks structural inequalities. A stronger regulatory and subsidy regime capable of ensuring high-quality provision remains the safest bet to prevent that (disadvantaged) children end up in suboptimal childcare arrangements.

Alongside the manipulation of structural quality features, more reflection is needed on possible explanations for the process quality gap. Continuous professional development initiatives based on the active engagement of practitioners and peer exchanges could be an excellent format to have this kind of debate (Peeters et al., 2015; Peleman et al., 2018).

3.6 Limitations

Some limitations of this study should be noted. First, caution is needed when extrapolating conclusions to the entire population as language barriers probably restricted the number of language minority families in our sample. Given that parents needed some proficiency in either Dutch, French, English or Turkish to fill in the questionnaire, non-response of other foreign-speaking families might have been substantial. Future research could clarify whether this potential exclusionary effect impacts the results. Preferably, such research contains an indicator of socio-economic deprivation (e.g. constructed through information on means-tested parent fees) so as to double-check whether our findings truly reflect a language issue.

Second, data on parental childcare decision-making were collected retrospectively. A prospective study, such as the one by Pungello and Kurtz-Costes (2000), is needed to better understand how parental beliefs and perceived constraints change over time and (are) influence(d) (by) childcare choices.

Lastly, a question that warrants further investigation is whether the classroom experiences of children from language minority households differ from those of their language majority peers within the same classroom. Indeed, our quality ratings express the average classroom experience and provide little information on the range of differentiation between individual children's experiences. Future research could take this limitation into account so as to determine whether we, as other research seems to suggest (Adair et al., 2017; Palludan, 2007; Peleman et al., 2019), have underestimated the true extent of the quality gap.

3.7 References

Adair, J. K., Colegrove, K. S., & McManus, M. E. (2017). How the word gap argument negatively impacts young children of Latinx immigrants' conceptualizations of learning. *Harvard Educational Review, 87*(3)*,* 309-334.

Akgündüz, Y. E., Ünver, Ö., Plantenga, J., & Nicaise, I. (2015). *The socio-economic dimension of early childhood education and care in Europe.* Utrecht: Utrecht University - CARE project.

Ball, S. (1993). Education markets, choice and social class: The market as a class strategy in the UK and the USA. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 14*(1), 3-19.

Barnett, W. S., & Ackerman, D. J. (2006). Cost, benefits, and long-term effects of early care and education programs: Recommendations and cautions for community developers. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Journal of the community development society, 37(2), 86-100.

Becker, B., Klein, O., & Biedinger, N. (2013). The development of cognitive, language, and cultural skills from age 3 to 6: A comparison between children of Turkish origin and children of native-born German parents and the role of immigrant parents' acculturation to the receiving society. *American Educational Research Journal, 50*(3), 616-649.

Brennan, D., Cass, B., Himmelweit, S., Szebehely, M. (2012). The marketisation of care: Rationales and consequences in Nordic and liberal care regimes. *Journal of European Social Policy, 22*(4), 377-391.

Brinbaum, Y., & Cebolla-Boado, H. (2007). The school careers of ethnic minority youth in France Success or disillusion? *Ethnicities*, *7*(3), 445–474.

Brooks-Gunn, J., Britto, P. R., & Brady, C. (1999). Struggling to make ends meet: Poverty and child development. In M. E. Lamb (Ed.) Parenting and child development in "nontraditional" families (pp. 279-304). Mahwah, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum Associates.

Buysse, V., Peisner-Feinberg, E., Páez, M., Hammer, C. S., & Knowles, M. (2014). Effects of early education programs and practices on the development and learning of dual language learners: A review of the literature. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 29,* 765-785.

Camilli, G., Vargas, S., Ryan, S., & Barnett, W. S. (2010). Meta-analysis of the effects of early education interventions on cognitive and social development. Teachers College Record, 112(3), 579-620.

Croon, M. A., & van Veldhoven, M. J. P. M. (2007). Predicting group-level outcome variables from variables measured at the individual level: A latent variable multilevel model. Psychological Methods, 12(1), 45–57.

Csikszentmihayli, M. (1979). The concept of flow. In B. Sutton-Smith (Ed.), *Play and learning*. New York: Gardner Press.

Currie, J. (2001). Early childhood education programs. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 15*(2), 213-238.

Dalli, C., White, E. J., Rockel, J., Duhn, I., Buchanan, E., Davidson, S., … Wang, B. (2011). *Quality early childhood education for under-two-year-olds: What should it look like? A literature review*. New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

Danhier, J., & Jacobs, D. (2017). *Segregatie in het onderwijs overstijgen. Analyse van de resultaten van het PISA 2015-onderzoek in Vlaanderen en in de Federatie Wallonië-Brussel.* Brussels: Koning Boudewijnstichting.

Dowsett, C. J., Huston, A. C., Imes, A. E., & Gennetian, L. (2008). Structural and process features in three types of child care for children from high and low income families. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 23,* 69-93.

Early, D. M., & Burchinal, M. R. (2001). Early childhood care: relations with family characteristics and preferred care characteristics. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 16,* 475-497.

Ebbeck, M., Winter, P., Russo, S., Yim, H. Y. B.,Teo-Zuzarte, G. L. C., & Goh, M. (2012). Measuring children's involvement as an indicator of curriculum effectiveness: a curriculum evaluation of a selected child study centre in Singapore. *Early Child Development and Care, 182*(5), 609-619.

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice. (2019). *Key data on early childhood education and care in Europe – 2019 edition.* Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Felfe, C., & Lavile, R. (2018). Does early child care affect children's development? *Journal of Public Economics, 159*, 33-53.

Field, A. (2009). *Discovering statistics using SPSS. Third edition.* London: SAGE.

Flemish Government. (2012). *Decreet van 20 april 2012 (BS 15 juni 2012) houdende de organisatie van kinderopvang van baby's en peuters.*

Foster-Johnson, L., & Kromrey, J. D. (2018). Predicting group-level outcome variables: An empirical comparison of analysis strategies. Behavior Research Methods, 50(6), 2461–2479.

Gallagher, A. (2018). The business of care: Marketization and the new geographies of childcare. *Progress in Human Geography, 42*(5), 706-722.

Gambaro, L., Stewart, K., & Waldfogel, J. (2015). A question of quality: do children from disadvantaged backgrounds receive lower quality early childhood education and care? *British Educational Research Journal, 41*(4), 553-574.

Geoffroy, M-C., Côté, S. M., Giguère, C-E., Dionne, G., Zelazo, P. D., Tremblay, R. E., ... Séguin, J. R. (2010). Closing the gap in academic readiness and achievement: The role of early childcare. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 51*(12), 1359-1367.

Gialamas, A., Mittinty, M. N., Sawyer, M. G., Zubrick, S. R., & Lynch, J. (2015). Social inequalities in childcare quality and their effects on children's development at school entry: Findings from the longitudinal study of Australian children. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health, 69,* 841-848.

Gormley, W. T. (2008). The effects of Oklahoma’s pre-k program on Hispanic children. *Social Science Quarterly, 89*(4), 916-936.

Greenberg, J. P. (2011). The impact of maternal education on children’s enrollment in early childhood education and care. *Children and Youth Services Review, 33,* 1049-1057.

Hamre, B. K., La Paro, K. M., Pianta, R. C., & LoCasale-Crouch, J. (2014). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System. Manual. Infant.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Han, W-J. (2004). Nonstandard work schedules and child care decisions: evidence from the NICHD study of early child care. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 19,* 231-256.

Harbach, M. J. (2016). Nudging Parents. *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice*, 19, 74-126.

Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (2003). The early catastrophe: The 30 million word gap by age 3. American Educator, 27(1), 4-9.

Hulpia, H., Vandenbroeck, M., Daems, M., Declercq, B., Janssen, J., Van Cleynenbreugel, C., & Laevers, F. (2016). *MeMoQ Deelrapport 10. Emotionele en educatieve ondersteuning in de nulmeting.* Brussel – Gent – Leuven: Kind & Gezin – UGent – KU Leuven.

Hurt, H., & Betancourt, L M. (2016). Effect of socioeconomic status disparity on child language and neural outcome: how early is early? Pediatric RESEARCH, 79(1), 148-158.

Hurt, H., & Betancourt, L M. (2017). Turning 1 year of age in a low socioeconomic environment: A portrait of disadvantage. Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics, 38(7), 493-500.

Karoly, L. A., & Gonzalez, G. C. (2011). Early care and education for children in immigrant families. *Future of Children, 21*(1), 71-101.

Kim, J., & Fram, M. S. (2009). Profiles of choice: parents’ patterns of priority in child care decision-making. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 24,* 77-91.

Kind & Gezin. (2019). *Het kind in Vlaanderen 2019.* Brussel: Kind & Gezin.

La Paro, K. M., Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2012). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System. Manual. Toddler.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Laevers, F. (2007). *Well-being and involvement in care settings. A process-oriented self-evaluation instrument (SiCs)*. Brussel: Kind & Gezin. Retrieved from www.kindengezin.be/-img/sics-ziko-manual.pdf

Laevers, F., & Declercq, B. (2018). How well-being and involvement fit into the commitment to children's rights. *European Journal of Education, 53,* 325–335.

Lloyd, E., & Penn, H. (2010). Why do childcare markets fail? Comparing England and the Netherlands. *Public Policy Research, 17*(1), 42-28.

Lloyd, E., & Penn, H. (2012). *Childcare markets: Can they deliver an equitable service?* Bristol: Policy Press.

Magnuson, K., Lahaie, C., & Waldfogel, J. (2006). Preschool and school readiness of children of immigrants. Social Science Quarterly, 87(5), 1241-1262.

Magnuson, K. A., Meyers, M. K., Ruhm, C. J., & Waldfogel, J. (2004). Inequality in preschool education and school readiness. American Educational Research Journal, 41(1), 115-157.

Magnuson, K. A., & Shager, H. (2010). Early education: Progress and promise for children from low-income families. *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*, 1186-1198.

Magnuson, K. A., & Waldfogel, J. (2005). Early childhood care and education: Effects on ethnic and racial gaps in school readiness. The Future of Children, 15(1), 169-196.

McLoyd, V. C. (1998). Socioeconomic disadvantage and child development. American Psychologist, 53(2), 185-204.

Meijer, A. (2007). Does transparency lead to more compliance? Critical remarks on the relation between transparency and compliance. *European Food and Feed Law Review, 5,* 264-269.

Melhuish, E. C. (2004). *A literature review of the impact of early years provision on young children, with emphasis given to children from disadvantaged backgrounds.* Report prepared for the National Audit Office. London: Birkbeck, University of London.

Melhuish, E., Ereky-Stevens, K., Petrogiannis, K., Ariescu, A., Penderi, E., Rentzou, K., & Tawell, A. (2015). *A review of research on the effects of early childhood education and care (ECEC) upon child development*. Utrecht: Utrecht University - CARE project.

Meyers, M. K., & Jordan, L. P. (2006). Choice and accommodation in parental child care decisions. *Community Development, 37*(2), 53-70.

Mocan, N. (2007). Can consumers detect lemons? An empirical analysis of information asymmetry in the market for child care. *Journal of Population Economics, 20,* 743-780.

Moss, P. (2009). *There are alternatives! Markets and democratic experimentalism in early childhood education and care.* Working Paper no. 53 in Early Childhood Development. The Hague, The Netherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation and Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Moss, P. (2014). *Transformative change and real utopias in early childhood education: A story of democracy, experimentation and potentiality*. New York: Routledge.

Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (1998-2017). Mplus User's Guide. Eigth Edition. Muthén & Muthén. Los Angeles, CA: Muthén & Muthén

Obeng, C. S. (2006). Immigrant families and childcare preferences: do immigrants' cultures influence their childcare decisions? *Early Childhood Education Journal, 34*(4), 259-264.

Palludan, C. (2007). Two tones: The core of inequality in kindergarten? *International Journal of Early Childhood, 39*(1), 75-91.

Pavolini, E., & Van Lancker, W. (2018). The Matthew effect in childcare use: a matter of policies of preferences? *Journal of European Public Policy, 25*(6), 878-893.

Peeters, J., Cameron, C., Lazzari, A., Peleman, B., Budginaité, I., Hauari, I., & Siarova, H. (2015). *Early childhood care: Working conditions, training and quality of services – A systematic review.* Eurofound Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Peleman, B., Lazzari, A., Budginaité, I., Siarova, H., Hauari, H., Peeters, J., & Cameron, C. (2018). Continuous professional development and ECEC quality: Findings form a European systematic literature review. *European Journal of Education, 53*(1), 9-22.

Peleman, B., Vandenbroeck, M., & Van Avermaet, P. (2019). Early learning opportunities for children at risk of social exclusion. Opening the black box of preschool practice. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 28*(1), 21-42.

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), 150-161.

Peyton, V., Jacobs, A., O'Brien, M., & Roy, C. (2001). Reasons for choosing child care: associations with family factors, quality, and satisfaction. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 16,* 191-208.

Pungello, E. P., & Kurtz-Costes, B. (2000). Working women's selection of care for their infants: a prospective study. *Family Relations, 49*(3), 245-255.

Sandstrom, H., Giesen, L., & Chaudry, A. (2012). How contextual constraints affect low-income working parents' child care choices. *Perspectives on Low-Income Working Families, URBAN INSTITUTE, Brief 22.*

Shlay, A. B. (2010). African American, White and Hispanic child care preferences: A factorial survey analysis of welfare leavers by race and ethnicity. *Social Science Research, 39,* 125-141.

Shlay, A. B., Tran, H., Weinraub, M., & Harmon, M. (2005). Teasing apart the child care conundrum: a factorial survey analysis of perceptions of child care quality, fair market price and willingness to pay by low-income, African American parents. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 20,* 393-416.

Slot, P. (2018). Structural characteristics and process quality in early childhood education and care: A literature review. *OECD Education Working Papers,* No. 176, Paris: OECD Publishing.

Slot, P., Boom, J., Verhagen, J., & Leseman, P. (2017). Measurement properties of the CLASS Toddler in ECEC in The Netherlands. *Journal of applied developmental psychology, 48*, 79–91.

Snijders, T. A. B., & Bosker, R. J. (2012). *Multilevel analysis: an introduction to basic and advanced multilevel modeling*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Stahl, J. F., Schober, P. S., & Spiess, C. K. (2018). Parental socio-economic status and childcare quality: Early inequalities in educational opportunity? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 44*, 304-317.

Sylva, C., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I, & Taggart, B. (2004). *The effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project: Final report. A longitudinal study funded by the DfES 1997-2004.*

Teney, C., Devleeshouwer, P., & Hanquinet, L. (2013). Educational aspirations among ethnic minority youth in Brussels: Does the perception of ethnic discrimination in the labour market matter? A mixed-method approach: *Ethnicities, 13*(5), 584-606.

Teppers, E., Schepers W., & Van Regenmortel, T. (2019). *Het gebruik van en de behoefte aan kinderopvang voor baby's en peuters jonger dan 3 jaar in het Vlaamse Gewest.* Leuven: Steunpunt Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Gezin.

Tobin, J., & Kurban, F. (2010). Preschool practitioners' and immigrants parents' beliefs about academics and play in the early childhood educational curriculum in five countries. *Orbis Scholae, 4*(2), 75-87.

Torquati, J., Raikes, H., Huddleston-Casas, C., Bovaird, J. A., & Harris, B. A. (2011). Family income, parent education, and perceived constraints as predictors of observed program quality and parent rated program quality. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 26*(4), 453-464.

van Belle, J. (2016). *Early childhood education and care (ECEC) and its long-term effects on educational and labour market outcomes.* Cambridge: RAND Europe.

Vandenbroeck, M., De Visscher, S., Van Nuffel, K., & Ferla, J. (2008). Mothers' search for infant child care: the dynamic relationship between availability and desirability in a continental European welfare state. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 23*(2), 245-258.

Vandenbroeck, M. & Lazzari, A. (2014). Accessibility of early childhood education and care: A state of affairs. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 22*(3), 327-335.

Vandenbroeck, M., Lenaerts, K., & Beblavý, M. (2018). *Benefits of early childhood education and care and the conditions for obtaining them*. EENEE analytical report no. 32, prepared for the European Commission.

Vesely, C. K. (2013). Low-income African and Latina immigrant mothers' selection of early childhood care and education (ECCE): Considering the complexity of cultural and structural influences. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 28,* 470-486.

Vesely, C. K., Ewaida, M., & Kearney, K. B. (2013). Capitalizing on early childhood education: Low-income immigrant mothers' use of early childhood education to build human, social and navigational capital. *Early Education and Development, 24*(5), 744-765.

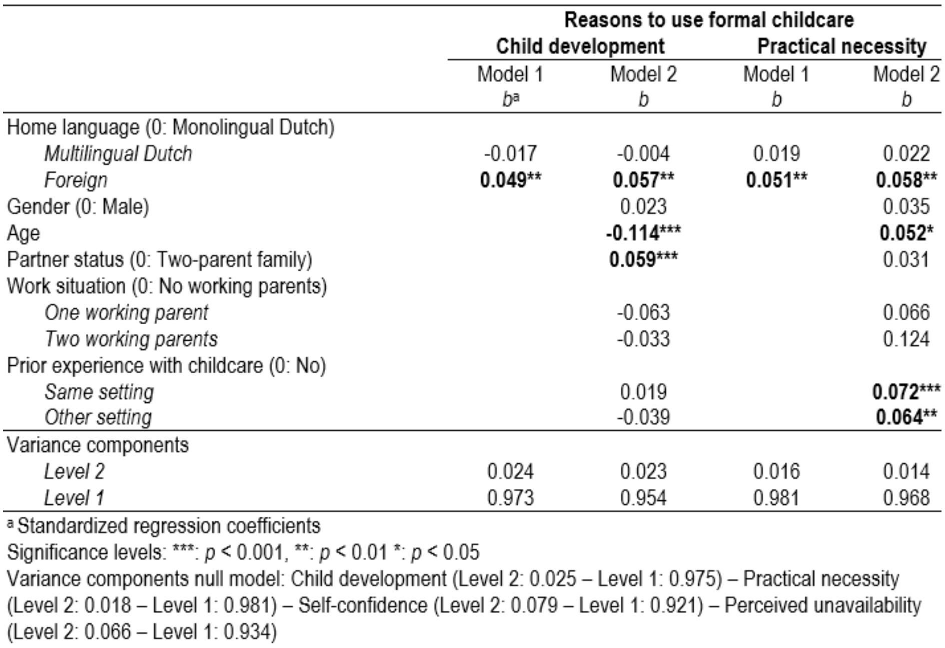
Wall, K., & José, J. S. (2004). Managing work and care: A difficult challenge for immigrant families. *Social Policy & Administration, 38*(6), 591-621.

Watamura, S. E., Phillips, D. A., Morrissey, T.W., McCartney, K., & Bub, K. (2011). Double jeopardy: poorer social-emotional outcomes for children in the NICHD SECCYD experiencing home and child-care environments that confer risk. *Child Development, 82*(1), 48-65.

White, L. A., & Friendly, M. (2012). Public funding, private delivery: States, markets, and early childhood education and care in liberal welfare states – A comparison of Australia, the UK, Quebec, and New Zealand. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice, 14*(4), 292-310.

Yuen, G. (2015). Markets, choice of kindergarten, mothers' care responsibilities, and the voucher scheme in Hong Kong. *Children and Youth Services Review, 48,* 167-176.

Table 11. Summary of multilevel linear regression analysis predicting childcare (*N* = 2791)



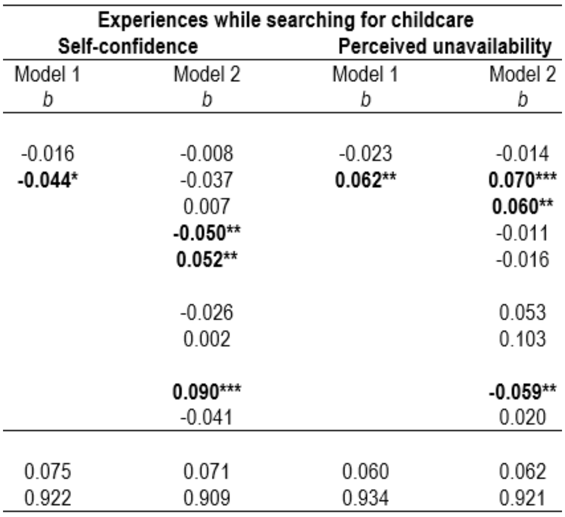
	Reasons to use formal childcare			
	Child development		**Practical necessity**	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
	b[a]	*b*	*b*	*b*
Home language (0: Monolingual Dutch)				
Multilingual Dutch	-0.017	-0.004	0.019	0.022
Foreign	**0.049****	**0.057****	**0.051****	**0.058****
Gender (0: Male)		0.023		0.035
Age		**-0.114*****		**0.052***
Partner status (0: Two-parent family)		**0.059*****		0.031
Work situation (0: No working parents)				
One working parent		-0.063		0.066
Two working parents		-0.033		0.124
Prior experience with childcare (0: No)				
Same setting		0.019		**0.072*****
Other setting		-0.039		**0.064****
Variance components				
Level 2	0.024	0.023	0.016	0.014
Level 1	0.973	0.954	0.981	0.968

[a] Standardized regression coefficients

Significance levels: ***: $p < 0.001$, **: $p < 0.01$ *: $p < 0.05$

Variance components null model: Child development (Level 2: 0.025 – Level 1: 0.975) – Practical necessity (Level 2: 0.018 – Level 1: 0.981) – Self-confidence (Level 2: 0.079 – Level 1: 0.921) – Perceived unavailability (Level 2: 0.066 – Level 1: 0.934)

reasons to use formal childcare and experiences while searching for



Experiences while searching for childcare			
Self-confidence		Perceived unavailability	
Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
b	*b*	*b*	*b*
-0.016	-0.008	-0.023	-0.014
-0.044*	-0.037	**0.062****	**0.070*****
	0.007		**0.060****
	-0.050**		-0.011
	0.052**		-0.016
	-0.026		0.053
	0.002		0.103
	0.090***		**-0.059****
	-0.041		0.020
0.075	0.071	0.060	0.062
0.922	0.909	0.934	0.921

Table 12. Summary of multilevel (logistic) regression analysis for choice

	Choice options			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	B[a]	*Exp(B)*	*B*	*Exp(B)*
Home language (0: Monolingual Dutch)				
Multilingual Dutch	**-0.426****	0.653	**-0.336***	0.714
Foreign	**-0.783****	0.457	**-0.660****	0.517
Gender (0: Male)			-0.178	0.837
Age			**-0.034****	0.966
Partner status (0: Two-parent family)			0.164	1.178
Work situation (0: No working parents)				
One working parent			0.634	1.885
Two working parents			**0.852***	2.345
Prior experience with childcare (0: No)				
Same setting			0.207	1.230
Other setting			**-0.313***	0.731
N	2791	2791	2791	2791
Variance components				
Level 2	0.809		0.799	
Level 1	3.29[c]		3.29	

[a] Logits, with Exp(B) as odds ratio's

[b] Standardized regression coefficients

[c] In multilevel logistic regression the individual level variance is fixed at $\pi^2/3 \approx 3.29$ (see Snijders & Bosker, 2012, Chap. 17)

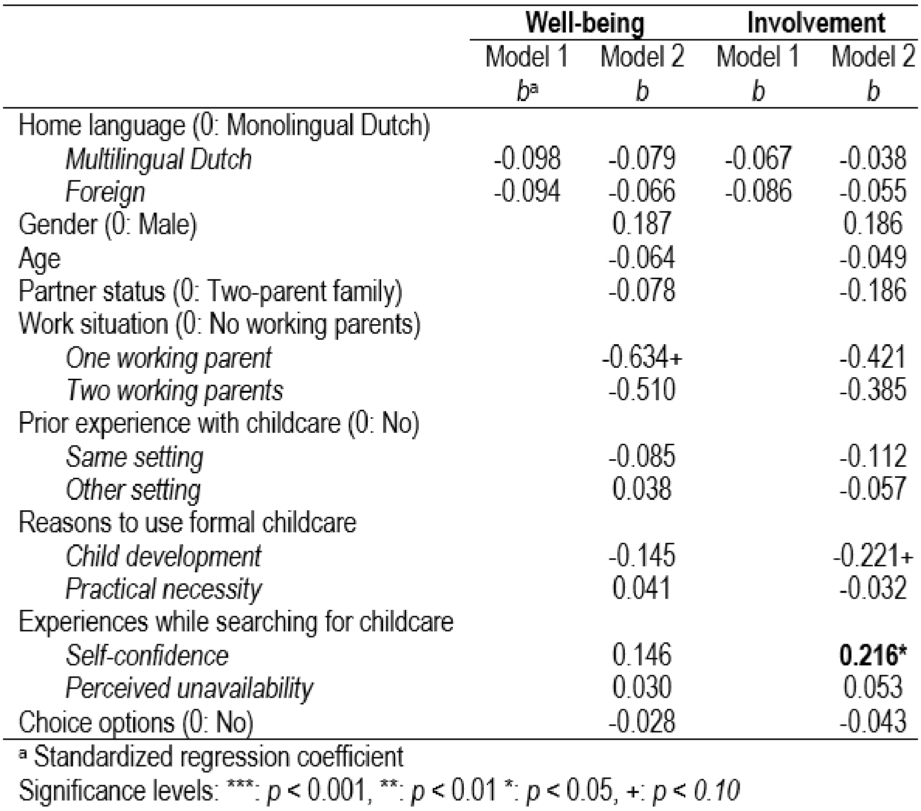
Significance levels: ***: $p < 0.001$, **: $p < 0.01$ *: $p < 0.05$

Variance components null model: Choice options (Level 2: 0.922 – Level 1: 3.29) – Perceived quality (Level 2: 0.160 – Level 1: 0.836) – Flexibility (Level 2: 0.182 - Level 1: 0.900) – Practical convenience (Level 2: 0.033 - Level 1: 0.653) – Affordability (Level 2: 0.221 - Level 1: 1.562)

options and selection motives

Perceived quality		Flexibility		Practical convenience		Affordability	
Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
b^b	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*
0.020	0.031	0.012	0.023	0.008	0.020	**0.084*** **	**0.088*** **
0.024	0.027	0.004	0.010	-0.009	-0.004	**0.128*** **	**0.125*** **
	0.035		0.003		-0.019		0.001
	-0.069 **		-0.041		-0.051		**-0.079*** **
	0.066 **		0.050		0.012		**0.079*** **
	-0.009		0.113		0.119		-0.061
	0.032		0.168		0.180		-0.071
	0.061 **		-0.005		**-0.051***		**0.063** **
	-0.050*		**-0.064** **		-0.027		0.023
2099	2099	2099	2099	2099	2099	2099	2099
0.163	0.158	0.182	0.179	0.033	0.035	0.195	0.185
0.834	0.818	0.900	0.891	0.653	0.645	1.541	1.519

Table 13. Summary of micro-macro multilevel analysis predicting process

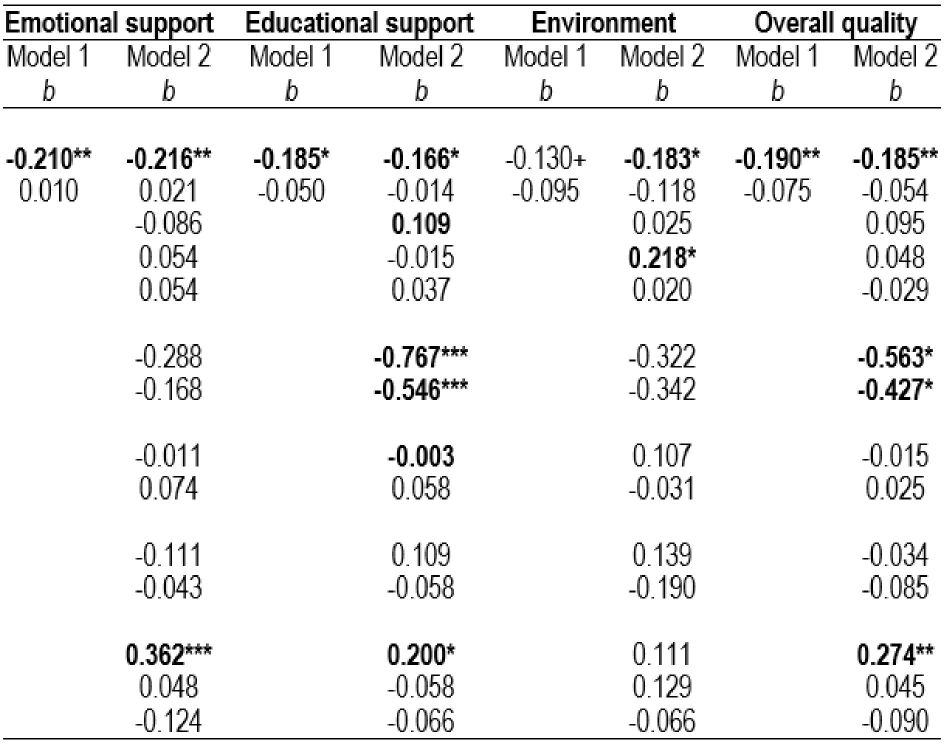


	Well-being		Involvement	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
	b^a	b	b	b
Home language (0: Monolingual Dutch)				
Multilingual Dutch	-0.098	-0.079	-0.067	-0.038
Foreign	-0.094	-0.066	-0.086	-0.055
Gender (0: Male)		0.187		0.186
Age		-0.064		-0.049
Partner status (0: Two-parent family)		-0.078		-0.186
Work situation (0: No working parents)				
One working parent		-0.634+		-0.421
Two working parents		-0.510		-0.385
Prior experience with childcare (0: No)				
Same setting		-0.085		-0.112
Other setting		0.038		-0.057
Reasons to use formal childcare				
Child development		-0.145		-0.221+
Practical necessity		0.041		-0.032
Experiences while searching for childcare				
Self-confidence		0.146		**0.216***
Perceived unavailability		0.030		0.053
Choice options (0: No)		-0.028		-0.043

[a] Standardized regression coefficient

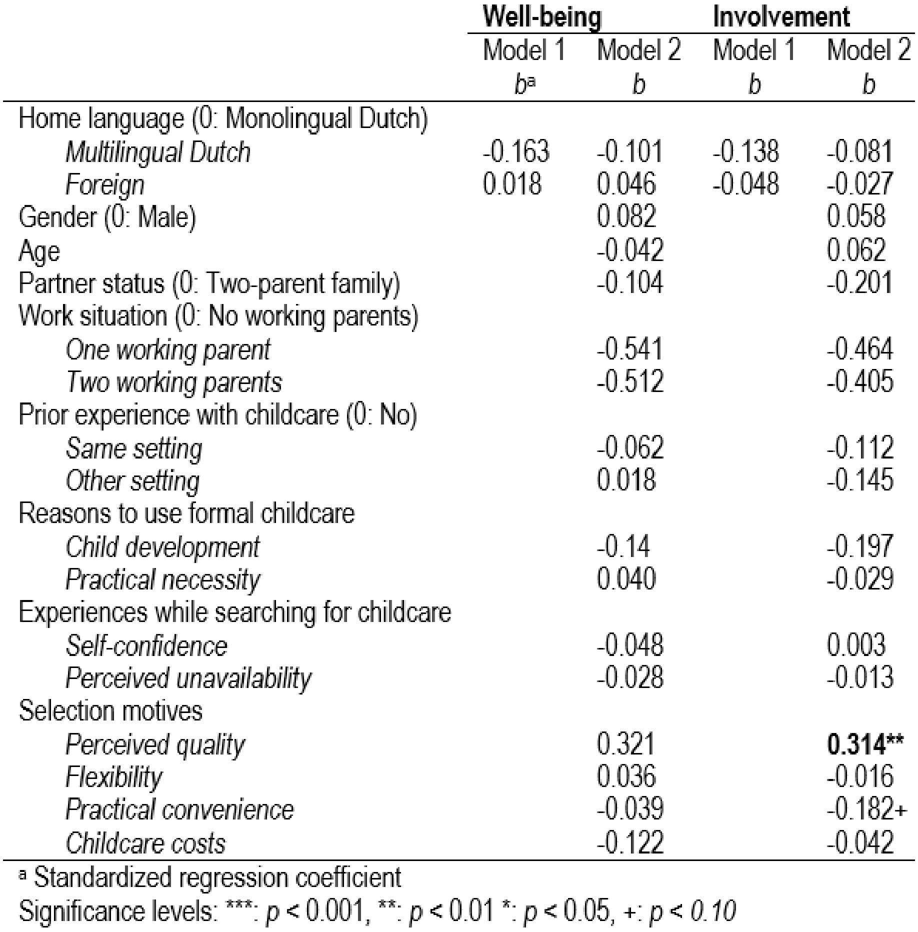
Significance levels: ***: $p < 0.001$, **: $p < 0.01$ *: $p < 0.05$, +: $p < 0.10$

quality (*N* = 2791)



Emotional support		Educational support		Environment		Overall quality	
Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
b	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*
-0.210**	**-0.216****	**-0.185***	**-0.166***	-0.130+	**-0.183***	**-0.190****	**-0.185****
0.010	0.021	-0.050	-0.014	-0.095	-0.118	-0.075	-0.054
	-0.086		**0.109**		0.025		0.095
	0.054		-0.015		**0.218***		0.048
	0.054		0.037		0.020		-0.029
	-0.288		**-0.767*****		-0.322		**-0.563***
	-0.168		**-0.546*****		-0.342		**-0.427***
	-0.011		**-0.003**		0.107		-0.015
	0.074		0.058		-0.031		0.025
	-0.111		0.109		0.139		-0.034
	-0.043		-0.058		-0.190		-0.085
	0.362***		**0.200***		0.111		**0.274****
	0.048		-0.058		0.129		0.045
	-0.124		-0.066		-0.066		-0.090

Table 14. Summary of micro-macro multilevel analysis predicting process



	Well-being		**Involvement**	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
	b[a]	*b*	*b*	*b*
Home language (0: Monolingual Dutch)				
Multilingual Dutch	-0.163	-0.101	-0.138	-0.081
Foreign	0.018	0.046	-0.048	-0.027
Gender (0: Male)		0.082		0.058
Age		-0.042		0.062
Partner status (0: Two-parent family)		-0.104		-0.201
Work situation (0: No working parents)				
One working parent		-0.541		-0.464
Two working parents		-0.512		-0.405
Prior experience with childcare (0: No)				
Same setting		-0.062		-0.112
Other setting		0.018		-0.145
Reasons to use formal childcare				
Child development		-0.14		-0.197
Practical necessity		0.040		-0.029
Experiences while searching for childcare				
Self-confidence		-0.048		0.003
Perceived unavailability		-0.028		-0.013
Selection motives				
Perceived quality		0.321		**0.314****
Flexibility		0.036		-0.016
Practical convenience		-0.039		-0.182+
Childcare costs		-0.122		-0.042

[a] Standardized regression coefficient

Significance levels: ***: $p < 0.001$, **: $p < 0.01$ *: $p < 0.05$, +: $p < 0.10$

quality (*N* = 2099)

Emotional support		Educational support		Environment		Overall quality	
Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
b	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*
-0.237*	**-0.184***	**-0.251****	**-0.200***	**-0.205***	-0.163+	**-0.267****	**-0.197***
0.049	0.071	0.027	0.053	-0.035	-0.045	0.004	-0.025
	-0.279		0.019		-0.075		-0.069
	0.018		-0.007		0.171		0.063
	-0.073		-0.049		-0.019		-0.099
	-0.309		-0.569+		-0.465		-0.412
	-0.218		-0.401		-0.510		-0.327
	-0.001		0.052		0.176		0.028
	0.120		0.184		0.057		0.082
	-0.387		0.034		0.472		-0.025
	-0.030		-0.091		-0.144		-0.082
	0.138		-0.026		0.091		0.051
	0.003		-0.150		0.067		-0.039
	0.426***		**0.373*****		**0.202***		**0.431*****
	-0.040		-0.097		-0.138+		-0.084
	-0.337**		**-0.259***		**-0.252***		**-0.306****
	-0.030		-0.037		-0.094		-0.072

CHAPTER 4

From multiculturalism to super-diversity in the early years: An analysis of curriculum issues

Abstract

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is nowadays portrayed as an actor of social transformation, capable of levelling the playing field for all children. An interesting, though often overlooked, reflection in debates around equal opportunities is the need to develop multicultural curricula as a way to decolonize the field. Whilst such progressive beliefs already emerged a few decades ago, little is known about how contemporary early years policies try to incorporate the changing social reality. This study maps how the emergence of ‘multiculturalism’ and more recently ‘super-diversity’ brings forth challenges in relation to (1) acculturation; (2) anti-bias education; (3) equity pedagogy; (4) epistemology; and (5) intersectionality. Through comparative study, we explore how pedagogical understandings in relation to each of these issues differ in eleven curricular frameworks from ten different Western countries in different parts of the world. The results of our direct content analysis show that, in most countries, a multicultural education reform has taken place. Nevertheless, there is a need to catch up with more recently emerged challenges of super-diversity.

Based on Janssen, J., Devlieghere, J., De Wilde, L., & Vandenbroeck, M. (will be submitted for peer review). From Multiculturalism to Super-diversity in the Early Years: An Analysis of Curriculum Issues. *Comparative Education*.

4.1 Introduction

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is nowadays framed as an actor of social transformation, capable of levelling the playing field for all children. Indeed, there is a robust body of evidence suggesting that ECEC improves disadvantaged children's school readiness and, by implication, is capable of breaking the cycle of disadvantage (Becker et al., 2013; Buysse et al., 2014; Currie, 2001; Felfe & Lalive, 2018; Geoffroy et al., 2010; Gialamas et al., 2015; Gormley, 2008; Magnuson & Shager, 2010; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005; Magnuson et al., 2004, 2006; Sylva et al., 2004). Its equalizing potential, however, is largely defined in terms of compensation for (the adverse effects of) family background. The present study seeks to bring more nuance in current debates about equal opportunities by focusing on the importance of respect for diversity. An extremely relevant topic nowadays as ECEC participation of migrant and ethnic minorities is expressly desired and early childhood services are likely to become one of the places where super-diversity is at its most marked. Therefore, we explore how contemporary early years policies try to accommodate the changing social reality.

Already a few decades ago, the question how ECEC could respond to the multi-ethnicity of society began to garner attention of scholars in different parts of the world (see e.g. Derman-Sparks & The ABC Task Force 1989, for the U.S.; Stonehouse 1991, for Australia; Vedder, Bouwer and Pels 1996, for Europe). Ostensibly influenced by a broader 'multicultural education' reform movement, grounded in the Civil Rights Movement (Banks, 2015), these authors echoed the demand of marginalized groups to incorporate their history and culture within the curriculum and to make other reforms that would create greater educational equality. The promotion of tolerance and respect for diverse cultures and ethnic groups within society remains very pertinent until today. Vertovec (2007), however, suggests that these so-called progressive multicultural policies are becoming less adequate for dealing with individual migrants' and ethnic minorities' public service needs. That is because new migration patterns have made the sociocultural diversification of present-day societies far more complex, as can be observed in the presence of 'an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants' (1024). Combinations of these traits, in turn, may produce new hierarchical social positions, statuses or stratifications and makes Vertovec (2007, 2019) conclude that policy frameworks and public perceptions of diversity need to catch up with this new condition of ‘super-diversity’.

In what follows, we further elaborate on past and present concerns with migrants’ and ethnic minorities’ public service needs and what it may mean for curriculum reform in early childhood education. Particular focus is given to five (interrelated) dimensions: acculturation, anti-bias education, equity pedagogy, epistemology and intersectionality. Thereafter, we analyse for each dimension how curriculum guidelines in eleven Western countries and regions sensitize practitioners to enhance migrants’ and ethnic minorities’ opportunities for participation and belonging.

4.2 Curriculum reform in times of (super-)diversity

A first dimension of respect for diversity in ECEC concerns migrant and ethnic minority children’s acculturation process. Indeed, ECEC is usually the first context in which migrant and ethnic minority children face the differences between their home culture and the majority culture of the country they live in. Following the assertion of Schwartz et al. (2010) that contexts of reception play a significant role in understanding acculturation outcomes (i.e. how one endorses practices, values and/or identifications of heritage and receiving cultures), the acculturation options made available by early childhood services could be of great importance. The cultural relinquishing that characterizes traditional assimilation strategies, for instance, is not necessarily the most optimal way to learn about or adapt to the mainstream culture. On the contrary, there is growing awareness of the ability of ethnic minorities and migrants to simultaneously hold or blend two or more cultural orientations, as well as of its positive association with psychological and social adjustment (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010, 2013). When ECEC incorporates a wider repertoire of ways of being in the world, however, it needs to beware of stereotypical views that create identity conflicts. Within the current reality of second-, third- or later-generation ethnic minorities, many of whom are reared with a blend of cultures and prefer to have a sense of multiple belonging and hybrid identities (Crul & Schneider, 2010; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2010; Vertovec, 2007; Viruell-Fuentes, 2006), the assumption of relatively stable and clearly identifiable ethnic groups has lost most of its validity. Against this backdrop, Vandenbroeck (2008) argues that ECEC practitioners should not create identity boundaries or dichotomies by assuming there is something called ‘the Maghreb culture’ or ‘the Asian way of doing things’ or by providing stereotypical displays or events such as ‘a festival celebrating Iraqi new year with traditional clothes and food'. The challenge for ECEC is not to deny nor oversimplify cultural diversity and family life. Instead, it should be recognized that the construct of cultural identity is inherently subjective and will carry different meanings for different individuals. Most realistic would be to honour the complexities of personal histories and family cultures and to create a shared sense of belonging to a super-diverse reality wherein people more than ever before cohere to a range of social worlds and communities simultaneously (Geldof, 2016; Vandenbroeck, 1999; Vertovec, 2007).

A second dimension is related to children's development of ethnic prejudice and discriminatory attitudes during early childhood. As the literature suggests that children can display both positive and negative attitudes towards difference by three years of age (Mac Naughton, 2006), with a peak in prejudice between the age of five and seven (Raabe & Beelmann, 2011), ECEC could be an opportunity to promote intergroup contact and anti-bias attitudes (Aboud, 2005; Aboud et al, 2012; Beelmann & Heimann, 2014; Bennett, 2017; Derman-Sparks & The ABC Task Force, 1989; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). To understand where prejudice comes from, one needs to consider that tensions between ethnic groups in larger society can be transmitted to children (see e.g. Bar-Tal, 1996; Connolly, Kelly, & Smith, 2009; Kurban & Tobin, 2009). In this regard, the development of new forms of racism and prejudice among and against native descendants, longstanding ethnic minorities and newcomers is worrisome. Nguyen and Benet-Martinez (2010), for instance, argue that mixed-race and mixed-ethnic individuals, as well as second-generation ethnic minorities, are often given (implicit or explicit) messages suggesting that they are not ethnic enough with regard to certain cultural markers, while also not being considered part of the mainstream culture. Schwartz et al. (2010) give another example whereby migrants who are seen as contributing to the receiving country's economy or culture (e.g. voluntary immigrants who work as doctors, engineers, or other professionals) may be welcomed with open arms, whereas refugees and asylum seekers, together with immigrants from lower socioeconomic brackets, may be viewed as a drain on the receiving country's resources and therefore more likely to face discrimination. Experiences of discrimination, in turn, could invoke what Rumbaut (2008) has termed 'reactive ethnicity' or holding even more strongly on one's cultural heritage and resisting adoption of the receiving culture. The challenge for ECEC is thus not to consider early childhood as a pre-political realm and preparation for (real) life in a multicultural society, but instead to take due account of the fact that prejudices are already transmitted to children. It requires reflection on the so-called 'hidden curriculum' and how practitioners unconsciously reproduce discriminatory messages (Pang, 1988), together with the creation of transformative spaces in which meanings are held up for collective interrogation, contestation and reformation (Rosen, 2016).

A third dimension focuses on the cultural and linguistic resources of migrant and ethnic minority children and the ways educational practices are modified to give them equal status. Indeed, it is a widespread misconception that ECEC is by definition a meritocratic institution that enables any individual child to fulfil its potential. Though ECEC participation may support disadvantaged children's school-readiness (Becker et al., 2013, Heckman, 2006; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005), a fixation on conventional skills also risks to separate migrant and ethnic minority children from typically developing children (Genishi & Goodwin, 2008). This kind of separation, in turn, negatively affects migrants' and ethnic minorities' learning opportunities and identities. Adair, Colegrove and McManus (2017), for instance, suggest that migrant children are often denied a range of dynamic and agentic learning experiences due to their language deficiency and therefore perceive learning as something that requires still, obedient and quit bodies. Children's cultural capital and 'feel for the game' furthermore matter for play. An interesting example is provided by Sadownik (2018), who asserts that Polish migrant children experience difficulties to participate on equal terms with other children in the child-initiated play-based content of Norwegian ECEC. She argues that although these children automatically belong to the group of children from an adult perspective, gaining the position of an interesting playmate is conditional on the embodiment of several cultural capitals (e.g. language, knowledge of global pop-culture). The challenge for ECEC is thus to support migrant and ethnic minority children to win a position as respectable and full peers. Instead of deficit-oriented thinking, practitioners may try to involve migrant and ethnic minority children as able and imaginative persons by supporting the development and performance of a range of unconventional skills and knowledge (Genishi & Goodwin, 2008).

A fourth and epistemological dimension treats the question what counts as true knowledge in the upbringing of young children. Notwithstanding the importance of child development theory, many scholars have argued to broaden the disciplinary base of early childhood education away from an exclusive focus on so-called scientific truths about young children (Dahlberg et al., 1999, 2007; Moss, 2005, 2007, 2014; Pence & Hix-Small, 2009; Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2008; Soto & Swadener, 2002). Indeed, it is hard to imagine that developmental appropriateness would be a universal standard. Valdivia (1999), for instance, found that the age norms assigned to various developmental domains are quite arbitrary and primarily reflective of white, middle-class childrearing norms. Her standpoint is that if migrant and ethnic minority parents do not identify a certain series of behaviours or symptoms as being descriptive of a developmental delay or childhood disability, we need to accept that these are socially and culturally situated constructs. The problem, however, is that early childhood educators' willingness to be culturally responsive is often trumped by their commitment to what they consider best practice (Tobin, 2020). In Children Crossing Borders, a comparative study of the beliefs and perspectives of immigrant parents and preschool teachers in five countries, Tobin, Adair and Arzubiaga (2013) found that cultural responsiveness was merely interpreted as making accommodations for religious diets, using children's home languages in morning greetings, celebrating a range of holidays and providing culturally relevant books. Professionals generally are more reluctant to alter their core professional (and 'progressive') beliefs about what is developmentally appropriate, as demonstrated in Tobin and Kurban's (2010) observation that immigrant parents' desire for a more academic emphasis in the curriculum was labelled as 'outdated' and 'conservative'. Instead of drawing the line when it comes to questions of curriculum and pedagogy, the challenge for ECEC is to accept the inevitably of disagreements and thus to create structures where these disagreements can be worked out. Practitioners can create reciprocity in unequal relations by proactively moving beyond the hegemonic safe zones of traditional teacher-dominated practices and by acknowledging that their expertise is only provisional (Chan & Ritchie, 2016; Tobin, 2020; Vandenbroeck, 2009, 2018; Vandenbroeck et al., 2009).

A fifth and final dimension relates to the intersection of ethnicity with a range of other variables that matter for migrants' and ethnic minorities' social integration (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018; Vertovec, 2007, 2019; Wessendorf, 2018). Indeed, multicultural policies typically consider culture as the nucleus of social inequality, whereas it is in fact a combination of traits that determines ones opportunities and public service needs. Tobin (2020), for instance, argues to also consider the role of socio-economic status when interpreting immigrant parents' wish for a stronger academic focus in the curriculum. Taken from this perspective, migrant and ethnic minority parents' desire could be the expression of a concern about their children's vulnerability to failing in school and the reflection of a self-perceived lack of resources to support the child's language development and academic preparation. Another example is provided by Lunneblad (2017), who draws attention to the precarious situation of refugees who fled from areas of violent conflict and suffer from post-traumatic stress. The challenge for ECEC is to recognize the composite effects of social categories or characteristics when serving migrants and ethnic minorities. It is only through such an intersectional approach that ECEC services can become resilient spaces for those who are worst-off, which are those affected by so-called ‘multiply-burdened’ experiences (Bove & Sharmahd, 2020; Park et al., 2018). As Vesely and Ginsberg (2011) suggest, this might entail that practitioners need to act as social workers, advocates and resource brokers for them.

Thus far we have sketched five dimensions of curriculum reform that help ECEC to incorporate the changing social reality. In the next section, we explain how this theoretical framework was used to conduct a direct content analysis of curricula from eleven Western countries and regions.

4.3 Methods

4.3.1 Data collection

Since document analysis requires data selection rather than data collection (Bowen, 2009), we began searching for publicly accessible publications based on two selection criteria. On the one hand, we were interested in curricula that covered the youngest age group (0 to 3 years), albeit not necessarily as a separate group. On the other hand, curricula could only be selected when made available in English, French or Dutch. Beyond these pragmatic criteria, we looked for diversity rather than typicality or generalizability. Therefore, we selected a limited number of curricula that would maximize the potential diversity along the following lines:

Paradigmatic diversity: Bennett (2005) distinguishes divergent approaches in early childhood curriculum development, varying from a social pedagogical paradigm to a pre-primary paradigm. Hence, curricula from countries that are labelled as traditional social pedagogical countries were included (e.g. Sweden and Denmark), as well as the Berlin curriculum that is rooted in the German tradition of ‘sozialpädagogik’ and ‘Bildung’. Concurrently, curricula from pre-primary countries were selected (e.g. England and Ireland). Since Moss (2013) argues that there is a typical approach to the ‘preschool paradigm’ in English speaking countries, we also included curricula from a broader array of culturally diverse, English speaking countries (e.g. Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia). Furthermore, the framework from the French speaking community of Belgium was added as a case that resembles the psychoanalytical approach typically found in early childhood education in French speaking countries (Hoshi-Watanabe et al., 2015).

Diversity in multicultural education: multicultural education is conceptualized and implemented differently across the world (Banks, 2015; Tobin, 2005). According to Banks (2015), differences can be found between Western European nations (e.g. The Netherlands, England, Ireland), Western immigrant nations (e.g. Australia, New Zealand) and East Asian nations (e.g. China). Not only do the groups on which multicultural education focuses vary by national contexts, he argues, but also the approaches and its implementation.

Diversity in status: some curricula represent a proper compulsory curriculum, describing universal goals to be achieved (e.g. the Statutory Framework in England) or, rather, serving as national guidelines and a source of inspiration with no legal status (e.g. the Netherlands). Others take the format of a law and are limited to a number of legal standards and principles rather than an elaborate text on how to proceed (e.g. Denmark), or stress the underlying values of early childhood education rather than the practice (e.g. Sweden and the Flemish Community of Belgium).

Diversity in welfare contexts: the meaning of early childhood education can hardly be analysed without acknowledging the political context in general, and visions of the welfare state in particular (Vandenbroeck et al., 2010). We therefore chose countries that vary in welfare state constructions according to the typology of Esping-Andersen (1990) and subsequent scholars (Scruggs & Allan, 2008): Nordic countries (e.g. Sweden and Denmark); liberal welfare states (e.g. England and Ireland) and corporatist welfare states (Belgium and the Netherlands). We further chose countries in which child care is predominantly market oriented (e.g. Hong Kong and the Netherlands), as well as countries where child care is publicly financed and considered the right of each child (e.g. Sweden and Denmark) and mixed models (e.g. Belgium).

Diversity in age range: our sample included curricula that focus exclusively on the youngest children (e.g. both the Flemish and French Community of Belgium), ones that cover preschool children as well (e.g. England, Sweden, Berlin, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and the Netherlands) and those that stretch until 18 years (e.g. Denmark).

Table 15 (at the end of this chapter) provides some background information regarding our selection of eleven curricula.

4.3.2 Data analysis

This study uses a so-called ‘directed approach’ to qualitative content analysis, which Hsieh and Shannon (2005) recommend for researchers who use a theoretical framework or theory as guidance for initial coding. More specifically, the five dimensions of curriculum reform outlined in the introduction were used for this kind of deductive category application. First, all curricula were read and re-read entirely to highlight all text that on first impression appeared to represent (either implicitly or explicitly) one of the predetermined codes. The Maori part of Te Whariki (part B in the curriculum of New Zealand), however, was excluded from the analysis because of language barriers. Next, all highlighted passages were re-examined to determine if they represent a new category or a subcategory of an existing code (e.g. ‘biculturalism’, ‘national identity’, ‘confessional providers’). Broad statements about equal opportunities, such as illustrated below, were excluded from further scrutiny as we believe that each of the five dimensions requires deliberate attention and focus.

> *“Concern for the individual child’s well-being, security, development and learning should characterise the work of the preschool. Account should be taken of the varying conditions and needs of chil¬dren. This means that the preschool cannot be organised in the same way everywhere, and that the resources of the preschool need not be distributed equally.” (Skolverket, 2011, p. 4). - Sweden*

As such, our directed approach to content analysis is able to support and extend existing theory on diversity and complexity in early childhood education. To illustrate differences and possibilities in respectful approach of diversity, excerpts of curricula – or an English translation of them (undertaken by the authors of this article) – were selected in mutual consideration.

4.4 Results

4.4.1 Acculturation

Curricula are generally inclined to foster children’s connection with their family background and cultural community. Often (e.g. in Australia, Berlin, Ireland, New Zealand and Sweden), this is expressed by means of a mandate to pass on a ‘cultural heritage’ from one generation to the next. Practitioners are generally encouraged to avoid stereotypical approaches and to provide children with cultural resources that are meaningful to them (e.g. using children's home languages, displays of children's families and cultural backgrounds, familiar stories and activities). The Council of Australian Governments (2009, p. 13), for instance, nuances that the culture where children are born in 'is not only influenced by traditional practices, heritage and ancestral knowledge, but also by the experiences, values and beliefs of individual families and communities'. Curricula occasionally exemplify how these general statements can be translated into relevant learning experiences. For instance, the Irish curriculum gives the example of grandmother Gloria who brings along familiar things from North Nigeria for her grandson Lee (and the other children in the toddler room) to see, play with and learn about. Interestingly, some curricula use these occasions to ensure the cultural security of specific communities (e.g. Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia, Maori in New Zealand, Travelers in Ireland).

Participation in one's own culture and the culture of others is generally perceived as a strategy to familiarize children with cultural diversity. Except for the curriculum in Hong Kong, which considers ECEC as an opportunity for children to develop national identity through an understanding of the Chinese culture, curricula do no provide extra guidelines or specific recipes on how to nurture multiple belongings and hybrid identities:

> *"The preschool can help to ensure that children from national minorities and children with a foreign background receive support in developing a multicultural sense of identity." (Skolverket, 2011, p. 5) – Sweden*

The 'bi-cultural' curriculum in New Zealand, by contrast, can be seen as a notable exception. It provides a basis for bicultural early childhood education through the integration of a distinct Maori curriculum that 'protects Màori language and tikanga, Màori pedagogy, and the transmitting of Màori knowledge, skills, and attitudes through using Màori language' (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 12).

While our analysis suggests that curricula expressly desire an integrative approach to support children's acculturation, it is important to point out that some countries have been prepared to compromise on it for the sake of being multicultural. The curriculum in New Zealand, for instance, supports the fact that

Maori and some groups of migrants from the Pacific Islands have established early childhood centres to keep their different cultures flourishing. The unique institutional setup in Berlin is also worth mentioning in this regard. Though the curriculum only marginally addresses the issue, it states that ‘while institutions in the public service sphere cultivate a pluralistic worldview, kindergartens under the auspices of confessional providers cultivate opportunities for religious Bildung within the framework of their faith’ (Prott & Preissing, 2006, p. 20).

4.4.2 Anti-bias education

A consensus emerges among curricula that intergroup contact is essential for children to champion fairness, solidarity and respect for each other. Whether it be expressed in educational outcomes, learning experiences or pedagogical guidelines, curricula recognize that young children become increasingly aware of diversities and expect ECEC to nurture anti-bias attitudes. This is aptly illustrated in the curriculum of Berlin:

> *“In Germany the prime concern is the perception and recognition of social, cultural and ethnic differences between people, the perception and acceptance of physical, psychological and intellectual differences. Such differences should neither be denied, nor evened out, but be seen as a chance for many and diverse mutual learning experiences.” (Prott & Preissing, 2006, p. 8) – Berlin*

Various terminology is used to indicate ECEC’s entitlement to help children assimilate the ethical norms and values to thrive in an increasingly heterogeneous society; for instance, the provision of ‘a training ground for democracy’ (Flemish Community of Belgium), the aim of ‘countering racism’ (New Zealand) or the importance of acting as ‘good role models’ (Sweden). Often, curricula also sensitize practitioners to prevent that children are prejudiced in one way or another by their experiences within the classroom:

> *“The childcare facility is a place that addresses prejudice and discrimination in an effective way and which enables children to adopt a positive approach to children and families who are different. Practitioners use the diversity of children and their families as the basis for the development of the childcare facility. They question their own standards and rules so that all children, families and practitioners can feel welcome*

> *and safe there." (Kind en Gezin, 2014, p. 19) – Flemish Community of Belgium*

> *"Adults who interact with the children need to be aware of their own ideas of 'normality' and how their norms and values, even in the smallest things, are transmitted to children. That is why practitioners need to communicate with each other (and with parents) about the societal picture they present to children, even in settings where diversity seems to be limited." (BKK, 2017, p. 84) – The Netherlands*

Interestingly, some curricula (e.g. in Berlin, the Netherlands) go one step further in counteracting prejudice by deliberately supporting children's resilience towards misleading social constructions. The Berlin curriculum, for instance, describes how media exposes children to clichés, outdated role models and prejudices. Therefore, it is considered an important task of practitioners to elicit children's reflection on prevailing prejudices and to foster young children's competencies in the critical use of media.

4.4.3 Equity pedagogy

In general, curricula (implicitly or explicitly) consider children's first years of life as the backbone for further (lifelong) learning and supporting children to fulfil their potential, by implication, is a central motive for curriculum development. The first paragraph of the curriculum in England eloquently illustrates this reasoning:

> *"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up." (Department for Education, 2012, 3) – England*

In some countries, the curriculum suggests that ECEC carries great potential to break the cycle of disadvantage and counts on it to help redress disparities in scholastic outcomes between ethnic-cultural groups. The Council of Australian Governments (2009, p. 6), for instance, aspires ECEC to help 'closing the gap in educational achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade', whereas the Berlin curriculum refers to the 'German PISA-shock' and the corresponding need to better tailor classroom practices to the needs of children at-risk of educational failure.

Interestingly, curricula who focus on supporting disadvantaged children's school-readiness still seek to valorise immigrant and ethnic minority children's linguistic and cultural resources. In England, for instance, providers must ensure that children with a foreign mother tongue receive sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language, while simultaneously taking 'reasonable steps' to allow children to develop and use their home language in play and learning. Deficit-oriented thinking is also deliberately eschewed in other countries such as Sweden, where the curriculum propagates that children's development of their mother tongue creates better opportunities to learn Swedish and to develop knowledge in other areas.

Another inspiring example is provided by curricula that overtly criticize the alleged 'objectivity' of standardized monitoring and testing in contexts of diversity and warn against its pervasive effects. In this regard, practitioners are recommended to reflect on how they can tailor conventional assessment procedures to the abilities and needs of multilingual learners so as to ensure that all children experience the joy of making progress and feeling a valued member of the group. The Irish curriculum, for instance, states that:

> *"It is important to remember that test scores for young children can be unreliable. It is also important to remember that, as tests are standardized for particular populations of children, the results for children who may have a different first language, for example, should be interpreted and used with care." (NCCA, 2009a, p. 96) – Ireland*

4.4.4 Epistemology

Curricula answer the question of what counts as knowledge in the upbringing of young children, or what is in children's bests interest, in a democratic and/or scientific fashion. Regarding the former, some countries or regions (e.g. Flemish Community of Belgium) have deliberately involved various stakeholders in the preparation of centrally coordinated guidelines, whereas the Danish curriculum insists on the establishment of a 'parent board' which should be involved in the preparation, evaluation and follow-up of a daycare facility's pedagogical curriculum. Other curricula fancy the development of so-called 'reflective practices' or 'learning communities' wherein parents and professionals engage in joint decision-making about individual children's learning. As such, practitioners are expected to deal positively with cultural variation in childrearing beliefs and practices. The curriculum in New Zealand, for instance, argues that they need to be aware of different perspectives within the community on values and behaviours 'such as cooperation, physical contact, sharing food, crying, or feeling sorry' (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 65) and practitioners in Australian ECEC need to develop their 'cultural competence':

> “ *“Educators who are culturally competent respect multiple cultural ways of knowing, seeing and living, celebrate the benefits of diversity and have an ability to understand and honour differences. This is evident in everyday practice when educators demonstrate an ongoing commitment to developing their own cultural competence in a two way process with families and communities.” (Council of Australian Governments, 2009, p. 16) – Australia*

On the other hand, we noticed that the curriculum is used as an instrument to transmit knowledge on child development from theory to practice. Just by looking at the amount of references in curricula, one can notice the desirability of applied (scientific) knowledge in the Netherlands (221), Ireland (219) and the French Community of Belgium (165). The importance of science and developmentally appropriate practice is also conveyed more tacitly in curricular descriptions of an enjoyable and challenging learning environment (e.g. the curriculum in New Zealand differentiates appropriate learning experiences for infants, toddlers and young children). As such, curricula tend to portray practitioners as technicians and claim a scientific 'objectivity' that largely disregards education as a normative practice:

> “ *“Up to now, The Netherlands lacked a guiding 'academic' document for childcare providers. … The function of the pedagogical curriculum is to answer the 'how-to question': how can the pedagogical assignment mentioned in the law be best put into practice? It does not contain concrete learning materials, reference levels or tests. It provides guidelines on the content and methods to promote the well-being, socio-emotional development and cognitive development of children between zero and seven years old.” (BKK, 2017, p. 6-7) – The Netherlands*

Interesting to notice is how the ‘objective’ gaze that is often associated with academic rigor becomes relative when a broader spectrum of academic disciplines is given prominence. The curriculum from the French Community of Belgium, for instance, acknowledges that developmental phenomena can be observed ‘quasi universal’ but concurrently uses intercultural psychological insights to raise awareness of cultural variance in perceptions of child development and its nurturance. The same is true for the curriculum in New Zealand, which cites Bronfenbrenner and his ecology of human development to underscore the importance of coordinating the different contexts of child development.

4.4.5 Intersectionality

The curricula under study approach social stratification in a variety of ways and thus, albeit mostly indirect, recognize that a culture-sensitive curriculum is too narrow to create a more just and equal world. This is done, for instance, by referring to the principles laid out in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child or simply by stating that culture is but one of many reasons to individualize educational practices. In England or the Netherlands, the curriculum in general draws little attention to issues of culture or ethnicity, but instead tend to give priority to other marginalized groups in policies that promote equality of opportunity:

> *“Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to promote equality of opportunity for children in their care, including support for children with special educational needs or disabilities. The policy should cover: how the individual needs of all children will be met (including how those children who are disabled or have special educational needs, will be included, valued and supported, and how reasonable adjustments will be made for them); the name of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (in group provision); arrangements for reviewing, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of inclusive practices that promote and value diversity and difference; how inappropriate attitudes and practices will be challenged; and how the provision will encourage children to value and respect others.” (Department for Education, 2012, p. 26) – England*

> *“The environment has a strong influence on the development of executive functions and self-regulation. … Scientific research indicates that factors such as growing up in poverty, divorced parents and exposure to stress negatively impact this development. … Therefore, it is of crucial*

> *importance to support children’s development of executive functions and self-regulation at home, in daycare, at school and everywhere else.” (BKK, 2017, p. 54) – The Netherlands*

Typically, little attention is given to the interplay of different factors that shape migrants’ and ethnic minorities’ opportunities for participation and belonging. Although there are some implicit hints to an intersectional philosophy (e.g. the Berlin curriculum states that even children who belong to the same ethnic-cultural group are different from each other), there is a lack of elaborate policies that account for the ‘multiply-burdened’ experiences of the most vulnerable migrant and ethnic minority children.

4.5 Discussion and concluding remarks

This study drew attention to issues of diversity in ECEC and examined how contemporary early years policies try to accommodate the changing social reality. Particular focus was given to five dimensions of curriculum reform. Curricula from different parts of the world were selected for the review in order to increase the chances of finding differences and possibilities in the education of young children. The findings indicated that a multicultural education reform has taken place in most countries and regions under study, whereas there is still a need to catch up with more recently emerged challenges of super-diversity.

Consistent with previous research (Banks, 2015; Tobin, 2005), we found that multicultural education is not a universal standard. Countries and regions differ in terms of the marginalized groups they focus on (e.g. specific attention for Maori, Aboriginals, Travelers, religious communities, SEN) and the kind of approach they deem appropriate for each child to develop its potential (e.g. progressive universalism, segregation or immersion programmes, appointment of a SEN coordinator, involvement of stakeholders in centrally coordinated guidelines). Yet, the moral to the story, to use the words of Rumbaut (2008), is that societies recognise that they ‘reap what they sow’ and that a great deal of how tomorrow’s social contract is worked out may hinge on today’s commitment to democratic values of equity and inclusion. On a positive note, we observed that, in most countries and regions, ECEC is seen as an instrument to support the next generations’ ability to live together and develop a sense of belonging in increasingly heterogeneous societies.

To end with, we wish to stress some general concerns and points for further deliberation. Firstly, our analysis uncovered a need for further reflection on the shortcomings of well-meant policies of multicultural education in times of super-diversity. In this regard, Makkonen (2002) suggests that by way of recognizing different cultures in the name of accommodation, there is a danger to also recognize internal hierarchical structures and values which may be harmful to particular members of that community. This so-called 'paradox of multicultural vulnerability' is merely at stake in policies of unconditional multiculturalism, when cultural communities are granted a certain autonomy over their members. While we found that cultural communities have established their own ECEC services in some places (e.g. New Zealand, Berlin), it would be interesting to explore whether specific precautions are taken to prevent that a new vulnerability is created by remedying another. However, the most vulnerable 'multiply-burdened' migrants and ethnic minorities are largely invisible elsewhere as well. For example, we found that curricula in general are particularly silent on the situation of refugees and asylum seekers, despite the fact that they can have very specific needs (Park et al., 2018).

Secondly, there is some reluctance regarding the sacrifices or compromises that should be made on developmental appropriateness for the sake of being multicultural. The curriculum in England and the Netherlands, for instance, largely disregard the fact that disagreement is inherent to serving diverse communities. More than a decade ago, Vandenbroeck (2009) wrote an article called 'Let us disagree' in which he argued that "we have only begun to discuss with parents and children how to deal with issues of diversity in education, instead of deciding for them" (p. 167). Unfortunately, our comparative study suggests that not everyone is on the same page yet. Given that curricula are revised once in a while, it could be interesting to also compare how the approach of diversity issues evolves throughout time within the same country or region.

Finally, it is important to consider that curriculum documents only tell a fraction of the story as other factors determine how official mandates are implemented in practice (Sylva et al., 2015). Especially in complex matters such as equal opportunities, it can be anticipated that professionals 'cherry pick' parts of the theory and ignore the rest. Aguiar et al. (2020), for instance, suggest that most early interventions to tackle inequalities tend to overlook the importance of supporting the maintenance and development of heritage cultures and languages. It will be of utmost importance therefore that the importance of respect for diversity is given a prominent place in the initial and continuing professional development of early years practitioners.

4.6 References

Aboud, F. E. (2005). The development of prejudice in childhood and adolescence. In J. F. Dovidio, P. Glick, & L. A. Rudman (Eds.), On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years After Allport (pp. 310-326). Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Aboud, F. E., Tredoux, C., Tropp, L. R., Brown, C. S., Niens, U., Noor, N. M., & the Una Global Evaluation Group. (2012). Interventions to reduce prejudice and enhance inclusion and respect for ethnic differences in early childhood: A systematic review. Developmental Review, 32, 307-336.

Adair, J. K., Colegrove, K. S., & McManus, M. E. (2017). How the word gap argument negatively impacts young children of latinx immigrants' conceptualizations of learning. Harvard Educational Review, 87(3), 309-334.

Aguiar, C., Silva, C. S., Guerra, R., Rodrigues, R. B., Ribeiro, L. A., Pastori, G., Leseman, P., & the OSITIS research team. (2020). Early interventions tackling inequalities experienced by immigrant, low-income, and Roma children in 8 European countries: A critical overview. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 28(1), 58-76.

Banks, J. A. (2015). Multicultural education. International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences 2nd Edition, 16, 18-20.

Bar-Tal, D. (1996). Development of Social Categories and Stereotypes in Early Childhood: The Case of 'the Arab' Concept Formation, Stereotype and Attitudes by Jewish Children in Israel. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 20(3/4), 341-370.

Becker, B., Klein, O., & Biedinger, N. (2013). The development of cognitive, language, and cultural skills from age 3 to 6: A comparison between children of Turkish origin and children of native-born German parents and the role of immigrant parents' acculturation to the receiving society. American Educational Research Journal, 50(3), 616-649.

Beelmann, A., & Heinemann, K. S. (2014). Preventing prejudice and improving intergroup attitudes: A meta-analysis of child and adolescent training programs. Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 35, 10-24.

Bennett, J. (2005). Curriculum issues in national policy-making. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 13(2), 5-23.

Bennett, M. J. (2017). Development model of intercultural sensitivity. In Y. Kim (Ed.) International encyclopedia of intercultural communication. Hoboken: Wiley.

BKK (Bureau Kwaliteit Kinderopvang). (2017). Pedagogisch Curriculum voor het Jonge Kind in de Kinderopvang. Utrecht: Bureau Kwaliteit Kinderopvang.

Bove, C., & Sharmahd, N. (2020). Beyond visibility. Welcoming children and families with migrant and refugee background in ECEC settings. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 28(1), 1-9.

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. Qualitative Research Journal, 9(2), 27-40.

Buysse, V., Peisner-Feinberg, E., Páez, M., Hammer, C. S., & Knowles, M. (2014). Effects of early education programs and practices on the development and learning of dual language learners: A review of the literature. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 29, 765-785.

Chan, A., & Ritchie, J. (2016). Parents, participation, partnership: Problematizing New Zealand early childhood education. Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 17(3), 289-303.

Connolly, P., Kelly, B., & Smith, A. (2009). Ethnic Habitus and Young Children: A Case Study of Northern Ireland. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 17(2), 217-232.

Council of Australian Governments. (2009). Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.

Currie, J. (2001). Early childhood education programs. Journal of Economic Perspectives, 15(2), 213-238.

Crul, M., & Schneider, J. (2010). Comparative Integration Context Theory: Participation and Belonging in New Diverse European Cities. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 33(7), 1249-1268.

Curriculum Development Council. (2006). Guide to the Pre-Primary Curriculum. Hong Kong: Curriculum Development Council.

Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. (1999). Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: Postmodern perspectives. London: Falmer Press.

Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. (2007). Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: Languages of evaluation. Second edition. New York: Routledge.

Department for Education. (2012). Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage: Setting the Standards for Learning, Development and Care for Children from Birth to Five.

Derman-Sparks, L. & The ABC Task Force. (1989). Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children. Washington DC: NAEYC.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Felfe, C., & Lavile, R. (2018). Does early child care affect children's development? *Journal of Public Economics, 159*, 33-53.

Geldof, D. (2016). Super-diversity in the heart of europe. How migration changes our society. Leuven: Acco.

Genishi, C., & Goodwin, A. L. (2008). Diversities across early childhood settings: Contesting identities and transforming curricula. In C. Genishi and A. L. Goodwin (Eds.), Diversities in Early Childhood Education: Rethinking and Doing (pp. 273-278). New York: Routledge.

Geoffroy, M-C., Côté, S. M., Giguère, C-E., Dionne, G., Zelazo, P. D., Tremblay, R. E., ... Séguin, J. R. (2010). Closing the gap in academic readiness and achievement: The role of early childcare. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 51*(12), 1359-1367.

Gialamas, A., Mittinty, M. N., Sawyer, M. G., Zubrick, S. R., & Lynch, J. (2015). Social inequalities in childcare quality and their effects on children's development at school entry: Findings from the longitudinal study of Australian children. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health, 69,* 841-848.

Gormley, W. T. (2008). The effects of Oklahoma's pre-k program on Hispanic children. Social Science Quarterly, 89(4), 916-936.

Grzymala-Kazlowska, A., & Phillimore, J. (2018). Introduction: Rethinking integration. New perspectives on adaptation and settlement in the era of super-diversity. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44(2), 179-196.

Hoshi-Watanabe, M., Musatti, T., Rayna, S., & Vandenbroeck, M. (2015). Origins and Rationale of Centres for Parents and Young Children Together. Child and Family Social Work, 20, 62-71.

Hsieh, H., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. Qualitative Health Research, 15(9), 1277-1288.

Kind en Gezin. (2014). A pedagogical framework for childcare for babies and toddlers. Brussels: Kind en Gezin.

Kurban, F., & Tobin, J. (2009). ‘They don’t like us’: Reflections of Turkish children in a German preschool.” Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 10(1), 24-34.

Leseman, P. P. M., & Slot, P. (2014). Breaking the cycle of poverty: Challenges for European early childhood education and care. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 22(3), 314-326.

Lunneblad, J. (2017). Integration of refugee children and their families in the Swedish preschool: Strategies, objectives, and standards. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 25(3), 359-369.

Mac Naughton, G. M. (2006). Respect for diversity: An international overview. The Hague: Bernand van Leer Foundation.

Magnuson, K., Lahaie, C., & Waldfogel, J. (2006). Preschool and school readiness of children of immigrants. Social Science Quarterly, 87(5), 1241-1262.

Magnuson, K. A., Meyers, M. K., Ruhm, C. J., & Waldfogel, J. (2004). Inequality in preschool education and school readiness. American Educational Research Journal, 41(1), 115-157.

Magnuson, K. A., & Shager, H. (2010). Early education: Progress and promise for children from low-income families. *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*, 1186-1198.

Magnuson, K. A., & Waldfogel, J. (2005). Early childhood care and education: Effects on ethnic and racial gaps in school readiness. The Future of Children, 15(1), 169-196.

Makkonen, L. L. M. T. (2002). Multiple, compound and intersectional discrimination: Bringing the experiences of the most marginalized to the fore. Turku: Institute for Human Rights, Åbo Akademi University.

Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs. (2007). Act on Day-Care, After-School and Club Facilities, etc. for Children and Young People (Day-Care Facilities Act). Act no. 501 of 6 June 2007.

Ministry of Education. (1996). Te Whariki. He whariki matauranga mo nga mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early Childhood Curriculum. Wellington: Learning Media.

Moss, P. (2005). Section I: Theoretical examinations of quality: Making the narrative of quality stutter. Early Education and Development, 16(4), 405-420.

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. (2013). The Relationship Between Early Childhood and Compulsory Education: A Properly Political Question. In P. Moss (Ed.), Early Childhood and Compulsory Education: Reconceptualising the Relationship (pp. 2–50). London: Routledge.

Moss, P. (2014). Transformative change and real utopias in early childhood education: A story of democracy, experimentation and potentiality. New York: Routledge.

NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). (2009a). Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Guidelines for Good Practice. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). (2009b). Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Key Messages From the Research Papers. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). (2009c). Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Principles and Themes. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). (2009d). Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. User Guide. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

Nguyen, A.-M. D., & Benet-Martínez, V. (2010). Multicultural identity: Wat it is and why it matters. In R. Crisp (Ed.), The psychology of social and cultural diversity (pp. 87-114). Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell.

Nguyen, A.-M. D., & Benet-Martínez, V. (2013). Biculturalism and adjustment: A meta-analysis. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 44(1), 122-159.

ONE (Office de la Naissance et de l’Enfance). (2002). Accueillir les Tout-Petits. Oser la Qualité. Un Référentiel Psycho-Pédagogique pour des Milieux d'Accueil de Qualité. Bruxelles: Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance.

Pang, V. O. (1988). About teachers and teaching: Ethnic prejudice: Still alive and hurtful. Harvard Educational Review, 58(3), 375-380.

Park, M., Katsiaficas, C., & McHugh, M. (2018). Responding to the ECEC needs of children of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe and North America. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

Pence, A., & Hix-Small, H. (2009). Global children in the shadow of the global child. International Critical Childhood Policy Studies 2(1), 75-91.

Pence, A., & Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (2008). Discourses on quality care: The Investing 'Quality' project and the Canadian experience. Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 9(3), 241-255.

Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 90(5), 751-783.

Prott, R., and C. Preissing. (2006). Bridging Diversity - An Early Childhood Curriculum. Berlin: verlag das netz.

Raabe, T., & Beelmann, A. (2011). Development of ethnic, racial, and national prejudice in childhood and adolescence: A multinational meta-analysis of age differences. Child Development, 82(6), 1715-1737.

Rosen, R. (2016). Early childhood subjectivities, inequities, and imaginative play. In N Worth, & C. Dwyer (Eds.), Identities and Subjectivities (pp. 141-162). Singapore: Springer.

Rumbaut, R. G. (2008). Reaping what you sew: Immigration, youth, and reactive ethnicity. Applied Developmental Science, 22(2), 1-6.

Sadownik, A. (2018). Belonging and participation at stake. Polish migrant children about (mis)recognition of their needs in Norwegian ECECs. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 26(6), 956-971.

Schwartz, S. J., Unger, J. B., Zamboanga, B. L., & Szapocznik, J. (2010). Rethinking the concept of acculturation: Implications for theory and research. American Psychologist, 65(4), 237-251.

Scruggs, L. A., & Allan, J. P. (2008). Social stratification and welfare regimes for the twenty-first century: Revisiting the three worlds of welfare capitalism. World Politics, 60(4), 642–664.

Skolverket. (2011). Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 98. Revised 2010. Stockholm: Skolverket.

Soto, L. D., & Swadener, B. B. (2002). Toward liberatory early childhood theory, research and praxis: Decolonizing a field. Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 3(1), 38-66.

Stonehouse, A. (1991). Opening the Doors: Child Care in a Multicultural Society. Watson: Australian Early Childhood Association.

Sylva, K., K. Ereky-Stevens, & Aricescu, A.-M. (2015). Overview of European ECEC Curricula and Curriculum Template. Utrecht: Utrecht University – CARE Project.

Sylva, C., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I, & Taggart, B. (2004). *The effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project: Final report. A longitudinal study funded by the DfES 1997-2004.*

Tobin, J. (2005). Quality in early childhood education: An anthropologist's perspective. Early Education & Development, 16(4), 421-434.

Tobin, J. (2020). Addressing the needs of children of immigrants and refugee families in contemporary ECEC settings: Findings and implications from the children crossing borders study. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 28(1), 10-20.

Tobin, J., Adair, J., & Arzubiaga, A. (2013). Children crossing borders: Immigrant parents and teacher perspectives on preschool for children of immigrants. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Tobin, J., & Kurban, F. (2010). Preschool practitioners' and immigrants parents' beliefs about academics and play in the early childhood educational curriculum in five countries. Orbis Scholae, 4(2), 75-87.

Valdivia, R. (1999). The implications of culture on developmental delay. ERIC Digest: ED438663.

Vandenbroeck, M. (1999). De blik van de yeti: Over het opvoeden van jonge kinderen tot zelfbewustzijn en verbondenheid. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij SWP.

Vandenbroeck, M. (2008). Beyond colour-blindness and tokenism. Early Childhood in Focus, 3, 28.

Vandenbroeck, M. (2009). Let us disagree. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 17(2), 165-170.

Vandenbroeck, M. (2018). Supporting (super)diversity in early childhood settings." In L. Miller, C. Cameron, C. Dalli, & N. Barbour (Eds.), The

SAGE Handbook of Early Childhood Policy (pp. 403-417). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Vandenbroeck, M., Coussée, F., & Bradt, L. (2010). The Social and Political Construction of Early Childhood Education. British Journal of Educational Studies, 58(2), 139–153.

Vandenbroeck, M., Roets, G., & Snoeck, A. (2009). Immigrant mothers crossing borders: Nomadic identities and multiple belongings in early childhood education. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 17(2), 203-216.

Vedder, P., Bouwer, E., & Pels, T. (1996). Multicultural child care. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Vertovec, S. (2007). Super-diversity and its implications. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 30(6), 1024-1054.

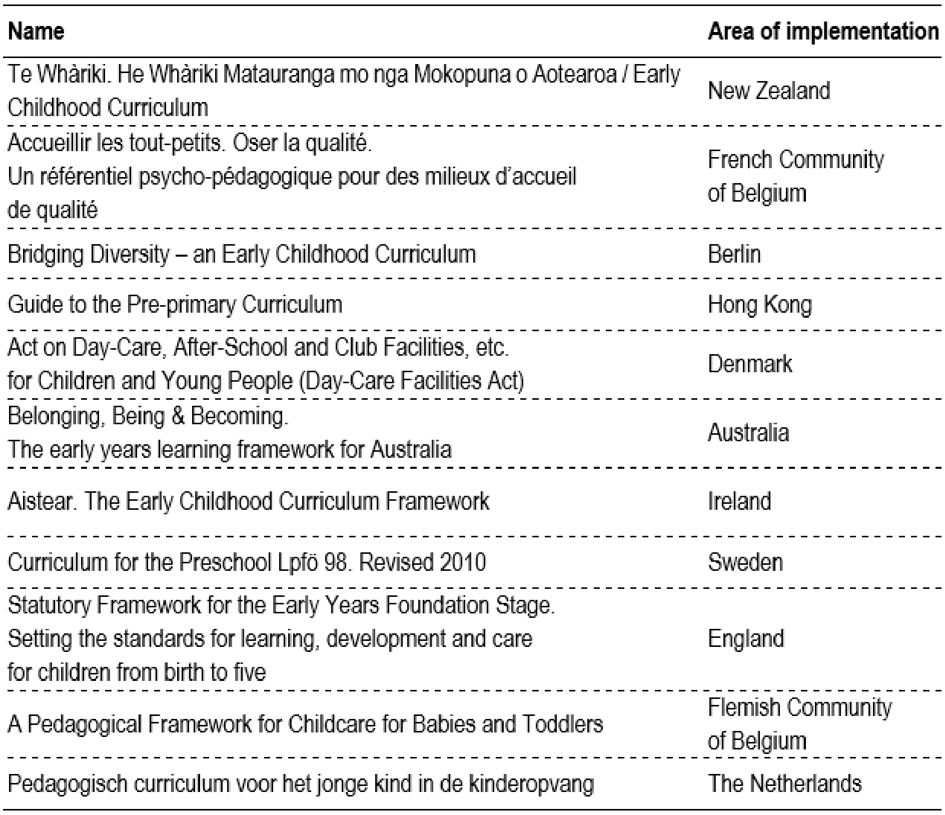
Vertovec, S. (2019). Talking around super-diversity. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 42(1), 125-139.

Viruell-Fuentes, E. A. (2006). ‘My heart is always there’: The transnational practices of first-generation Mexican immigrant and second-generation Mexican American women. Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power, 13(3), 335-362.

Vesely, C. K., & Ginsberg, M. R. (2011). Strategies and practices for working with immigrant families in early education program. Young Children, 66(1), 84-89.

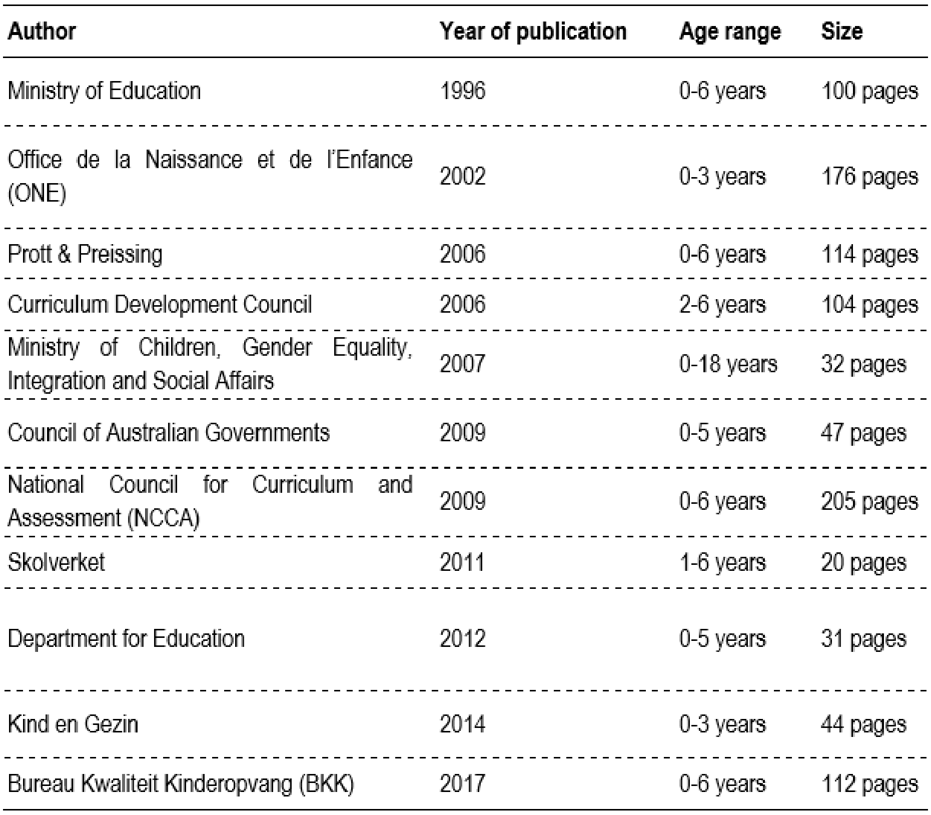
Wessendorf, S. (2018). Pathways of settlement among pioneer migrants in super-diverse London. Journal of Ethnic and Migrations Studies, 44(2), 270-286.

Table 15. Background information of 11 ECEC curricula selected for the



Name	Area of implementation
Te Whàriki. He Whàriki Matauranga mo nga Mokopuna o Aotearoa / Early Childhood Curriculum	New Zealand
Accueillir les tout-petits. Oser la qualité. Un référentiel psycho-pédagogique pour des milieux d'accueil de qualité	French Community of Belgium
Bridging Diversity – an Early Childhood Curriculum	Berlin
Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum	Hong Kong
Act on Day-Care, After-School and Club Facilities, etc. for Children and Young People (Day-Care Facilities Act)	Denmark
Belonging, Being & Becoming. The early years learning framework for Australia	Australia
Aistear. The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework	Ireland
Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 98. Revised 2010	Sweden
Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five	England
A Pedagogical Framework for Childcare for Babies and Toddlers	Flemish Community of Belgium
Pedagogisch curriculum voor het jonge kind in de kinderopvang	The Netherlands

review (in order of publication date)



Author	Year of publication	Age range	Size
Ministry of Education	1996	0-6 years	100 pages
Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance (ONE)	2002	0-3 years	176 pages
Prott & Preissing	2006	0-6 years	114 pages
Curriculum Development Council	2006	2-6 years	104 pages
Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs	2007	0-18 years	32 pages
Council of Australian Governments	2009	0-5 years	47 pages
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	2009	0-6 years	205 pages
Skolverket	2011	1-6 years	20 pages
Department for Education	2012	0-5 years	31 pages
Kind en Gezin	2014	0-3 years	44 pages
Bureau Kwaliteit Kinderopvang (BKK)	2017	0-6 years	112 pages

CHAPTER 5

(De)constructing parental involvement in early childhood curricular frameworks

Abstract

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) provision can have long-lasting positive effects on children’s learning and development. A key feature in fostering educational outcomes is the enhancement of parental involvement. This article builds on critical concerns with the emergent ‘schoolification’ of ECEC and corresponding orientations of parental involvement to explore how educational partnering is perceived across countries. A thematic analysis of 13 ECEC curricula from divergent pedagogical traditions revealed subtle yet meaningful differences in interpretation and operationalisation. Three distinct curricular approaches to parental involvement were identified, which demonstrate a lack of unanimity in top-down constructions of parental roles and responsibilities. The article concludes with a discussion on the implications of these findings for policy and practice.

Based on Janssen, J., & Vandenbroeck, M. (2018). (De)constructing parental involvement in early childhood curricular frameworks. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, *26*(6), 813-832.

5.1 Introduction

Early childhood education is increasingly framed as the start of lifelong learning (OECD, 2015), thereby increasing attention on the first years of life as a sensitive and critical period in children's brain development and architecture (Mustard, 2007; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007). Together with new insights on the environmental factors that influence which human capacities are realised and to what extent (see Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994), the neurological discourse of 'skills beget skills' increased the appeals on pedagogical and structural quality features in the provision of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. In this vein, the development of early childhood educational curricula became a hallmark of effective ECEC policy (OECD, 2001, 2006, 2012). The growing perception of the future merits of high quality early learning also entailed an increasing interest in parental involvement in early childhood education (Arnold et al., 2008; Castro et al., 2004; Eldridge, 2001; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Halgunseth & Peterson, 2009; Marcon, 1999; McWayne et al., 2004; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Sylva et al., 2004). While there is a longstanding tradition to advocate for parental involvement in compulsory education in the context of inequality in school outcomes (see Downey & Condron, 2016), ECEC services that do not collaborate with parents are now also believed to be missing this important element for increasing children's achievement.

However, the narrow focus on preschool as a preparation for compulsory schooling (or the 'schoolification' of early childhood education) has also been criticised (Moss, 2013). Whereas econometric narratives suggest policymakers should 'intervene early, often and effectively', as this generates 'the highest return-on-investment' (Heckman, 2006; Heckman & Mosso, 2014; Ludwig & Sawhill, 2007; Lynch, 2004, 2005), studies have documented that the required quality is often unavailable to those who need it most (Burchinal & Nelson, 2000; La Paro et al., 2014; Peyton et al., 2001; Slot et al., 2015; Vandenbroeck & Lazzari, 2014). Moreover, the tendency toward 'schoolification' may entail a more coercive approach of parents (Vandenbroeck et al., 2013). Despite the increasing attention on curricula and the need for parental involvement in early childhood education, studies that look at how parental involvement is conceptualised in early childhood curricula remain scarce and under-theorised. This article contributes to the existing literature on critical curricula studies by analysing how parental involvement is framed in different countries in an era where early childhood education is increasingly influenced by the narratives of human investment (Hunkin, 2018; Moss, 2013; Paananen et al., 2015).

Over the last two decades many countries have developed ‘pedagogical frameworks’ or ‘curricular frameworks’ as a set of guiding principles and values, programme standards, expected content, outputs and pedagogical guidelines (Bennett, 2005). Whereas education policy concerns over social justice and economic competitiveness seem to be universal, the corresponding ‘schoolification’ strategy in ECEC is not. In this vein, Bennett (2005) discerned two broad approaches to curriculum and pedagogy in early years’ services and labelled them as a ‘social pedagogy tradition’ and a ‘pre-primary school tradition’. The former considers ECEC as a broad preparation for life in which children’s ‘here and now’ is equally important as supporting their future educational performance. The pre-primary approach, in contrast, is predominantly concerned with the acquisition of (cognitive) knowledge and skills that are important in children’s further schooling. Other studies (see Pramling Samuelsson et al., 2006) confirm that there is no consensus in early childhood curricula on what exactly constitutes pedagogical quality. The curriculum review undertaken by Sylva et al. (2015), however, suggests that most European countries favour a ‘balanced approach’ in which they strive towards overcoming the strong dichotomy between an academic and holistic approach. According to these authors, countries adopt a more comprehensive focus on the ‘whole child’ for the youngest children and a gradually increasing academic emphasis on the ‘learning child’ for children nearing school entry.

One can investigate, therefore, how parental involvement is approached in countries that differ in their understanding of early childhood education and its quality. In this paper, the rationales of parental involvement in a diverse sample of ECEC curricula are explored. Despite the growing academic interest in cross-national comparisons of pedagogical frameworks (Bennett, 2005; Oberhuemer, 2005; Pramling Samuelsson et al., 2006; Soler & Miller 2003; Sylva et al., 2015; Wilks et al., 2008), the perspective on parental involvement has not yet been accurately addressed. This is especially the case for the youngest age group, which is the focus of this study.

5.2 Method

5.2.1 Data selection

Following Neuman (2011), we argue that a comparative orientation can improve conceptualisation through the detection of hidden biases, assumptions and values underpinning parental involvement. This study explores divergent conceptualisations of parent-professional relations in curricula for the youngest children. A first inclusion criterion therefore is that the youngest children (0–3 years) are included in the selected curricula (be it as a separate group or included in a broader age group such as zero to compulsory school age). A second pragmatic criterion is the availability of curricula in languages that are accessible to the researchers (English, French and Dutch). Beyond these pragmatic criteria, diversity rather than typicality or generalisability were sought. In other words, this study was not as interested in knowing how often A or B occurs, but rather in the fact that both A and B exist. Therefore, a limited number of curricula that would maximise the potential diversity were selected, along the following lines:

Paradigmatic diversity: Following Bennett's (2005) typology, one can distinguish – on the basis of, among others, different perceptions of the role of early childhood centres, curriculum development, focus of the programme, pedagogical strategies – a social pedagogical paradigm and a pre-primary paradigm in European early childhood education. Therefore, curricula from countries labelled by Bennett (2005) as typical for a social pedagogical approach were included (e.g. Sweden and Denmark), as well as the Berlin curriculum that is rooted within the German tradition of 'sozialpädagogik' and 'Bildung'. Additionally, curricula from countries that are typically associated with the pre-primary paradigm were included (e.g. England and Ireland). In his reflections on the relations between early childhood education and primary school, Moss (2013) asserts that there is a typical 'pre-school paradigm' approach in English speaking countries. Consequently, a broader array of culturally diverse English speaking countries were also included (e.g. Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia). Furthermore, several authors (Hoshi-Watanabe et al., 2015; Martin, 2010) have claimed that in French language countries the approach of family policies in general and early childhood education is strongly marked by a psychoanalytical approach and that this is significant for their conceptualisation of parent-professional relations. Consequently, the framework from the French speaking community of Belgium was also included.

Diversity in status: Curricula may have very different statuses. Some represent a proper compulsory curriculum, describing universal goals to be achieved (e.g. the Statutory Framework in England). Others are a vision that may serve as national guidelines and a source of inspiration, but do not have a legal status (e.g. in the Netherlands). Still others have the format of a law and are limited to a number of legal standards and principles rather than an elaborated text on how to proceed (e.g. in Denmark), or stress the underlying values of early childhood education rather than the practice (e.g. in Sweden and the Flemish Community of Belgium).

Diversity in welfare contexts: It has been argued that the meaning of early childhood education can hardly be analysed without acknowledging the political context in general and visions of the welfare state in particular (Moss, 2007; Vandenbroeck et al., 2010). Therefore, countries that vary in welfare state constructions were chosen, according to the typology of Esping-Andersen (1990) and subsequent scholars (Scruggs & Allan, 2008): Nordic countries (e.g. Sweden, Denmark), liberal welfare states (e.g. England, Ireland) and corporatist welfare states (e.g. Belgium, the Netherlands). Countries in which childcare is predominantly private market oriented and therefore are believed to face problems of poor quality (e.g. due to low qualification levels and salaries) or unequal access were also selected (e.g. Hong Kong and the Netherlands), as well as countries where childcare is publicly financed and considered a public good (e.g. Sweden, Denmark), and mixed models (e.g. Belgium).

Diversity in age range: A range of curricula were selected, including those that focus exclusively on the youngest children (e.g. Flemish and French Communities of Belgium), that cover preschool children as well (e.g. England, Sweden, Berlin, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong), and that extend to 13 years (the Netherlands) or even 18 years (e.g. Denmark).

Finally, the above considerations resulted in the following selection of curricula: England (Department for Education, 2012), Ireland (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d), Hong Kong (Curriculum Development Council, 2006), Australia (Council of Australian Governments, 2009), New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1996), the Netherlands (Boogaard et al., 2013; Singer & Kleerekoper, 2009; van Keulen & Singer, 2012), Denmark (Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs, 2007), Sweden (Skolverket, 2011), Berlin (Prott & Preissing, 2006) and both the Flemish and French Communities of Belgium (Kind en Gezin, 2014; Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance, 2002). Table 16 (at the end of this chapter) provides an overview of some of the characteristics of these curricula and how they relate to one another.

5.2.2 Data analysis

The review undertaken by Sylva et al. (2015) revealed that official curriculum documents only tell a fraction of the story as other factors determine how national mandates are implemented in practice (e.g. acts and decrees, non-legislated curriculum guidelines, financial resources for staffing and salary, pedagogical monitoring and support). The purpose of analysing the data, therefore, should be considered as being of theoretical rather than empirical significance. However, studying the normative elements within policy documents can provide opportunities to confront actual implementation. In this vein, a thematic analysis is appropriate to analyse the data as it enables identification of overarching themes pertinent to the phenomenon of parental involvement (Howitt, 2010).

The data analysis involved two phases. First, the selected curricula were read and reread entirely to select sections of text that referred to parents and their involvement. General statements, implicit and explicit arguments were included. For example, fragments of curricula that simply stressed that parents are children’s first educators or raised awareness of cultural differences regarding physical care practices (without specifying actions in this respect) were considered to be relevant. Likewise, sections of texts were selected when they mentioned the involvement of (extended) family, community, stakeholders, adults or carers. Second, the selected excerpts of the curricula were read and re-read to identify patterns within the data. Using NVivo 11 Pro, these patterns were then clustered into final themes – thereby going back-and-forward between both analytical stages to check and refine the themes – resulting in a rigorous explorative analysis of parental involvement. These themes were then used as the framework for reporting on the diverse rationales that are present within the selected curricula. Central in this thematic analysis is that rationales on why parents are to be involved, may vary substantially from one curriculum to another. The following broad rationales were obtained: creating child-centred learning environments; monitoring developmental progress; negotiating pedagogical practice; ensuring smooth transitions; and, providing parenting support. Each of these rationales is discussed before analysing how they may imply quite different approaches to parental involvement. Excerpts of curricula – or an English translation of them (undertaken by the authors of this article) – are used to illustrate the thematic analysis.

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Creating child-centred learning environments

Curricula focus on offering a rich learning environment for all children, often specifying the areas of experience or learning outcomes that ECEC services need to cover. Most curricula – albeit not all (e.g. England) – explicitly argue for this to be achieved in child-centred ways, thereby building on what the children bring to the learning environment. Such an emergent curriculum requires the inclusion of parents as their unique knowledge of the child enables practitioners to develop a more complete picture of children's experiences, interests and (dis)likes and to gain knowledge of children's learning styles and (in)abilities. Illustrations of such appeals to parental involvement appear in different stages of curriculum planning and therefore implicitly suggest that an emergent curriculum may only be viable through the ongoing commitment of parents. For instance, the Berlin curriculum considers parental involvement as a quality requirement for planning and designing projects with children, whereas the Hong Kong curriculum also stresses the importance of 'feedback' and parental involvement in curriculum review and monitoring.

> “ *Working in partnership with families, educators use the Learning Outcomes to guide their planning for children's learning. In order to engage children actively in learning, educators identify children's strengths and interests, choose appropriate teaching strategies and design the learning environment (Council of Australian Governments, 2009, p. 9).*
>
> “ *As parents have close contact with their children, they know clearly what children do at home. The information provided by parents is useful for teachers to have a better understanding of the children. In return, teachers may keep parents informed of how children behave in school through interviews and elaboration on children's portfolios. These are also channels for teachers to obtain parents' feedback (Curriculum Development Council, 2006, p. 41–42). – Hong Kong*

A feature of the emergent curriculum that is commonly referred to is its holistic approach to teaching and learning. This implies recognition that children's belonging to a family and community cannot be dissociated from their out-of-home learning experiences. Furthermore, curriculum implementation should actively promote continuity in familiar ways of being and learning by taking into account children's cultural backgrounds. Practitioner-parent collaborations therefore enable children to become confident and involved learners, able to develop a positive self-image and (cultural) identity.

> “ *Practitioners (…) can help children develop a sense of identity and belonging in the setting by actively engaging with and finding out about family values, traditions and beliefs, and building on these where appropriate (NCCA, 2009a, p. 8) – Ireland*

However, several pedagogical frameworks (e.g. England, Ireland, the Netherlands, Hong Kong) argue that participatory design of the learning environment is not entirely open-ended. When the curriculum fosters the orientation of children's learning towards specific outcomes, appeals to parental involvement are also made to determine where further stimulation is developmentally appropriate. In this regard, educational collaboration with parents is desirable on the basis of *compensation* rather than *continuation*.

> “ *It is important to connect to the interests of the child, but is does no harm to offer something entirely different to a child. Children who may be less interested in running, talking or toilet training may need some stimulation from the family day care provider and from the parents (Boogaard et al., 2013, p. 64). – the Netherlands (family day care)*
>
> “ *In their interactions with children, practitioners should respond to their own day-to-day observations about children's progress, and observations that parents and carers share (Department for Education, 2012, p. 10). – England*

Overall, curricula agree that parental involvement is an indispensable feature of curriculum implementation as it enables practitioners to make learning more meaningful, challenging and enjoyable for individual children. However, curricula use diverse ways of specifying what early learning should entail and therefore – especially in outcome-oriented curricula – limit the extent to which parents themselves can determine what information and knowledge is worthwhile sharing.

5.3.2 Monitoring developmental progress

All selected curricula consider that participation of parents in monitoring children’s developmental progress is mutually beneficial. On the one hand, it is believed that practitioners’ observations and assessments of children’s development become more accurate and comprehensive through the exploration of parental observations in the home environment. These so-called shared assessment practices enable practitioners to make better sense of their observations and to adopt appropriate scaffolding strategies. The English curriculum’s advocacy for summative assessment of children’s skills and abilities, in contrast, gives only limited scope for parental involvement.

> “ *Although the assessment is conducted mainly by teachers, children and parents also play important roles in the assessment process. Only with the participation of all three parties can the findings of assessment effectively reflect reality (Curriculum Development Council, 2006, p. 63). – Hong Kong*
>
> “ *When assessing communication, language and literacy skills, practitioners must assess children’s skills in English. If a child does not have a strong grasp of English language, practitioners must explore the child’s skills in the home language with parents and/or carers, to establish whether there is cause for concern about language delay (Department for Education, 2012, p. 6). – England*

Sharing observations and documentation, on the other hand, provides parents with insight to their child’s learning trajectory and supports the development of reasonable educational expectations. Some curricula (e.g. England, Ireland) further suggest that this sharing could enhance parents’ awareness of and reflection on their own educational role and ultimately activate supportive parenting practices at home. Parental involvement is in these cases reduced to ‘help parents understand’, ‘help parents to see’ or ‘discuss (…) to support learning at home’.

> “ *Some parents may need assistance with this, for example parents whose first language is neither English nor Irish, or parents who may not feel confident in meeting practitioners, or who, perhaps, may feel uncomfortable with the idea of assessment, given the young age of their children. (…) This can help parents to see the important part they can play*

> *in helping their children to learn and develop (NCCA, 2009a, p. 78). – Ireland*

> *When a child is aged between two and three, practitioners must review their progress, and provide parents and/or carers with a short written summary of their child's development in the prime areas. (…) Practitioners must discuss with parents and/or carers how the summary of development can be used to support learning at home (Department for Education, 2012, p. 10–11). – England*

In contrast to these somewhat compelling appeals for parents to (re)act in accordance with the assessed developmental progress of their child (unilaterally defined by the professionals), the Danish curriculum foregrounds an alternative approach to enhance supportive parenting behaviours. Here, the interface with parenting practices is embedded in a strong commitment to involve parents in the work of the services. The curriculum thereby implicitly suggests that a reciprocal partnership is a prerequisite to increase parents' intrinsic motivation and receptiveness for support.

> *The local council is responsible for ensuring that the child's parents are involved in the language assessments and the work of the day-care facility to support children's language development and that the parents receive counselling in supporting their children's language development (Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs, 2007, p. 5). – Denmark*

In short, the monitoring of children's developmental progress is a common feature of educational partnering across curricula. However, it operates according to different logics. On the one hand, claims on parental involvement in assessment practices can be interpreted as a responsibilisation strategy that raises parents' awareness of developmental shortcomings and thereby activates more adequate and responsive learning support at home. Curricula may promote, on the other hand, a less prescriptive and submissive way of involving parents in their child's learning and development and therefore emphasise the input rather than the outcome of shared assessments.

5.3.3 Negotiating pedagogical practice

Several pedagogical frameworks – albeit not all (e.g. England) – explicitly recommend practitioners and parents to jointly reflect and agree upon the general pedagogical guidelines and approaches for individual children. In so doing, ECEC services can consider cultural diversities and reduce discrepancies in expectations.

> “ *Parents and providers may differ in what they consider safe for a child. While a parent may allow a child to cross the street by himself, the provider may forbid this when he cannot take this responsibility. In such cases attunement with the parents is necessary (Boogaard et al., 2013, p. 42). – the Netherlands (family day care)*
>
> “ *The programme should encompass different cultural perspectives, recognising and affirming the primary importance of the child’s family and culture. Staff need to be aware of different attitudes within the community to values and behaviours, such as cooperation, physical contact, sharing food, crying, or feeling sorry, and deal positively with any inconsistencies (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 65). – New Zeeland*

Whereas curricula specify numerous pedagogical topics that can be discussed within practitioner-parent collaborations, the strategies they employ to address inconsistencies differ considerably. Most curricula do not mention how to deal with conflicting beliefs or expectations. They simply stress that practitioners need to demonstrate transparency and flexibility about one’s own practices and beliefs and a commitment to deal constructively with parental opinions and suggestions. The Berlin notion of a ‘democratic culture’ is probably the most eloquent example of this democratic engagement with parents since it embeds ad-hoc consultations on pedagogical issues within a more comprehensive and proactive policy to create a welcoming environment. One can argue therefore that the establishment of a democratic culture intends on making pedagogical conflicts and disagreements less likely by creating the best possible preconditions for finding common ground.

> “ *The kindergarten develops a democratic culture in which the participation of parents is expressly desirable.; The Erzieher open up the dialogue with parents about their ideas on upbringing.; (…) In so doing they also consider the parents’ cultural backgrounds.; (…) They also*

> *ensure that the parents experience that their opinions are important and that their suggestions are used (Prott & Preissing, 2006, p. 103). – Berlin*

The democratic engagement of parents also unfolds in more institutionalised and formalised participation channels (e.g. through inclusive evaluations of service quality, participation in service administration or parent board). In this vein, the Danish parent board is probably the most radical pathway towards democratic parental involvement as parents are authorised to join in pedagogical decision-making that goes beyond their private concerns.

> *“ The parent board of a day-care centre shall lay down the principles for the work of the daycare centre and for applying the budget framework of the day-care centre within the objectives and framework determined by the local council. (…) The parent board has a right of nomination and right to participate in the appointment of the manager. (…) The parent board has a right of nomination in connection with the hiring of employees (…) The manager of the day-care facility shall include the parent board in the preparation, evaluation and follow-up of the pedagogical curriculum (Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs, 2007, p. 6). – Denmark*

Curricula that provide specific guidelines for dealing with disagreement in educational partnering (e.g. the Netherlands, Hong Kong, French Community of Belgium) often do so in less democratic ways. A recurring feature in this regard is the need for solid justification for pedagogical practices so that these are ‘adhered’ to, even in the event that parents cannot be ‘convinced’. Since the attempts to create inter-subjectivity are largely confined by services’ pedagogical vision and particular conceptions of developmentally appropriate practice, one can critically question the extent of which the so-called involvement of parents is a truly democratic practice. The justification (rather than co-construction) of pedagogical practice may very well result in the exclusion of parental knowledge and beliefs and illustrates how parents are mainly involved as service consumers.

> *“ Getting dirty and taking risks is an integral part of outdoor play. Parents who have doubts about this are best convinced when they actually see their child playing outdoors, or through pictures and stories of the provider. Professionals show respect for cultural differences in*

> *engaging with nature. They look for mutual understanding in cases of diverse understandings of what is dirty or risky (Singer & Kleerekoper, 2009, p. 223). – The Netherlands (day care centres)*

> *If any deviation is detected, it is necessary for the institution to take it into account. For example, if parents or social expectations place undue emphasis on the transmission of subject knowledge and drilling of academic skills, the institution should adhere to a child-centred approach which matches the children's developmental needs (Curriculum Development Council, 2006, p. 65). – Hong Kong*

The democratic deficit in educational collaboration is even more apparent when it functions as a mechanism to match supply and demand on the ECEC market. In this vein, the Dutch curriculum for family day care suggests that ECEC services can avoid a 'mismatch' by expressing their pedagogical vision in a mission statement. The intended pedagogical differentiation on the market is believed to enable parents to explore different options regarding the education and care of their child and cont(r)act the service of their preference. This view of parents as rational decision-makers and service purchasers, nonetheless, abstracts practical constraints in parents' search for an ECEC service. Due to services' preventative 'better safe than sorry' enrolment policy, parents may have no other option than expressing their gratitude for something to which they do not fully subscribe. The curriculum expresses a 'take it or leave it' approach as follows:

> *A family day care provider takes into account parental wishes, but ultimately decides herself whether or not these can be fulfilled. She runs her day care service in a professional way and in line with her own vision on upbringing and the pedagogical vision statement of her family day care association. This may imply that her approach differs from those of parents. However, this is no problem for the children involved. It provides them with opportunities to learn that there may apply other rules in other contexts. Providers and parents discuss their pedagogical ideas and vision in advance and if these are incompatible with each other a match becomes impossible (Boogaard et al., 2013, p. 147). – The Netherlands (family day care)*

As outlined in the above, curricula formulate different views on democracy in pedagogical policymaking. While 'negotiating pedagogical practice' can imply that parental perspectives are given prominence in pedagogical decision-making, other curricula promote a more balanced agency between parents and practitioners by stressing the importance of a participatory process to (co-)construct pedagogical practices. However, a more restrictive notion of democratic participation can be discerned when curricula reduce democracy to freedom of choice.

5.3.4 Ensuring smooth transitions

Most curricula claim parental involvement to ensure children's smooth transitions from the home to the setting and, ultimately, to primary school. In the former case, parents are viewed as children's prime attachment figures and therefore a vital partner to alleviate the separation process. Several curricula – especially those from the Flemish and French Communities of Belgium, the Netherlands and Hong Kong – recommend that services invite parents and their child to take part in an adaptation period. During these first encounters – which may be prior to children's first day of attendance – practitioners need to inform parents on the working methods of the setting and learn from the parents' questions, expectations and care practices. However, despite the frequently used reciprocal rhetoric to describe initial partnering, the underlying aims may differ considerably. Whereas initial exchanges with parents can be used to customise education and care practices, they may as well intend to alter parenting behaviour in favour of children's adaptation to the setting's policy. The question often remains whether it is the child (and the parent) who adapt to the setting or vice versa, and to what extent this is a reciprocal process.

> “ *The family day care provider ensures a smooth transition by meeting the child and his parents one or more times before taking over the care for the child on her own (…) This way the child can familiarize with the family day care provider, the new environment and perhaps the other children. It simultaneously provides plenty of time to consult parents on their approaches of eating and sleeping, as well as those related to changing diapers, reading aloud, handling clothing, hygiene and outings (Boogaard et al., 2013, p. 162–163). – the Netherlands (family day care)*

> “ *Institutions should provide parents with information about the institutions' mission, learning environment, curriculum modes, detailed arrangements for the new school year, problems commonly encountered by new entrants, and the relevant solutions. Institutions should also listen to parents' views, know their concerns, and enhance communication*

> *between the two parties in order to get children prepared for the start of school (Curriculum Development Council, 2006, p. 69). – Hong Kong*

A crucial aspect to alleviate the separation process for children is the development of a trusting relationship with parents. Several curricula (e.g. the Netherlands, French Community of Belgium) therefore underscore that parents cannot feel dispossessed when handing over the education and care to someone else and should be welcomed, heard and appeased in their fears. Whereas these appeals to parental involvement are often expressed in a gender-neutral fashion (e.g. referring to ‘parents’, ‘both parents’, ‘mothers and fathers’), the curriculum from the French Community of Belgium argues that practitioner’s efforts should primarily focus on mothers.

> *“ It is better for the child when the person that takes care of the child has been, as Françoise Dolto said, ‘mamaïsée’ (mothered), this means if she has established a relation with the mother (something that connects them) in the presence of the child so that the child can state ‘if mother appreciates this woman, I can relate to her too, I can welcome her in my world, I can trust her…with her, life can continue.’ (ONE, 2002, p. 21) – French Community of Belgium*
>
> *“ It is important to direct sufficient attention to the parent’s feelings in order to develop a trusting relationship with them: they are reassured when their child gets attached to the family day care provider, but it concurrently can be hard for them to experience that they are no longer the only secure attachment for their child (Boogaard et al., 2013, p. 154). – The Netherlands (family day care)*

Some curricula (e.g. England, Hong Kong, Berlin) also advise practitioners to intensify collaborations with parents in the months prior to school entry. However, again the underlying intentions may differ. The English and Hong Kong curricula apply a terminology that suggests parents need to be prepared for their child’s transition (e.g. ‘inform’, ‘brief’, ‘introduce’, ‘prepare’, ‘familiarise’), and therefore merely stress parents’ responsibility in supporting their children’s future learning at home. The Berlin curriculum, in contrast, takes individual children’s and parents’ needs as the starting point to support the transition: rather than defining smooth transitions in terms of supporting parents in the acquisition of school-like cultural capital, the Berlin curriculum recommends that practitioners discuss with parents how they perceive the upcoming transition and support children’s and parents’ resilience to cope with these changes.

> *“ Teachers should brief parents on children’s developmental characteristics and learning needs, in order to help them better understand the initial problems encountered by children in school, and introduce the corresponding solutions to parents, so as to prevent their overanxiety. (…) Parents should be well prepared to help children deal with the psychological and emotional frustrations that may emerge in a new stage of learning. (Chapter 9) (Curriculum Development Council, 2006, p. 69–70) – Hong Kong*
>
> *“ The previous right of the parents to participate in all essential matters in the kindergarten, no longer applies in the school context. For this reason many parents experience their child’s transition to primary school as stress. (…) The effect of this in the kindergarten, especially during the last months before school begins, is that parents often want definite reassurance that their child will be able to meet the demands of primary school. One of the tasks of the Erzieher is to offer the parents the opportunity in good time to talk about the competencies the children need in order to be able to concentrate on the contents they will be learning. The hopes and fears of the parents should be the main focus, and they should be openly expressed. (…) From the point of view of the child it is decisive how much continuity and discontinuity there is in its environment parallel to starting school: is the family constellation constant, or is there a new baby? Are the parents separating? (…) A simultaneous confrontation with several serious breaks can endanger the child’s development. It is important that the involved adults communicate constructively with each other, particularly during the transition to primary school (Prott & Preissing, 2006, p. 106–107). – Berlin*

In summary, two distinct appeals on parental involvement in the context of facilitating the aforementioned transitions can be discerned. The first aims to inform parents of successful coping strategies and to align parenting practices with the conventions of succeeding education levels. In contrast to this one-size-fits-all approach, the second tries to deconstruct upcoming transitions in partnership with parents in order to identify what measures would be supportive.

5.3.5 Providing parenting support

Curricula stress that partnering with parents can also benefit the parents, especially those who experience heavy burdens (e.g. due to poverty, unemployment, loss of a loved one, social isolation, disability or illness). Whereas ECEC settings are supportive services as such (e.g. by temporarily unburdening parents from their caregiver's responsibilities), most curricula additionally expect them to function as so-called 'meeting places' wherein parents experience supportive encounters with other parents and professionals. Moreover, they provide opportunities for recently immigrated or socially isolated parents to integrate into the local neighbourhood.

> “ *Moreover, a childcare facility is a place where parents meet practitioners who know their child well and with whom they can share their concerns and questions. Here, parents see their children in a different light. Childcare is not just some type of material support for families, but can also offer information, and emotional and social support (Kind en Gezin, 2014, p. 13). – Flemish Community of Belgium*
>
> “ *Often, the best way to improve children's lives is to support their parents in their parenting role. One source of this support is the informal networks and friendships that are often created when parents meet. These can act as a valuable source of support and information for parents, particularly those who are isolated or new to the area. Parents can act as mentors for each other, or can simply offer friendship (NCCA, 2009a, p. 19). – Ireland*

Several curricula's (e.g. England, Ireland, Hong Kong, the Netherlands) advocacy for parenting support is not so much for the parents' sake but mainly to prevent children's developmental disadvantage. Hence, practitioners are expected to detect cues of 'child neglect' and provide parents with support in using the home as a learning environment. This view of support (as harm reduction) is constructed independently of what parents themselves may find supportive. The Irish curriculum is probably the most explicit in this regard as it seeks to contribute to supportive parenting by addressing parents as an audience.

> “ *You can support your child's learning and development at home in the following ways: Ask the practitioner for suggestions for what you can*

> *do at home with your child.; (…) Limit the amount of time your child spends watching television. Talk to him/her about what he/she watches.; Find out how children learn and develop. Ask your child's practitioner about useful books or websites for information.; Look at Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework for ideas about what you can do to support your child's learning and development (NCCA, 2009a, p. 9). – Ireland*

Other curricula also address parents from a deficit perspective and seek a proto-professionalisation (or pedagogicalisation) of parents:

> *" Many parents have not been taught in their own upbringing that they have an important role to play in children's language development. Childcare centres can make parents aware of their role and familiarize them with the idea of giving special attention to language by using existing (VVE) programs and methods (Singer & Kleerekoper, 2009, p. 211). – The Netherlands (day care centres)*

Despite curricular advocacy to support parenting, the analysis shows that underlying justifications differ due to contrasting discourses on what constitutes a good parent. Often, a good parent is interpreted as one that champions the knowledge and skills that are required to provide children with a prosperous future in school and life. In this vein, parenting support is mainly about empowering the (unknowing) individual in an educational sense. In several other instances, curricula argue for a broader scope of intervention as good parenting is determined by the complex interplay of several (other) factors. Deficiency, therefore, is not interpreted as an intrinsic characteristic of individuals, but rather as the result of inadequate resources. Hence, interventions to support parenting may focus on the availability of certain preconditions to be a good parent.

5.4 Discussion

There is a growing interest in the development of curricula and in the enhancement of parental involvement in early childhood education. Yet, critical analyses of how parent involvement is conceived are virtually non-existent. As a result, it may seem as if there is consensus on the need for parent involvement, on its rationales and on how it takes place. This analysis, however, shows that there are quite divergent conceptions of these matters across countries. Based on a thematic analysis of curricula from 13 jurisdictions, five different rationales were framed: the construction of child-centred learning environments, monitoring of children's developmental progress, negotiation of pedagogical practice, facilitation of smooth transitions, and provision of parenting support. A more in-depth exploration revealed subtle yet significant differences in interpretation and operationalisation. On the basis thereof, a school-like, rights-based and ambivalent perspective on parental involvement in early childhood education can be distinguished.

The first two perspectives become apparent when comparing pre-primary approaches with social pedagogical approaches, as defined by Bennett (2005). The first perspective looks at ECEC as a preparation for compulsory schooling. The data analysis suggested that this orientation of quality in terms of school readiness is most apparent in the English, Irish and Hong Kong curricula. Curricula with this perspective often reproduce a discourse on deficient parenting that is constructed in concerns over human capital formation and inequalities in educational outcomes (see Downey and Condron, 2016): parents are an important (latent) educational resource that needs to be activated to support children's achievement of early learning outcomes and readiness for school. Enhancing educational collaboration, therefore, is predominantly defined in unilateral terms of informing, advising and educating parents (e.g. on their child's progress towards educational outcomes, or regarding frequently encountered difficulties during children's transition to primary school) and stressing the quality of the home learning environment. Notwithstanding the importance parents may attribute to their children's future success in school and life, the curriculum defines the modalities of early childhood education relatively independently from parents. The strong emphasis on human capital formation entails an instrumental rationality since parents need to be readied for involvement in their children's learning and development. It often encompasses the 'othering' of parental knowledge (e.g. summative assessments of children's school readiness) and interference with parenting behaviours (e.g. the pedagogicalisation or proto-professionalisation of parenting, altering expectations of parents, and guiding learning support at home).

The social pedagogical approach – mainly exemplified by the Nordic curricula (Sweden, Denmark) and those from Berlin and the Flemish Community of Belgium – emphasises parental involvement as a democratic right. Since these curricula offer only broad guidance and devolve the responsibility of constructing a more detailed curriculum to the local stakeholders, practitioners and parents are considered competent partners in curriculum and pedagogical decision-making. Moreover, the curriculum uses a democratic language of evaluation

(Dahlberg et al., 1999; Farquhar, 1999; Musatti, 2011) in which parental involvement is about discussing the norms and values that guide practice rather than adopting expected behaviours. This rights-based perspective is related to an inclusive, non-discriminatory and reflective notion of quality wherein parental perspectives on early childhood education are incorporated and supported to enhance children's learning and development (e.g. by giving parental perspectives prominence in evaluation practices, collaboratively identifying pertinent needs in relation to children's transition, and emphasising input instead of output in shared assessment practices).

Based on the above, one may suggest that these perspectives on parental involvement are another distinctive feature of Bennett's (2005) typology. However, the observation of Sylva et al. (2015) that many countries try to overcome the dichotomy between both pedagogical approaches also applies to the findings of this study on parental involvement. A third perspective, therefore, promotes a more ambivalent understanding of parental involvement as being both a (instrumental) means of fostering children's learning and development, as well as a key (democratic) objective. Yet, the democratic consultation of parents is merely about how to realise the early learning goals (pedagogy) than on what early learning should be about (education). In this third approach, professionals are given a fair amount of discretion to determine how collaboration with parents is approached. Whereas the curriculum highlights a variety of incentives to involve parents (e.g. educational, psychological, cultural, emotional and relational), it ultimately suggests the professional's interpretation and dedication is decisive.

5.5 Implications for policy and practice

The lack of consensus in policy documents concerning parental roles and responsibilities in ECEC raises fundamental questions on how to proceed with educational partnering. As this cross-national analysis revealed that perspectives on parental involvement are often intertwined with curricular and pedagogical traditions, the actual diversity in (alternative) approaches remains largely invisible for practitioners. Although it is hard to estimate the impact of curricular guidelines on actual practices (see Cottle & Alexander, 2014; Sylva et al., 2015), these findings can help practitioners to broaden their frame of reference and recognise that parental involvement is in fact a multifaceted and value-laden concept rather than an objective or self-evident truth. As a result, one may recognise that there are choices to be made and, considering the UN convention on the rights of the child, that these choices need to be made from a democratic perspective. Therefore, awareness of multiple interpretations of parental involvement in ECEC policy can also function as a lever towards a growing understanding of the varying views, dispositions and expectations that parents themselves may have about their own involvement (see Lareau, 1987, on cultural capital; McWayne et al., 2008, on gender; Whitmarsh, 2011, on asylum-seeking mothers).

Moreover, in contemporary times of rapid demographic transformation and superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007), the democratic consultation of parents is an indispensable feature of ECEC's social dimension. Early childhood education services need to embrace a kind of reflexivity and uncertainty as the group of participating parents becomes increasingly heterogeneous and confronts practitioners with a broad array of foreign pedagogical traditions (Tobin & Kurban, 2010). Since lack of a 'culture-sensitive' curriculum can prevent disadvantaged parents from enrolling and entrusting their ('at-risk') child to an ECEC service (Leseman & Slot, 2014), the reproduction of social inequality cannot be tackled by rigidly orchestrating parental involvement in non-participatory ways. However, this analysis revealed that this approach is present when there is a more 'schoolified' vision of ECEC. In this vein, Dahlstedt (2009a) and Rose (1996) argue that central government's new role in governing 'advanced liberal' democracies aims at citizen's self-regulation through the mobilisation, coordination and control of partnering. Whereas the pre-primary curriculum stresses parents' responsibility for their children's future success in school and life, participation involves conjuring up among parents a desire to accept the value base and make the dominant conventions their own. The inclusion of parents therefore simultaneously implies their subordination – something Dahlstedt (2009a, 2009b) refers to as 'parental governmentality'. According to Rose (1996), individuals may freely choose to bind themselves to expert advice since 'the citizen is enjoined to bring the future into the present, and is educated in the ways of calculating the future consequences of actions' (Rose, 1996, p. 58). Consequently, the responsibility for injustices in the educational system risks shifting from a structural to an individual level and may remove politics and education services from critical scrutiny (Dahlstedt, 2009a, 2009b; Hartas, 2015).

While it is known that parents' calculations and strategic thinking about their children's early learning can generate opposite expectations, the pre-primary curriculum may jeopardise its own mission. Rather than internalising a desire to comply with a white, middle-class ideal of good parenting, parents from children 'at-risk' of educational failure prefer professional educators to undertake compensatory efforts (see Tobin & Kurban, 2010, on immigrant parents' appeal for a greater emphasis on academics within the curriculum). This 'mismatch' exemplifies that even if there is a consensus on promoting children's school readiness among the main protagonists, the curriculum should enhance a democratic negotiation between practitioners and parents on appropriate ways to share this educational responsibility. In this vein, we strongly recommend that policymakers adopt a more explicit argumentation in favour of democratic parental involvement within the curriculum. An interesting pathway for future research, therefore, would be to investigate the effect of a more democratic engagement with parents – especially those of children that are traditionally labelled as 'at-risk of educational failure' – on children's educational outcomes.

Our argument here is not to deny the importance of high quality early childhood education, nor of parent involvement, but rather to problematise the existence of only one narrative about the parent-professional relation. It is important that what parental involvement may look like is also the subject of reciprocal negotiation with parents. This involves bringing politics back into the nursery (Moss, 2007) by realising reciprocity and contradiction in unequal relations (Vandenbroeck, 2009; Vandenbroeck et al., 2009). Instead of raising concerns over 'hard-to-reach' parents and 'non-participation' – or incentivising instrumental participation via curricular guidelines – the opposite reflection on what makes services and practitioners 'hard-to-reach' for certain parents may be more effective (Whitmarsh, 2011).

5.6 References

Arnold, D. H., Zeljo, A., Doctoroff, G. L., & Ortiz, C. (2008). Parent Involvement in Preschool: Predictors and the Relation of Involvement to Preliteracy Development. *School Psychology Review, 37*(1), 74–90.

Bennett, J. (2005). Curriculum Issues in National Policy-Making. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 13*(2), 5–23.

Boogaard, M., Hoex, J., van Daalen, M. & Gevers, M. (2013). *Pedagogisch kader gastouderopvang*. Amsterdam: Reed Business.

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Ceci, S. J. (1994). Nature-Nurture Reconceptualized in Developmental Perspective: A Bioecological Model. *Psychological Review, 101*(4), 568–586.

Burchinal, M., & Nelson, L. (2000). Family Selection and Child Care Experiences: Implications for Studies of Child Outcomes. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 15*(3), 385–411.

Castro, D. C., Bryant, D. M., Peisner-Feinberg, E. S., & Skinner, M. L. (2004). Parent Involvement in Head Start Programs: The Role of Parent, Teacher and Classroom Characteristics. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 19*(3), 413–430.

Cottle, M., & Alexander, E. (2014). Parent Partnership and 'Quality' Early Years Services: Practitioners Perspectives. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 22*(5), 637–659.

Council of Australian Governments. (2009). *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.*

Curriculum Development Council. (2006). *Guide to the Pre-Primary Curriculum*. Hong Kong: Curriculum Development Council.

Dahlberg, G., Moss, P. & Pence, A. (1999). *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Postmodern Perspectives.* London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Dahlstedt, M. (2009a). Parental Governmentality: Involving 'Immigrant Parents' in Swedish Schools. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 30*(2), 193–205.

Dahlstedt, M. (2009b). Governing by Partnerships: Dilemmas in Swedish Education Policy at the Turn of the Millennium. *Journal of Education Policy, 24*(6), 787–801.

Department for Education. (2012). *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage: Setting the Standards for Learning, Development and Care for Children from Birth to Five*.

Downey, D. B., & Condron, D. J. (2016). Fifty Years Since the Coleman Report: Rethinking the Relationship between Schools and Inequality. *Sociology of Education, 89*(3), 207–220.

Eldridge, D. (2001). Parent Involvement: It's Worth the Effort. *Young Children, 56*(4), 65–69.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Farquhar, S. (1999). *Research and the Production of "Worthwhile" Knowledge about Quality in Early Years Education*. Paper presented at the AARE - NZARE Annual Conference, Melbourne, November 29–December 2.

Galindo, C., & Sheldon, S. B. (2012). School and Home Connections and Children's Kindergarten Achievement Gains: The Mediating Role of Family Involvement. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 27*(1), 90–103.

Halgunseth, L. C., Peterson, A., Stark, D. R., & Moodie, S. (2009). *Family Engagement, Diverse Families, and Early Childhood Education Programs: An Integrated Review of the Literature*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children & Pre-K Now.

Hartas, D. (2015). Parenting for Social Mobility? Home Learning, Parental Warmth, Class and Educational Outcomes. *Journal of Education Policy, 30*(1), 21–38.

Heckman, J. J. (2006). Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children. *SCIENCE, 312*, 1900–1902.

Heckman, J. J., & Mosso, S. (2014). The Economics of Human Development and Social Mobility. *Annual Review of Economics, 6*, 689–733.

Hoshi-Watanabe, M., Musatti, T., Rayna, S., & Vandenbroeck, M. (2015). Origins and Rationale of Centres for Parents and Young Children Together. *Child and Family Social Work, 20*(1), 62–71.

Howitt, D. (2010). Thematic Analysis. In D. Howitt (Ed.), *Introduction to Qualitative Methods in Psychology* (pp. 163-186). Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Hunkin, E. (2018). Whose Quality? The (Mis)Uses of Quality Reform in Early Childhood and Education Policy. *Journal of Education Policy, 33*(4), 443–456.

Kind en Gezin. (2014). *A Pedagogical Framework for Childcare for Babies and Toddlers*. Brussels: Kind en Gezin.

La Paro, K. M., Williamson, A. C., & Hatfield, B. (2014). Assessing Quality in Toddler Classrooms Using the CLASS-Toddler and the ITERS-R. *Early Education and Development, 25*(6), 875–893.

Lareau, A. (1987). Social Class Differences in Family-School Relationships: The Importance of Cultural Capital. S*ociology of Education, 60*(2), 73–85.

Leseman, P., & Slot, P. (2014). Breaking the Cycle of Poverty: Challenges for European Early Childhood Education and Care. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 22*(3), 314–326.

Ludwig, J., & Sawhill, I. (2007). *Success by Ten: Intervening Early, Often, and Effectively in the Education of Young Children.* The Brookings Institute.

Lynch, R. G. (2004). *Exceptional Returns: Economic, Fiscal, and Social benefits of Investment in Early Childhood Development*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

Lynch, R. G. (2005). *Early Childhood Investment Yields Big Payoff*. California: WestEd.

Marcon, R. (1999). Positive Relationships Between Parent School Involvement and Public School Inner-City Preschoolers' Development and Academic Performance. *School Psychology Review, 28*(3), 395–412.

Martin, C. (2010). The Reframing of Family Policies in France: Processes and Actors. *Journal of European Social Policy, 20*(5), 410–421.

McWayne, C., Campos, R., & Owsianik, M. (2008). A Multidimensional, Multilevel Examination of Mother and Father Involvement among Culturally Diverse Head Start Families. *Journal of School Psychology, 46*(5), 551–573.

McWayne, C., Hampton, V., Fantuzzo, J., Cohen, H. L., & Sekino, Y. (2004). A Multivariate Examination of Parent Involvement and the Social and Academic Competencies of Urban Kindergarten Children. *Psychology in the Schools, 41*(3), 363–377.

Miedel, W. T., & Reynolds, A. J. (1999). Parent Involvement in Early Intervention for Disadvantaged Children: Does it Matter? *Journal of School Psychology, 37*(4), 379–402.

Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs. (2007). *Act on Day-Care, After-School and Club Facilities, etc. for Children and Young People (Day-Care Facilities Act). Act no. 501 of 6 June 2007*.

Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whariki. He Whariki Matauranga mo nga Mokopuna o Aotearoa/Early Childhood Curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.

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. (2013). The Relationship Between Early Childhood and Compulsory Education: A Properly Political Question. In P. Moss (Ed.), *Early Childhood and Compulsory Education: Reconceptualising the Relationship* (pp. 2–50). London: Routledge.

Musatti, T. (2011). *Young Children and Their Services: Developing a European Approach. Principle 7 – Evaluation: Participatory, Democratic and Transparent*. Edinburgh: Children in Europe.

Mustard, F. (2007). Experience-based Brain Development: Scientific Underpinnings of the Importance of Early Child Development in a Global World. In M. E. Young & L. M. Richardson (Eds.), *Early Child Development From Measurement to Action: A Priority for Growth and Equity* (pp. 43–84). Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2007). *The Science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do*. Cambridge: Harvard University.

NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). (2009a). *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Guidelines for Good Practice*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). (2009b). *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Key Messages from the Research Papers*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). (2009c). *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Principles and Themes*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). (2009d). *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. User Guide*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

Neuman, W. L. (2011). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Boston: Pearson.

Oberhuemer, P. (2005). International Perspectives on Early Childhood Curricula. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 37*(1), 27–37.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2001). *Starting Strong I: Early Childhood Education and Care. Education and Skills*. Paris: OECD.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2006). *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2012). *Starting Strong III: A Quality Toolbox for Early Childhood Education and Care.* Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2015). *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

ONE (Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance). (2002). *Accueillir les tout-petits. Oser la qualité. Un référentiel psycho-pédagogique pour des milieux d'accueil de qualité*. Bruxelles: Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance.

Paananen, M., Kumpulainen, K., & Lipponen, L. (2015). Quality Drift Within a Narrative of Investment in Early Childhood Education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 23*(5), 690–705.

Peyton, V., Jacobs, A., O'Brien, M., & Roy, C. (2001). Reasons for Choosing Child Care: Associations with Family Factors, Quality, and Satisfaction. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *16*(2), 191–208.

Pramling Samuelsson, I., Sheridan, S., & Williams, P. (2006). Five Preschool Curricula – Comparative Perspective. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 38*(1), 11–30.

Prott, R., & Preissing, C. (2006). *Bridging Diversity - An Early Childhood Curriculum*. Berlin: verlag das netz.

Rose, N. (1996). Governing 'Advanced' Liberal Democracies. In A. Barry, T. Osborne & N. Rose (Eds.), *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism, and Rationalities of Government* (pp. 37–64). London: Routledge.

Scruggs, L. A., & Allan, J. P. (2008). Social Stratification and Welfare Regimes for the Twenty-First Century: Revisiting the Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism. *World Politics, 60*(4), 642–664.

Singer, E., & Kleerekoper, L.. (2009). *Pedagogisch Kader Kindercentra 0-4 jaar*. Maarssen: Elsevier gezondheidszorg.

Skolverket. (2011). *Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 98. Revised 2010*. Stockholm: Skolverket.

Slot, P., Lerkkanen, M.-K. , & Leseman, P. (2015). *The Relations Between Structural Quality and Process Quality in European Early Childhood Education and Care Provisions: Secondary Analyses of Large Scale Studies in Five Countries*. Utrecht: Utrecht University – CARE Project.

Soler, J., & Miller, L. (2003). The Struggle for Early Childhood Curricula: A Comparison of the English Foundation Stage Curriculum, Te Whariki and Reggio Emilia. *International Journal of Early Years Education, 11*(1), 57–68.

Sylva, K., Ereky-Stevens, K., & Aricescu, A.-M. (2015). *Overview of European ECEC Curricula and Curriculum Template*. Utrecht: Utrecht University – CARE Project.

Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Taggart, B. (2004). *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Final Report.* London: The Institute of Education.

Tobin, J., & Kurban, F. (2010). Preschool Practitioners' and Immigrant Parents' Beliefs About Academics and Play in the Early Childhood Educational Curriculum in Five Countries. *Orbis Scholae, 4*(2), 75–87.

van Keulen, A., & Singer, E. (2012). *Samen verschillend: Pedagogisch kader diversiteit in kindercentra 0-13 jaar*. Amsterdam: Reed Business.

Vandenbroeck, M. (2009). Let us Disagree. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 17* (2), 165–170.

Vandenbroeck, M., Coussée, F., & Bradt, L. (2010). The Social and Political Construction of Early Childhood Education. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 58*(2), 139–153.

Vandenbroeck, M., De Stercke, N., & Gobeyn, H. (2013). What if the Rich Child has Poor Parents? The Relationship from a Flemish Perspective. In P. Moss (Ed.), *Early Childhood and Compulsory Education: Reconceptualising the Relationship*, (pp. 174–192). London: Routledge.

Vandenbroeck, M., & Lazzari, A. (2014). Accessibility of Early Childhood Education and Care: A State of Affairs. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 22*(3), 327–335.

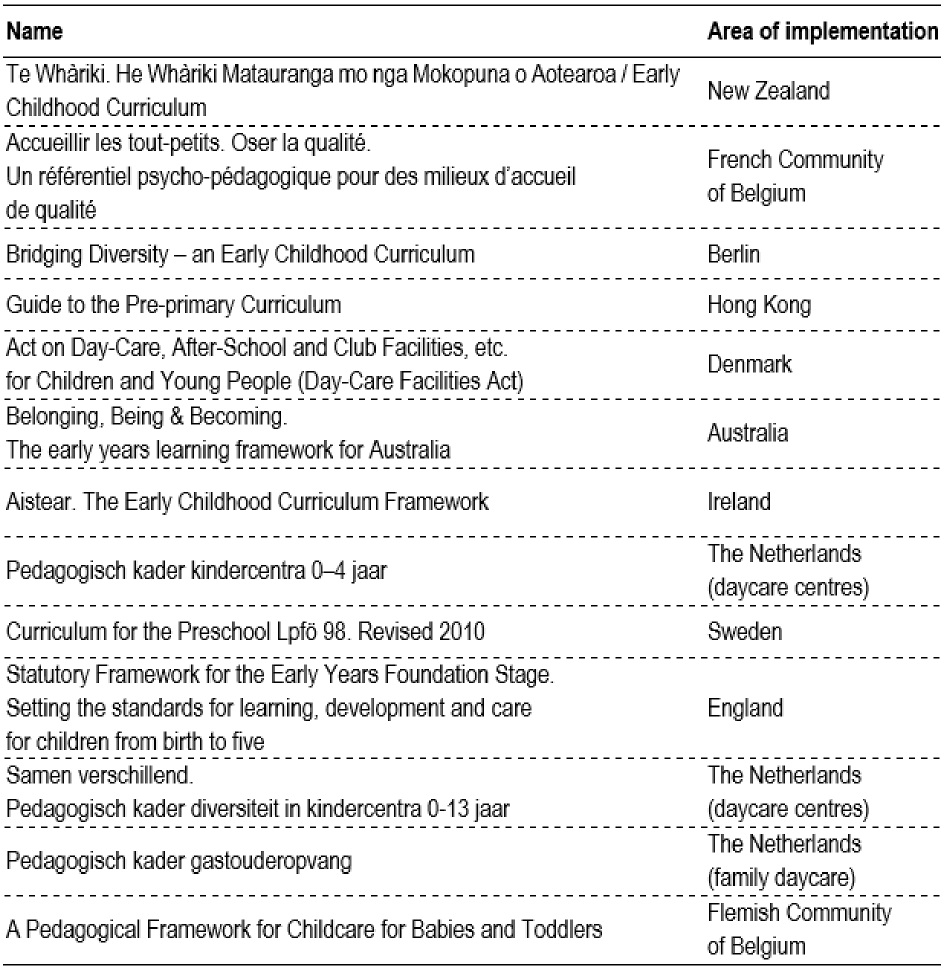
Vandenbroeck, M., Roets, G., & Snoeck, A. (2009). Immigrant Mothers Crossing Borders: Nomadic Identities and Multiple Belongings in Early Childhood Education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 17*(2), 203–216.

Vertovec, S. (2007). Super-Diversity and its Implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 30*(6), 1024–1054.

Whitmarsh, J. (2011). Othered Voices: Asylum-Seeking Mothers and Early Years Education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 19*(4), 535–551.

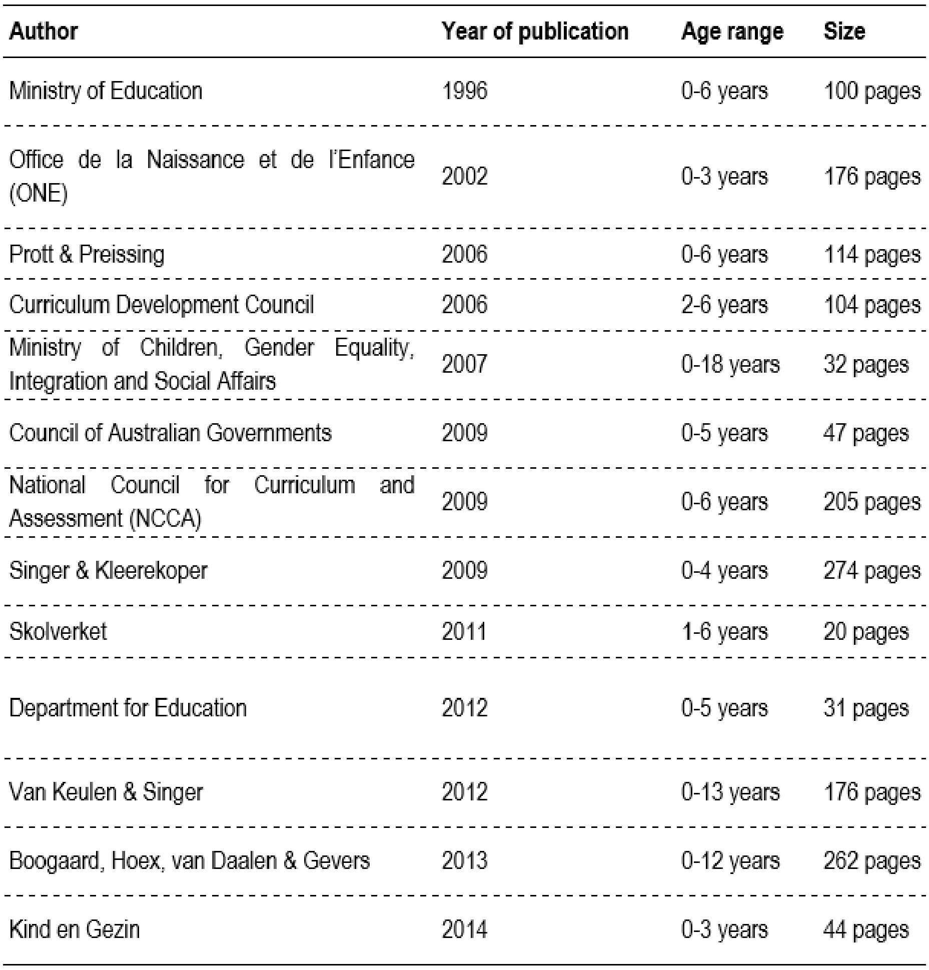
Wilks, A., Nyland, B., Chancellor, B., & Elliot, S. (2008). *Analysis of Curriculum/Learning Frameworks for the Early Years (Birth to Age 8).* Victoria: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

Table 16. Background information of 13 ECEC curricula selected for the



Name	Area of implementation
Te Whàriki. He Whàriki Matauranga mo nga Mokopuna o Aotearoa / Early Childhood Curriculum	New Zealand
Accueillir les tout-petits. Oser la qualité. Un référentiel psycho-pédagogique pour des milieux d'accueil de qualité	French Community of Belgium
Bridging Diversity – an Early Childhood Curriculum	Berlin
Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum	Hong Kong
Act on Day-Care, After-School and Club Facilities, etc. for Children and Young People (Day-Care Facilities Act)	Denmark
Belonging, Being & Becoming. The early years learning framework for Australia	Australia
Aistear. The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework	Ireland
Pedagogisch kader kindercentra 0–4 jaar	The Netherlands (daycare centres)
Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 98. Revised 2010	Sweden
Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five	England
Samen verschillend. Pedagogisch kader diversiteit in kindercentra 0-13 jaar	The Netherlands (daycare centres)
Pedagogisch kader gastouderopvang	The Netherlands (family daycare)
A Pedagogical Framework for Childcare for Babies and Toddlers	Flemish Community of Belgium

review (in order of publication date)



Author	Year of publication	Age range	Size
Ministry of Education	1996	0-6 years	100 pages
Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance (ONE)	2002	0-3 years	176 pages
Prott & Preissing	2006	0-6 years	114 pages
Curriculum Development Council	2006	2-6 years	104 pages
Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs	2007	0-18 years	32 pages
Council of Australian Governments	2009	0-5 years	47 pages
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	2009	0-6 years	205 pages
Singer & Kleerekoper	2009	0-4 years	274 pages
Skolverket	2011	1-6 years	20 pages
Department for Education	2012	0-5 years	31 pages
Van Keulen & Singer	2012	0-13 years	176 pages
Boogaard, Hoex, van Daalen & Gevers	2013	0-12 years	262 pages
Kind en Gezin	2014	0-3 years	44 pages

CHAPTER 6

General conclusion and discussion

6.1 Introduction

This dissertation focused on the pedagogical work of childcare services and its evaluation. As a starting point, the introductory chapter explained that the latest buzzword here is ‘quality’ and how it tends to reduce philosophical issues of value to purely technical and managerial questions of expert knowledge and measurement. Notwithstanding the importance of these questions to obtain the alleged child development and human capital benefits of childcare attendance (Akgündüz et al., 2015; Burger, 2010; Camilli et al., 2010; Dalli et al., 2011; Melhuish, 2004; Melhuish et al., 2015; Mitchell et al., 2008; Van Belle, 2016; Vandenbroeck et al., 2018), this dissertation was mainly concerned with the threatening ‘loss of perspective’ that stems from the growing thirst for evidence that demonstrates effective (high-quality) practice. The story of quality and high returns, as Moss (2014) argues, has become so beguiling in promise, so certain in delivery, so assertive in claims and so in tune with the dominant neoliberal regime of our time, that alternative views on the pedagogical work of childcare services are marginalized or only listened to by small audiences. Inspired by these dissident voices, such as that of Peter Moss (2007) who advocates for bringing politics into the nursery or Michel Vandenbroeck (forthcoming) who emphasises that facts matter but so do opinions, I realised that the pursuit of quality is in fact a normative choice that largely disregards the importance of social values such as democracy, equity and diversity.

Against this backdrop, my doctoral study aimed to broaden the quality debate and re-politicise the pedagogical work of childcare services and its evaluation. More precisely, I wanted to gain more insight into how the relation between childcare and families can be strengthened accordingly. Particular focus was given to the assumptions and values underlying three dominant discourses (i.e. parental involvement, commodification and equal opportunities) and their implications for the relation between the private and public sphere. On the one hand, I critically assessed whether there is any empirical ground for these ideas and, on the other hand, I explored alternative approaches. As such, I was able to answer four research questions:

> Research question 1: How are parent satisfaction and childcare quality related and what predicts parent satisfaction if it is not quality?

> Research question 2: How do parents from different (linguistic) backgrounds choose for a childcare setting and how is it related with the quality obtained?
>
> Research question 3: How do early childhood curricula accommodate (super-)diversity?
>
> Research question 4: How is parental involvement conceptualised in early childhood curricula?

In what follows, the main findings of this dissertation will be discussed in relation to each research question. Next, a critical discussion is provided on the implications for policy and practice. To conclude, the limitations of the dissertation are identified and some potential avenues for future research are offered.

6.2 Main findings

6.2.1 (De)constructing parental involvement in early childhood curricular frameworks

Since parental involvement in educational debates is mainly conceptualized in terms of learning-related actions that aim to increase academic outcomes of children (Arnold et al., 2008; Belsky et al., 2007; Castro et al., 2004; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; McWayne et al., 2004; Melhuish et al., 2006; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999), this dissertation drew attention to the power asymmetry in determining the rules of the game. By means of a cross-national curriculum analysis (see chapter 5), we sought to explore whether alternative visions of collaboration between the home and childcare setting exist. Indeed, we found that parent voices are mainly eschewed in contexts where the curriculum serves an instrumental or vocational purpose, that is when childcare is perceived as a preparation for compulsory schooling (cf. ‘school readiness’). Less compromising on politics was found in other curricula, notwithstanding that identical rationales for parental involvement were stressed: creating child-centred learning environments, monitoring developmental progress, negotiating pedagogical practice, ensuring smooth transitions and providing parenting support. So, to answer *RQ4*, there seem to be common concepts in fostering parental involvement, though their conceptualisation or framing is context-bound.

As our findings indicate that perspectives on parental involvement are intertwined with curricular traditions, which themselves are embedded in particular social, cultural, political and historical contexts (Ang 2014; Bennett 2005; Sylva et al. 2015), the concept of parental involvement should be treated as an umbrella term. It reminds us of the fact that, contrary to the alleged neutrality of its appearance in educational debates, there are ideological choices at stake and that these choices need to be made more explicit and debatable. The consideration of parents as an instrument to remedy educational and social ills is a *consequence* of choosing to make implicit what Soler and Miller (2003) refer to as the 'struggle' between ideas about what early childhood education is for and what are appropriate content and contexts for learning and development. As Moss (2013) argues, the relationship between early childhood and compulsory education is a properly political question as it involves a choice between conflicting alternatives. If made implicit, the pedagogical work of childcare services becomes a technique for achieving pre-defined goals that are instrumental to the existing society. The relevance of parental involvement than is derived from technical questions about solutions to achieve these goals rather than from political discussions about what these goals should be.

We therefore concur with Loizou (2018), who referred to our article when emphasizing that childcare settings need to avoid seeking one single truth, a protocol of practices or an improvement plan in reference to parents and parenting. Indeed, it is difficult to appreciate and support diversity in parental involvement and parenting when privileging any particular set of beliefs and forms of knowledge. At worst, it could incentivize stigmatization or the labelling of parents as hard-to-reach. This was furthermore evidenced in chapter 4, where our cross-national curriculum analysis on the incorporation of super-diversity revealed that the curriculum in countries such as England, Hong Kong and The Netherlands largely ignore the fact that developmental appropriateness is not a universal standard. Others, by contrast, are more explicit about the ideological struggles inherent to serving diverse communities and recognize the importance of culture and continuity of care in children's development. The literature indeed suggests that migrant and ethnic minority parents have certain desires or expectations regarding the continuation of caregiving practices (De Gioia, 2009; Obeng, 2006; Vesely, 2013), though the true meaning of inclusive early childhood education in times of super-diversity goes far beyond these relatively 'simple' requests. If it would be theirs to decide, Tobin and Kurban (2010) suggest, the curriculum would probably be given an academic emphasis so as to offset concerns about their children's vulnerability of failing in school. Perhaps, our observation that foreign-speaking parents express strong(er) expectations regarding the cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes of childcare utilization (chapter 3) too hints at such pragmatic or strategic reasoning.

Having a democratic debate about what is desirable in childcare is thus far more complex than meets the eye. Migrant and ethnic minority parents who use childcare may feel that there is much to gain for their child and, by implication, want childcare to live up to that potential. So, what if they want the pedagogical work of childcare services to be a technique for achieving pre-defined goals that are instrumental to the existing society? What if ‘the other’ wants to be made into ‘the same’? Is a schoolified approach of childcare then the right thing to do? These questions correspond with what Shpancer (2002) and others describe as the ‘intercontextual continuity issue’: though continuity of care is generally assumed to be in children's best interests, it is a slippery concept as discontinuity might not be inherently bad for children. Taken from this perspective, I would argue that there is nothing wrong with a schoolified approach of childcare provided that it is the product of a democratic debate.

Yet, we must not forget that disadvantaged groups can experience as much difficulties to comply with requests for democratic participation as with home learning support. The establishment of a parent committee, compulsory in countries like Denmark and The Netherlands, may not do the trick. Goossens’ (2019) dissertation on social mixing initiatives in education, for instance, demonstrates that socioeconomically disadvantaged and ethnic minority parents can have strong reservations about becoming active in such committees as they, among other things, feel incompetent next to highly educated parents whose mother tongue is also the official school language. Their voices, by implication, are often disregarded in the debate and those of others – whom may have different interests – will prevail.

Given the challenge of creating reciprocity between parents, we may ponder the question whether it makes sense to give parents a collective voice in the debate? Even if everyone would take part in a joint reflection, intersubjectivity *without* agreement is probably the best possible outcome. As I will describe in the next section, the measurement of individual parents’ satisfaction likewise shows little potential for a democratic debate.

6.2.2 Is everybody happy? Exploring the predictability of parent satisfaction with childcare

As the governance of childcare provision in many welfare states, such as in Flanders, is increasingly permeated by market mechanisms (Ball & Vincent, 2005; Brennan et al., 2012; Gallagher, 2018; Penn, 2011, 2014; Penn & Lloyd, 2013; Prentice, 2007; White & Friendly, 2012), this dissertation drew attention to the underlying assumption of consumer sovereignty. More precisely, it was argued that giving consumers or clients (parents) some control over the future development of childcare provision is a gamble, in particular when client satisfaction is perceived as a quality indicator. Therefore, we aimed to disentangle the factors that contribute to parent satisfaction with childcare in Flanders.

Consistent with previous research, our findings suggest that parents are generally (very) happy with their childcare (Bassok et al., 2018; Jang et al., 2014; Lehrer et al., 2015; Kim & Smith, 2007; McNaughton, 1994; Scopelliti & Musatti, 2013; Teleki & Buck-Gomez, 2002). Insofar that differences in parent satisfaction exist, they are modestly related to both personal and institutional characteristics. So, to answer *RQ1*, parent satisfaction varies modestly at the between-institutions level as a function of process quality and childcare type, whereas small effects were found within institutions for partner status, frequency of attendance, childcare options and migration status.

Admittedly, the explanatory power of our models is limited. The question what contributes to parent satisfaction with childcare thus remains a kind of mystery and urges us to exercise caution with speculating on relationships. It is crystal clear, however, that little information can be gleaned from parent satisfaction in terms of process quality. Hence, it seems very unlikely that parents will act as drivers of quality improvement and increase competitive pressures amongst childcare providers. This is not to say that parents do not expect childcare to provide children with adequate developmental guidance and learning opportunities. On the contrary, our study on parental childcare decision-making (chapter 3) showed that parents unanimously value the socio-emotional and cognitive outcomes that can reasonably be expected from high-quality childcare. Yet, they simultaneously motivate childcare utilization as a practical necessity and it may be hard for them to evaluate whether educational expectations are met when they are not present during the day.

In sum, our results offer childcare providers little clues to improve their service for parents. Perhaps, it is exactly this lack of excitement that is the biggest clue of it all? Although the measurement of parent satisfaction is mainstream in Flemish childcare, it can hardly be described as a promising avenue for democratic debate. In fact, the observation that (almost) everybody is happy may create the impression that such debate is redundant and disincentivize familiarization with each other's frame of reference. Indeed, the question of parent satisfaction seems ill-suited for this purpose, not the least because parents may be as obedient and obsequious as possible, as not to get on professionals' bad side. After all, their child's well-being is in their hands.

6.2.3 The language of choice and the childcare choices of language minority families: A portrait of disadvantage

While it is generally assumed that childcare attendance promotes disadvantaged children's school readiness and helps break the cycle of disadvantage (Becker et al., 2013; Buysse et al., 2014; Currie, 2001; Felfe & Lalive, 2018; Geoffroy et al., 2010; Gialamas et al., 2015; Gormley, 2008; Magnuson & Shager, 2010; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005; Magnuson et al., 2004, 2006; Sylva et al., 2004), this doctoral study remained in disbelief regarding such a technical fix to one of the most profound problems that confront our societies. In search of other playing fields that may require some form of levelling, we examined different aspects involved in parents' choice of a childcare service in Flanders. More precisely, we focused on differences between language minority and majority families in their reasons to use formal childcare, experiences while searching for a childcare place, selection motives and childcare quality obtained.

The results, to answer *RQ2*, suggested that families who send their child to formal childcare have many things in common. However, small inequalities related to home language were found in all domains of the decision-making process. Effects for the different domains are modest but highly consistent and as such add up to a chain of disadvantage. Most pronounced is the inequality in parent-perceived availability of childcare places, where we found that monolingual Dutch-speaking families were more than twice as likely to experience choice options than foreign-speaking families. This pattern reappeared to a somewhat smaller extent when monolingual Dutch-speaking families were compared with multilingual Dutch-speaking parents. But even if language minority families have options available, there is inequality in the selection process caused by a stronger consideration of childcare costs. Even when financial considerations are equal, they are more likely to end up in lower-quality childcare.

In other words, there is not one field in need of levelling. In fact, our study illustrates that new inequalities may arise in an attempt to tackle old ones ((in)equality in uptake of formal childcare > (in)equality in choice options > (in)equality in selection motives > inequality in childcare quality). Most striking is not the extent of difference that was uncovered, but the consist pattern of disadvantage across various domains. Though painful, it is a good example of how social inequality is not caused by one big barrier, but rather is the product of several smaller differences. This makes it a persistent and multidimensional problem that requires a more comprehensive approach.

6.2.4 From multiculturalism to super-diversity: an analysis of curriculum issues

Within the social investment narrative, the added (social) value of early childhood education lies in its potential to offset the risks of growing up in a disadvantaged household. This doctoral study, however, argued that ECEC can also become an actor of social transformation when diversity is treated with respect. It was shown that, while ECEC participation of migrant and ethnic minority children is expressly desired nowadays, the curriculum may need revisioning to accommodate the changing social reality. Particular focus was given to issues of acculturation, anti-bias education, equity pedagogy, epistemology and intersectionality. Based on this theoretical framework, we examined how curricula from 11 Western countries and regions sensitise practitioners to support migrants' and ethnic minorities' participation and belonging.

This, to our dismay, revealed that educational guidelines in some Western countries and regions barely pay attention to issues of diversity. The recently published (2017) curriculum in the Netherlands is worth mentioning here as it (implicitly) claims to reflect the best available academic evidence on how children learn without, however, acknowledging the fact that developmental appropriateness is not a universal standard. Indeed, the authors treat their position as if it was natural, neutral and self-evidently correct, though ignore or seem unaware that other views on reality exist.

In most countries and regions, however, a multicultural education reform has taken place. This means, to answer *RQ3*, that ECEC services are encouraged to incorporate the cultures of migrants and ethnic minorities in their classroom practices, to instill a sense of democracy in children and to create greater educational equality without approaching diversity as a deficit. However, our findings suggest that there is also a need to move beyond celebrating everyone's own world view and to catch up with more recently emerged understandings of super-diversity. As Vertovec (2019) clarifies, the notion of super-diversity is not coined to simply emphasize more ethnicity. On the contrary, together with the concept of intersectionality it serves as a call to recognize the composite effects of social and migration-related categories and hence *not* to overemphasize ethnicity or culture as the nucleus of social inequality. It is worthwhile pondering therefore whether the needs of the most marginalized groups in society, those with so-called multiply-burdened experiences (e.g. refugees and asylum seekers), are adequately met by curriculum guidelines. According to Makkonen (2002), unconditional 'anything goes' multiculturalism can easily result in the 'paradox of multicultural vulnerability'. This occurs when policies of unconditional multiculturalism try to remedy one type of vulnerability and thereby risk to create another type of vulnerability. For instance, migrant and ethnic minority groups could be granted a certain autonomy over their members (e.g. establishment of their own ECEC services and immersion programmes) and this, in turn, could be (mis)used to homologate internal hierarchical structures and values. What may seem as a positive development in the area of human rights at first sight may in fact institutionalize the violation of human rights for particular community members.

6.3 Discussion

6.3.1 Implications for policy and practice

After discussing the results presented throughout this dissertation, it is relevant to turn back to where we started. That is to say, to the debate on the pedagogical work of childcare services and its evaluation and whether quality should be pursued at all costs. Though we aimed to gain insight into the bigger picture of what is at stake in the pedagogical work of childcare services and its evaluation, it is important to stress that neither are we able to settle the debate, nor do we have the intention to do so. Rather, this dissertation has the potential to inform and disturb by combining objectivism with subjectivism and, to cite Moss (2005) once more, to make the narrative of quality stutter. Indeed, we have argued that quality, or better 'quality', exists in the eyes of the beholder and can be understood from a range of perspectives. While my work can be read as a plea to welcome and work with subjectivism, as well as the complexity, uncertainty and unpredictability that it implies, I did not mean to say that there is no value in seeing quality as a measurable and so-called objective concept. Unlike Peter Moss and his fellow reconceptualisers, we do not have an aversion from projects like MeMoQ. There is, in our opinion, no need to throw out the baby with the bathwater, which would imply that we cannot work with the concept of quality anymore and, by implication, lose track on children's socio-emotional and cognitive development. We can only hope that technical questions as well as their ready-made and conclusive answers are treated with more caution. They are at least beyond the scope of this dissertation and so too should our recommendations for policy and practice be treated as personal (though evidence-based) reflections on the utopian society we would like children, families and communities to live in. According to us, these reflections are relevant in a number of ways.

First, this dissertation urges policy makers and professionals to pay attention to other matters in addition to child development theory when taking a stance on quality. The challenge is not simply to create more quality, but also to question the kinds of quality we want. itself and welcome other perspectives on 'the good life'. It is needless to say, however, that other things in life matter as well. Especially now, after the murder on George Floyd and the 'Black Lives Matter' protests around the world, other bells should be ringing. If the social cannot collapse into the economic, it is worthwhile to ponder how childcare provision can support the pursuit of human dignity and social justice if it is not through social investment (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014).

The incorporation of super-diversity in curriculum development supposedly is a good starting point, at least more helpful in building a brighter future than a royal apology for our colonial past. Yet, putting intentions on paper is one thing, implementation another. The argument that all parents have the right to participate in pedagogical decision-making, such as posited by the pedagogical framework in Flanders, in reality should not be taken-for-granted. Indeed, Shpancer (1999) suggests that parents tend to conceptualize their relations with childcare workers as serving primarily a buffer function, meaning that they seek out professionals primarily in handling negative classroom events. Spontaneous parent-caregiver contact probably is insufficient therefore to effectuate parents' right to participate in decisions that affect them and their child. While the curriculum emphasizes the need to search for democratic professionalism, or 'warm' professionals as Peeters (2008) would argue, it is of great concern that skilled childcare professionals in general are so hard to find in Flanders. In fact, chapter 4 should also be read as an interpellation of policymakers to increase minimum qualification requirements and to invest (much) more in professional development opportunities that focus on topics of social sustainability. I admit, it will be a costly affair, though the alternative of doing nothing also comes at a price.

Equally important in the enhancement of public accountability for the so-called social function of childcare provision is the monitoring role of the Flemish inspectorate. In this regard, the MeMoQ project produced a questionnaire that allows the evaluation of respectful attitudes towards parents and diversity. However, according to an internal review by *Kind en Gezin*, one year after its official implementation in the sector, childcare services in Flanders score an astonishing average of 3.21 on a 4-point scale. While this may create the impression as if additional support for the social function is redundant, we would like to remind the reader of the more pessimistic portrait drawn up by the MeMoQ baseline study.

Second, this dissertation informs policymakers and practitioners about potential avenues to mitigate the Matthew effect in formal childcare use in Flanders. Given that, as the MeMoQ baseline study showed, the process quality is lower in classrooms with a higher proportion of children with a foreign home language, policymakers may need to allocate additional resources to support professionals in coping with these ostensibly more difficult circumstances. Meanwhile, inspection reports could mention such attenuating circumstances in order not to discourage childcare providers from enrolling these children. In addition, it is worthwhile to ponder the question how concentrations of children with a foreign home language could be avoided. In this regard, our finding that foreign-speaking parents are more often unable to choose between childcare providers is ‘encouraging’, to use the words of Pavolini and Van Lancker (2018), because constraints in the availability and affordability are amenable by policies. Listing home language as another priority enrolment criteria may be a first modest step to turn the tide.

Third, this dissertation serves as a wake-up call for those who see little or no harm in the encouragement of market mechanisms in childcare provision. It is obvious from our findings that the childcare market is an inefficient one as parents want high-quality childcare arrangements but fail to obtain them. At this point, we stand by Harbach’s (2016) argument that even economics will have to acknowledge that government intervention may be desirable. Her proposition of nudging parents into more favourable childcare choices, which reminds us of the upcoming public disclosure of inspection reports in Flanders, is however not the future direction we have in mind. This by no means suggests that we are against greater transparency about the quality of provisions. On the contrary, parents have the right to know. Yet, it should be given considerable though that a new inequality may be created. It would not surprise us if it were, as Meijer (2007) suggests, predominantly higher-educated parents who show an interest in this kind of ‘abstract’ information. If so, there is a real risk to extend rather than redress the Matthew effect, not to mention the dilemmas parents could experience once they find out that suboptimal choices are the only ones they can make.

We think it is better not to consider childcare as a private good that individual parents seek and purchase for themselves, but instead to recognize it as an important public service where every child and family, perhaps even every citizen, should be able to reap the benefits from. The first wave of COVID-19 in Flanders indeed proved that childcare services are instrumental in today’s society, at least in keeping so-called crucial sectors running and in providing a safety net for children from precarious home situations. In my opinion, this makes childcare itself a crucial sector and hence worth the effort of taking full public responsibility for. The hashtag *#heldenvandekinderopvang*, which appeared on social media to credit childcare workers (*heroes*) for their effort in coping with the pandemic, made me ponder the question as to where the heroes at the upper level are at? Despite the MeMoQ baseline study recommendations to improve adult-child ratios and group size, to name a few, little has changed since. I can only express hope that policymakers will soon start to realize that talking about quality makes little sense in the absence of an ambitious government policy. Expanding the coverage of high-quality childcare provision is not an individual responsibility of childcare professionals, nor of parents, but above all the product of a competent system.

6.3.2 Limitations and directions for future research

After answering the research questions and elaborating on the implications for policy and practice, we wish to dedicate this final section to the many unanswered questions we are left with. To start with, it is necessary to point out that my work was subject to several limitations. Admittedly, my own inexperience with quantitative data analysis is probably one of them. Nevertheless, even with support of knowledgeable colleagues the secondary analysis of MeMoQ data had its limitations. The explanatory power of our (limited set of) predictors of parent satisfaction, for instance, was disappointing and so too did our data provide little clues about why language minority parents have a higher probability of finding only one available childcare place. A reviewer once recommended me not to range widely with speculation on such matters and thus to accept that, for now, these are questions to which we simply do not have the answer.

Another question that warrants further investigation is whether the classroom experiences of children from foreign-speaking households differ from those of their peers within the same classroom. Indeed, quality measurement scales commonly focus on the average classroom experience and therefore provide little information on the range of differentiation between individual children's experiences. Future research could take this limitation into account so as to determine whether we, as other research seems to suggest (Adair et al., 2017; Palludan, 2007; Peleman et al., 2019), have underestimated the true extent of the Matthew effect.

We furthermore wish to stress that our findings could be subject to a selection bias. Regarding parental perspectives on childcare utilization, for example, the reader should keep in mind that only parents who use childcare could participate in the survey. Sceptics about childcare utilization are thus by definition excluded from our sample and so too could parents who have little interest in issues of quality be overrepresented in the non-response group. Hence, we cannot simply generalize upon our finding that parents, language minority parents in particular, have high expectations in terms of child outcomes. Neither does the retrospective character of the data allow us to be fully confident about the presence of such expectations in the initial stages of childcare decision-making. We should at least take into account the possibility that the answers of parents, who were aware of participating in a research on pedagogical quality, are in fact a post-hoc construction rather than an accurate reflection of what was at stake at a particular moment in time. A prospective study, such as the one by Pungello and Kurtz-Costes (2000), could clarify how parental beliefs and perceived constraints change over time and (are) influence(d) (by) childcare choices. Preferably, such research contains an indicator of socio-economic deprivation (e.g. constructed through information on means-tested parent fees) so as to double-check whether our findings truly reflect a language issue.

Our selection of curricula too may have been biased. Notwithstanding that we deliberately aimed to include a diversity of pedagogical frameworks in the analyses, sampling was not free of pragmatic constraints. Obviously, countries were left out of the equation and some of those who were in it (e.g. in the Netherlands, New Zealand, England and Sweden) have adopted new or revised curricula as we speak. Follow-up of these changes throughout time could be valuable in gauging the threat that human capital theory poses to the pedagogical work of childcare services.

More research on the combination of objectivism with subjectivism is definitely needed, in particular studies that seek confrontation between both sides of the spectrum. While this dissertation assumes that working with quality and having a democratic debate about what matters in childcare should be able to co-exist, we have little knowledge of whether these are in fact compatible with each other. I will illustrate this issue with an anecdote from *Het Laatste Nieuws* (a Flemish newspaper), which at the end of last year covered the story of a childcare setting that was forced to close after a complaint and various negative evaluations by the inspection agency. However, the parents were indignant and strongly opposed the decision by stating: “Some remarks are really ridiculous: letting children cry? Not announcing that you are going to rinse someone’s nose? Pulling up a child by its arm? Parents who are honest with themselves will admit that this happens too at home. Are you going to tell a two-year-old in advance that you will rinse his nose? Well, good luck than.” and “We as parents are satisfied, not one hundred but two hundred percent.” Admittedly, my fellow researchers from the MeMoQ project too made a joke or two about what would be the outcome of applying quality measurement scales to assess their own households. Further research therefore could include parents in determining the validity of quality rating scales, like we did with the ‘expert panel’ during the MeMoQ project, so as to identify bind spots or contradictions. Ideally, such questions are addressed by a diverse sample of parents as one could hypothesize that the idea of cultural validity in itself is already contradictory to a super-diverse reality.

Finally, it needs to be said that practitioners appear as passive objects of study throughout my work, whereas, in fact, they should not be considered as such. Indeed, Lipsky (1980) suggests that public service workers are street-level bureaucrats and, in effect, policy decision-makers as they wield considerable discretion in the day-to-day implementation of public policies. This most certainly is the case in Flemish childcare, where the MeMoQ project was bound to preserve a certain amount of autonomy for childcare providers. Hence, it is worthwhile to investigate how professionals use this discretionary space vis-à-vis children, parents and society.

6.4 References

Adair, J. K., Colegrove, K. S., & McManus, M. E. (2017). How the word gap argument negatively impacts young children of Latinx immigrants' conceptualizations of learning. *Harvard Educational Review, 87*(3)*,* 309-334.

Akgündüz, Y. E., Ünver, Ö., Plantenga, J., & Nicaise, I. (2015). *The socio-economic dimension of early childhood education and care in Europe.* Utrecht: Utrecht University – CARE project.

Ang, L. (2014). *The early years curriculum: The UK context and beyond.* London: Routledge.

Arnold, D. H., Zeljo, A., Doctoroff, G. L., & Ortiz, C. (2008). Parent Involvement in Preschool: Predictors and the Relation of Involvement to Preliteracy Development. *School Psychology Review, 37*(1), 74–90.

Ball, S. J., & Vincent, C. (2005). The 'childcare champion'? New Labour, social justice and the childcare market. *British Educational Research Journal, 31*, 557-570.

Bassok, D., Markowitz, A. J., Player, D., & Zagardo, M. (2018). Are parents' ratings and satisfaction with preschools related to program features? *AERA Open, 4*(1), 1–17.

Becker, B., Klein, O., & Biedinger, N. (2013). The development of cognitive, language, and cultural skills from age 3 to 6: A comparison between children of Turkish origin and children of native-born German parents and the role of immigrant parents' acculturation to the receiving society. *American Educational Research Journal, 50*(3), 616-649.

Belsky, J., Vandell, D. L., Burchinal, M., Clarke-Stewart, K. A., McCartney, K., Owen, M. T., & NICHD Early Child Care Research Network. (2007). Are there long-term effects of early child care? *Child Development, 78*(2), 681-701.

Bennett, J. (2005). Curriculum Issues in National Policy-Making. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 13*(2), 5–23.

Brennan, D., Cass, B., Himmelweit, S., Szebehely, M. (2012). The marketisation of care: Rationales and consequences in Nordic and liberal care regimes. *Journal of European Social Policy, 22*(4), 377-391.

Burger, K. (2010). How does early childhood care and education affect cognitive development? An international review of the effects of early interventions for children from different social backgrounds. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 25*(2), 140-165.

Buysse, V., Peisner-Feinberg, E., Páez, M., Hammer, C. S., & Knowles, M. (2014). Effects of early education programs and practices on the development and learning of dual language learners: A review of the literature. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 29,* 765-785.

Camilli, G., Vargas, S., Ryan, S., & Barnett, W. S. (2010). Meta-analysis of the effects of early education interventions on cognitive and social development. *Teachers College Record, 112*(3), 579-620.

Castro, D. C., Bryant, D. M., Peisner-Feinberg, E. S., & Skinner, M. L. (2004). Parent Involvement in Head Start Programs: The Role of Parent, Teacher and Classroom Characteristics. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 19*(3), 413–430.

Dalli, C., White, E. J., Rockel, J., Duhn, I., Buchanan, E., Davidson, S., … Wang, B. (2011). *Quality early childhood education for under-two-year-olds: What should it look like? A literature review.* Ministry of Education.

De Gioia, K. (2009). Parent and staff expectations for continuity of home practices in the child care setting for families with diverse cultural backgrounds. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 34*(3), 9–17.

Felfe, C., & Lavile, R. (2018). Does early child care affect children’s development? *Journal of Public Economics, 159*, 33-53.

Galindo, C., & Sheldon, S. B. (2012). School and Home Connections and Children’s Kindergarten Achievement Gains: The Mediating Role of Family Involvement. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 27*(1), 90–103.

Gallagher, A. (2018). The business of care: Marketization and the new geographies of childcare. *Progress in Human Geography, 42*(5), 706-722.

Geoffroy, M-C., Côté, S. M., Giguère, C-E., Dionne, G., Zelazo, P. D., Tremblay, R. E., ... Séguin, J. R. (2010). Closing the gap in academic readiness and achievement: The role of early childcare. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 51*(12), 1359-1367.

Gialamas, A., Mittinty, M. N., Sawyer, M. G., Zubrick, S. R., & Lynch, J. (2015). Social inequalities in childcare quality and their effects on children’s development at school entry: Findings from the longitudinal study of

Australian children. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health, 69,* 841-848.

Goossens, C. (2019). *Gentrification comes to school: Social mix and the struggle against educational inequality.* Ghent University. Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Ghent, Belgium.

Gormley, Jr., W. T. (2008). The effects of Oklahoma's pre-k program on Hispanic children. *Social Science Quarterly, 89*(4), 916-936.

Harbach, M. J. (2016). Nudging Parents. *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice, 19*, 74-126.

International Federation of Social Workers. (2014). *Global definition of social work.* https://www.ifsw.org

Jang, L-F., Moore, L., & Lin, Y-M. (2014). Parents' perspectives on child care quality and satisfaction in Taiwan. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education, 3*(5), 3–19.

Kim, Y. K., & Smith, A. K. (2007). Providing a critical service today for tomorrow's consumers: A relational model of customer evaluations and responses in the child care industry. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 14*, 232-245.

Lehrer, J. S., Lemay, L., & Bigras, N. (2015). Parental perceptions of child care quality in centre-based and home-based settings: Associations with external quality ratings. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 47,* 481–497.

Lipsky, M. (1980). *Street level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Lloyd, E., & Penn, H. (2012). *Childcare markets: Can they deliver an equitable service?* Bristol: Policy Press.

Loizou, E. (2018). Editorial. *European Early Childhood Research Education Research Journal, 26*(6), 809-812.

Magnuson, K., Lahaie, C., & Waldfogel, J. (2006). Preschool and school readiness of children of immigrants. Social Science Quarterly, 87(5), 1241-1262.

Magnuson, K. A., Meyers, M. K., Ruhm, C. J., & Waldfogel, J. (2004). Inequality in preschool education and school readiness. American Educational Research Journal, 41(1), 115-157.

Magnuson, K. A., & Shager, H. (2010). Early education: Progress and promise for children from low-income families. *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*, 1186-1198.

Magnuson, K. A., & Waldfogel, J. (2005). Early childhood care and education: Effects on ethnic and racial gaps in school readiness. The Future of Children, 15(1), 169-196.

Makkonen, L. L. M. T. (2002). *Multiple, compound and intersectional discrimination: Bringing the experiences of the most marginalized to the fore.* Turku: Institute for Human Rights, Åbo Akademi University.

McNaughton, D. (1994). Measuring parent satisfaction with early childhood intervention programs: Current practice, problems, and future perspectives. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 14*, 26–48.

McWayne, C., Hampton, V., Fantuzzo, J., Cohen, H. L., & Sekino, Y. (2004). A Multivariate Examination of Parent Involvement and the Social and Academic Competencies of Urban Kindergarten Children. *Psychology in the Schools, 41*(3), 363–377.

Meijer, A. (2007). Does transparency lead to more compliance? Critical remarks on the relation between transparency and compliance. *European Food and Feed Law Review, 5,* 264-269.

Melhuish, E. C. (2004). *A literature review of the impact of early years provision on young children, with emphasis given to children from disadvantaged backgrounds.* National Audit Office.

Melhuish, E., Ereky-Stevens, K., Petrogiannis, K., Ariescu, A., Penderi, E., Rentzou, K., … Leseman, P. (2015). *A review of research on the effects of early childhood education and care (ECEC) upon child development.* Utrecht: Utrecht University – CARE project.

Melhuish, E., Quinn, L., Hanna, K., Sylva, K., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Taggart, B. (2006). *Effective pre-school provision in Northern Ireland (EPPNI) summary report.* Department of Education.

Miedel, W. T., & Reynolds, A. J. (1999). Parent Involvement in Early Intervention for Disadvantaged Children: Does it Matter? *Journal of School Psychology, 37*(4), 379–402.

Mitchell, L., Wylie, C., & Carr, M. (2008). *Outcomes of early childhood education: Literature review. Report to the ministry of education.* New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Moss, P. (2005). Section I: Theoretical examinations of quality: Making the narrative of quality stutter. *Early Education and Development, 16*(4), 405-420.

Moss, P. (2013). The Relationship Between Early Childhood and Compulsory Education: A Properly Political Question. In P. Moss (Ed.), *Early Childhood and Compulsory Education: Reconceptualising the Relationship* (pp. 2–50). London: Routledge.

Moss, P. (2014). *Transformative change and real utopias in early childhood education: A story of democracy, experimentation and potentiality.* New York: Routledge.

Obeng, S. M. (2007). Immigrants families and childcare preferences: Do immigrants' cultures influence their childcare decisions? Early Childhood Education Journal, 34, 259–264.

Palludan, C. (2007). Two tones: The core of inequality in kindergarten? *International Journal of Early Childhood, 39*(1), 75-91.

Pavolini, E., & Van Lancker, W. (2018). The Matthew effect in childcare use: A matter of policies or preferences? *Journal of European Public Policy, 25,* 878-893.

Peeters, J. (2008). *De warme professional.* Gent: Academia Press.

Peleman, B., Vandenbroeck, M., & Van Avermaet, P. (2019). Early learning opportunities for children at risk of social exclusion. Opening the black box of preschool practice. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 28*(1), 21-42.

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), 150-161.

Penn, H. (2014). The business of childcare in Europe. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 22*(4), 432-456.

Prentice, S. (2009). High stakes: The "investable" child and the economic reframing of childcare. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 34,* 687-710.

Pungello, E. P., & Kurtz-Costes, B. (2000). Working women's selection of care for their infants: a prospective study. *Family Relations, 49*(3), 245-255.

Scopelliti, M. & Musatti, T. (2013). Parents’ view of child care quality: Values, evaluations, and satisfaction. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 22,* 1025–1038.

Shpancer, N. (1999). Caregiver-parent relations in daycare: Testing the buffer hypothesis. *Early Child Development and care, 156*(1), 1-14.

Shpancer, N. (2002). The home-daycare link: Mapping children’s new world order. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 17*, 374-392.

Soler, J., & Miller, L. (2003). The struggle for early childhood curricula: A comparison of the English Foundation Stage Curriculum, Te Whariki and Reggio Emilia. *International Journal of Early Years Education, 11*(1), 57-68.

Sylva, K., Ereky-Stevens, K., & Aricescu, A.-M. (2015). *Overview of European ECEC Curricula and Curriculum Template*. Utrecht: Utrecht University – CARE Project.

Sylva, C., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I, & Taggart, B. (2004). *The effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project: Final report. A longitudinal study funded by the DfES 1997-2004.* University College London.

Teleki, J. K., & Buck-Gomez, S. (2002). Child care and early education: Satisfaction with services among rural families. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 29*(3), 161–166.

Tobin, J., & Kurban, F. (2010). Preschool practitioners’ and immigrants parents’ beliefs about academics and play in the early childhood educational curriculum in five countries. *Orbis Scholae, 4*(2), 75-87.

van Belle, J. (2016). *Early childhood education and care (ECEC) and its long-term effects on educational and labour market outcomes.* RAND Europe.

Vandenbroeck, M. (forthcoming). *Revisiting Paulo Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed*. *Issues and challenges in early childhood education.* London: Routledge.

Vandenbroeck, M., Lenaerts, K., & Beblavý, M. (2018). *Benefits of early childhood education and care and the conditions for obtaining them. EENEE analytical report no. 32, prepared for the European Commission.* European Expert Network on Economics of Education.

Vertovec, S. (2019). Talking around super-diversity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 42*(1), 125-139.

Vesely, C. K. (2013). Low-income African and Latina immigrant mothers' selection of early childhood care and education (ECCE): Considering the complexity of cultural and structural influences. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 28,* 470-486.

White, L. A., & Friendly, M. (2012). Public funding, private delivery: States, markets, and early childhood education and care in liberal welfare states – A comparison of Australia, the UK, Quebec, and New Zealand. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice, 14*(4), 292-310.

English summary

This doctoral study aims to broaden the quality debate and re-politicise the pedagogical work of childcare services and its evaluation. We do so by examining how the relation between childcare and families can be nurtured in the curriculum and quality evaluation.

Chapter 1 introduces this doctoral study by arguing that the move towards more effective (high-quality) childcare provision is presented as self-evident nowadays. We do so through explaining that a robust body of child development literature lends legitimacy to anchor the pedagogical work of childcare services in an evidence base. The chapter continues by illustrating that, due to the current fixation with cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes of childcare attendance, the pursuit of quality is mainly imbued with questions of an essentially technical nature. The MeMoQ-project in Flanders, for instance, focused on questions such as: what is the definition of quality? How can it be operationalized? By what means can it be measured? How can it be assured and improved? Against this backdrop, we draw attention to the fact that the concept of quality itself is hardly called into question and, by implication, that its underlying values and assumptions remain largely invisible. The chapter brings to mind that working with quality is in fact a political and ethical choice that renders reality amenable to certain kinds of actions and, by the same token, excludes alternative ways of understanding and speaking about the pedagogical work of childcare services. We relate this threatening loss of perspective to the fact that neoliberalism currently dominates politics in much of the world. In so doing, we describe other stories that, like quality, are under a neoliberal spell and incentivize the depoliticization of early childhood education. A common thread through these stories is that the voices of parents are largely eschewed in the debate. As such, we come to the conclusion that the pursuit of quality stems from a human capital framework that carries the risk or danger of disregarding social values such as democracy, equity and diversity.

In chapter 2, “Is everybody happy? Exploring the predictability of parent satisfaction with childcare in Flanders”, the doctoral study focuses on the mainstream measurement of parent satisfaction in Flanders. It starts by explaining that the governance of childcare provision in many countries and regions, such as in Flanders, is permeated by market mechanisms because of the belief that consumers or clients (parents) are the best judge of their own welfare. Taken from this perspective, we aim to unravel the factors that contribute to parent satisfaction with childcare. Particular focus is given to

process quality as parents' childcare judgments, especially in the absence of strong regulatory regimes capable of ensuring high-quality provision, are seen as an important indicator of quality. The results suggest that parents are generally very satisfied with their childcare. Insofar that differences exist, they are only modestly related to process quality, as well as to some other institutional (i.e. childcare type) and personal characteristics (i.e. partner status, frequency of attendance, migrant status, choice options). Due to the limited explanatory power of these predictors, we must conclude that parent satisfaction with childcare remains a kind of mystery. However, there is (too) little evidence to assume that parents will drive quality improvement, nor to frame the measurement of parent satisfaction as a good way to involve parents in the pedagogical work of childcare services.

Chapter 3, "The language of choice and the childcare choices of language minority families: A portrait of disadvantage", addresses different aspects involved in parents' choice of a specific childcare service. More precisely, we focus on differences between language minority and majority families in their reasons to use formal childcare, experiences while searching for a childcare place, selection motives and childcare quality obtained. The chapter argues that, due to the consistent increase in childcare participation rates in Flanders, the question how parents choose a childcare setting may become more significant for inequality than the question whether or not to use it. Therefore, we aim to unravel whether and how inequality occurs in and is reproduced by parental childcare decision-making in Flanders. The results suggest that home language is related to all domains of the childcare decision-making process. Effects for the different domains are modest but highly consistent and as such add up to a chain of disadvantage. In conclusion, the issue of home language warrants further attention if childcare provision wants to help break the cycle of disadvantage. Indeed, new inequalities seem to arise in an attempt to tackle old ones.

In chapter 4, "From multiculturalism to super-diversity in the early years: An analysis of curriculum issues", the doctoral study focusses on childcare provision as an instrument to support social inclusion in a super-diverse society. More precisely, the chapter argues that the inclusion of migrant and ethnic minority children is not simply desirable to 'compensate for the family'. When childcare becomes one of the places where super-diversity is at its most marked, it is equally desirable that diversity is treated with respect. We further relate this nuanced perspective on equal opportunities with theories of acculturation, anti-bias education, equity pedagogy, epistemology and intersectionality. Next, we analyse for each of these issues how curriculum guidelines in 10 Western countries sensitize practitioners to enhance migrants' and ethnic minorities' opportunities for participation and belonging. Results suggest that a multicultural education reform has taken place in most countries, though there is still a need to catch up with more recently emerged challenges of super-diversity.

Chapter 5, "(De)constructing parental involvement in early childhood curricular frameworks", seeks to disentangle the rationales of parental involvement within a diverse sample of curriculum frameworks. The central question is whether different perspectives on educational partnerships exist as the English-medium literature creates the impression that parents are mainly there to support children's learning and development at home. Our thematic analysis suggests that there are common goals in fostering parental involvement, though their interpretation is context-bound. More specifically, curricula generally welcome the involvement of parents to create child-centred learning environments, monitor developmental progress, negotiate pedagogical practice, ensure smooth transitions and provide parenting support. The interpretation of these rationales varies across pedagogical traditions and as such exemplifies a lack of unanimity, or the presence of a fair amount of ideology, in the nurturance of the home-daycare link. The chapter concludes by explaining that this argument could support opposition against the taken-for-granted instrumentalization of parents and sharpen awareness of the potential merits of creating more reciprocity in unequal relations.

Chapter 6 concludes this doctoral dissertation with a synthesis of the main findings and a general reflection on the implications for policy and practice. Based on our findings, we advocate stronger government responsibility in determining the future direction of childcare provision as the individual and societal benefits of high-quality childcare provision will fail to materialize without it. Alongside the need for stronger regulatory regimes capable of ensuring high-quality provision, building relations between childcare and the family remains highly relevant. However, a reconceptualization of these relationships is required if the government wants to bring the full potential of educational partnerships to the fore. The curriculum in Flanders may be seen as a first step towards this new direction, though further research is needed to determine whether the involvement of parents as partners in the quality-defining process is compatible with scientific understandings of process quality.

Nederlandstalige samenvatting

Dit doctoraatsonderzoek heeft tot doel het kwaliteitsdebat te verbreden en het pedagogisch werk van kinderopvangvoorzieningen en diens evaluatie te repolitiseren. Hiertoe onderzoeken we hoe de verbinding tussen kinderopvang en thuismilieus ondersteund kan worden in het curriculum en de kwaliteitsevaluatie.

Hoofdstuk 1 introduceert het doctoraatsonderzoek door erop te wijzen dat de aandacht voor effectievere (kwaliteitsvolle) kinderopvang tegenwoordig als een vanzelfsprekendheid wordt gezien. Aangezien onderzoek aantoont dat kinderopvang van hoge kwaliteit een positieve impact heeft op de ontwikkeling van kinderen, gaan er steeds meer stemmen op om het pedagogisch werk van kinderopvangvoorzieningen te verankeren in deze wetenschappelijke basis. Echter, de huidige fixatie op de vermeende cognitieve en socio-emotionele ontwikkelingsvoordelen van kinderopvang draagt ertoe bij dat het kwaliteitsdebat gedomineerd wordt door vragen van technische aard. Het grootschalige MeMoQ-project in Vlaanderen bijvoorbeeld had tot doel een antwoord te formuleren op prangende vragen zoals: wat is de definitie van kwaliteit? Hoe operationaliseren en meten we kwaliteit? Hoe is kwaliteit te monitoren en te verbeteren? We merken hierbij op dat het concept kwaliteit an sich slechts zelden in vraag wordt gesteld, hetgeen onderliggende waarden en assumpties grotendeels onzichtbaar maakt. Het hoofdstuk herinnert eraan dat werken aan kwaliteit in feite een politieke en ethische keuze is, dewelke de realiteit hanteerbaar maakt voor een bepaald soort acties en terzelfdertijd alternatieve ziens- en denkwijzen met betrekking tot het pedagogisch handelen van kinderopvangvoorzieningen uitsluit. We verbinden dit dreigend verlies aan perspectief met de huidige politieke dominantie van het neoliberalisme in grote delen van de wereld. Op die manier wordt duidelijk dat het niet enkel kwaliteit is die een neoliberale invulling krijgt en bijdraagt tot de depolitisering van voorschoolse educatie, maar dat ook het dominante denken over ouderbetrokkenheid, gelijke kansen en vermarkting op dezelfde leest geschoeid zijn. Het gebrek aan aandacht voor de stem van ouders loopt als een rode draad doorheen deze verhalen. Bijgevolg komen we tot de conclusie dat het huidige streven naar kwaliteit legitiem is binnen een *human capital* raamwerk dewelke sociale waarden zoals democratie, rechtvaardigheid en diversiteit dreigt te negeren.

In hoofdstuk 2, “Is iedereen tevreden? Een exploratie van de voorspelbaarheid van oudertevredenheid met kinderopvang in Vlaanderen”, ligt de focus op de gebruikelijke meting van oudertevredenheid in de Vlaamse kinderopvangsector. Het hoofdstuk vangt aan met een beschrijving van de marktmechanismen die ten grondslag liggen aan de huidige besturing van kinderopvang in verschillende landen en regio's. Als uitgangspunt voor een dergelijk beleid wordt doorgaans aangenomen dat consumenten of cliënten (ouders) de beste beoordelaar zijn van hun eigen welzijn. We beargumenteren vervolgens dat het daarom interessant is op zoek te gaan naar de factoren die bijdragen aan oudertevredenheid met kinderopvang in Vlaanderen. Onze interesse gaat in het bijzonder uit naar de zogenaamde proceskwaliteit omdat de beoordelingen van ouders, zeker indien er geen sterke regelgeving is die hoogwaardige kinderopvang garandeert, gezien kunnen worden als een belangrijke indicatie van pedagogische kwaliteit. De resultaten suggereren dat ouders gemiddeld genomen zeer tevreden zijn met hun kinderopvang. In de mate dat verschillen tussen ouders bestaan, houden ze slechts beperkt verband met proceskwaliteit, alsook met enkele andere institutionele (nl. opvangtype) en persoonlijke kenmerken (nl. partner status, opvangfrequentie, migratiestatus en keuzemogelijkheden). De voorspellende kracht van deze factoren is echter beperkt en maakt dat oudertevredenheid een soort van mysterie blijft. Er is desalniettemin (te) weinig evidentie om te veronderstellen dat ouders de motor van kwaliteitsverbetering zullen zijn, noch om het meten van oudertevredenheid als een goede praktijk naar voor te schuiven voor wat betreft het betrekken van ouders bij de pedagogische praktijk.

Hoofdstuk 3, "De taal van keuze en de kinderopvangkeuzes van taalminderheden: Een portret van achterstelling", gaat dieper in op diverse aspecten in het maken van een keuze voor een specifieke kinderopvangvoorziening in Vlaanderen. We focussen daarbij op verschillen tussen gezinnen wiens thuistaal wel en niet (enkel) Nederlands is, meer bepaald in relatie tot de redenen waarom ze van formele kinderopvang gebruik maken, ervaringen in de zoektocht naar kinderopvang, selectiemotieven en de verkregen kwaliteit. Onze betrachting rust op de veronderstelling dat, gegeven het alsmaar toenemende gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen, de vraag naar hoe ouders een kinderopvangvoorziening kiezen belangrijker wordt voor ongelijkheid dan de vraag naar het al dan niet gebruiken ervan. Zodoende willen we ontrafelen of en hoe ongelijkheid zich voordoet in en gereproduceerd wordt door het keuzeproces van ouders. De resultaten wijzen uit dat thuistaal gerelateerd is aan alle aspecten van het keuzeproces. De effecten zijn weliswaar klein, maar zeer consistent en tonen als dusdanig aan dat taalminderheden verwikkeld zijn in een keten van achterstelling. De kwestie van thuistaal verdient met andere woorden meer aandacht indien kinderopvang de cyclus van achterstelling wenst te doorbreken. Men zal daarbij rekening moeten houden met onze observatie dat nieuwe ongelijkheden kunnen ontstaan in een poging oude te verhelpen.

In hoofdstuk 4, “Van multiculturalisme naar super-diversiteit in de voorschoolse opvang: Een analyse van curriculaire vraagstukken”, bestuderen we kinderopvang als een instrument ter bevordering van sociale inclusie in een superdiverse samenleving. Het uitgangspunt is dat de inclusie van migranten en etnisch culturele minderheden, in tegenstelling tot wat doorgaans de redenering is, niet uitsluitend wenselijk is ter compensatie van het thuismilieu. Wanneer kinderopvang één van de plaatsen wordt waar superdiversiteit het meest uitgesproken is, is het evenzeer wenselijk dat diversiteit met respect bejegend wordt. Deze nuance in het denken over gelijke kansen brengen we verder in verband met theorieën over acculturatie, anti-bias educatie, gelijkwaardigheidspedagogie, epistemologie en intersectionaliteit. Vervolgens analyseren we voor elk van deze vraagstukken hoe curricula uit 10 Westerse landen professionals sensibiliseren om de participatie en verbondenheid van migranten en etnisch culturele minderheden te ondersteunen. De resultaten geven aan dat er zich in de meeste landen een multiculturele hervorming heeft voltrokken, niettegenstaande dat er nog een inhaalbeweging nodig is om tegemoet te komen aan de meer recente uitdagingen van superdiversiteit.

Hoofdstuk 5, “(De)constructie van ouderbetrokkenheid in curricula voor voorschoolse opvang”, gaat op zoek naar beweegredenen voor het betrekken van ouders bij kinderopvang in een diverse steekproef van curricula. De centrale vraag luidt of er verschillende perspectieven op educatieve partnerschappen bestaan aangezien de Engelstalige literatuur de indruk wekt dat ouders er voornamelijk zijn om het leren en de ontwikkeling van kinderen thuis te ondersteunen. Onze thematische analyse suggereert dat er gemeenschappelijke doelen ten grondslag liggen aan het betrekken van ouders, maar dat hun interpretatie verschilt naargelang de context. Meer bepaald, curricula zijn over het algemeen geneigd om ouders te betrekken bij het opvanggebeuren teneinde kindgerichte leeromgevingen te creëren, de ontwikkeling van kinderen mee op te volgen, de pedagogische praktijk te bespreken, transities te vergemakkelijken en opvoedingsondersteuning te bieden. De interpretatie van deze drijfveren is echter afhankelijk van het pedagogisch project dat men voor ogen heeft en illustreert aldus het gebrek aan unanimiteit, of de aanwezigheid van ideologische argumenten, in de betekenisgeving aan de link tussen kinderopvang en gezin. Op basis van dit argument bekritiseren we de vanzelfsprekendheid waarmee ouders in het publieke debat geïnstrumentaliseerd worden en bieden we tegelijkertijd inzicht in de potentiële meerwaarde van het creëren van meer wederkerigheid in ongelijke relaties.

In hoofdstuk 6 maken we een eindbalans op van het doctoraatsonderzoek. Na een synthese van de belangrijkste bevindingen volgt een algemene reflectie op de implicaties voor beleid en praktijk. Hierin bepleiten we een vooraanstaande rol voor de overheid bij het bepalen van de toekomstige richting van de kinderopvangsector aangezien de huidige situatie afbreuk doet aan de individuele en maatschappelijke belangen die op het spel staan. Naast het belang van een sterker regelgevend kader dat in staat is om hoogwaardige kinderopvang te verzekeren, ligt een belangrijke uitdaging in het herdenken van de relatie tussen het opvang- en thuismilieu. Het curriculum in Vlaanderen zette reeds de bakens uit van wat een meer participatieve benadering van voorschoolse opvoeding kan betekenen, al is verder onderzoek nodig om te bepalen of het betrekken van ouders als partners in het definiëren van kwaliteit compatibel is met wetenschappelijke inzichten inzake proceskwaliteit.

Data storage fact sheets

```
% Name/identifier study: Is Everybody Happy? Exploring the
Predictability of Parent Satisfaction with Childcare in
Flanders (Chapter 2)
% Author: Jeroen Janssen
% Date: August 11, 2020

1. Contact details
==========================================================

1a. Main researcher
----------------------------------------------------------
- name: Jeroen Janssen
- address: Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Gent
- e-mail: jerojans.Janssen@UGent.be

1b. Responsible Staff Member (ZAP)
----------------------------------------------------------
- name: Prof. Michel Vandenbroeck
- address: Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Gent
- e-mail: Michel.Vandenbroeck@UGent.be

If a response is not received when using the above contact
details, please send an email to data.pp@ugent.be or
contact Data Management, Faculty of Psychology and
Educational Sciences, Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Ghent,
Belgium.


2. Information about the datasets to which this sheet
applies
==========================================================
* Reference of the publication in which the datasets are
reported: Janssen, J., Spruyt, B., & Vandenbroeck, M. (re-
submitted for peer review). Is Everybody Happy? Exploring
the Predictability of Parent Satisfaction with Childcare
in Flanders. Early Childhood Research Quarterly.

* Which datasets in that publication does this sheet apply
to?: The sheet applies to all data used in the
publication.



3. Information about the files that have been stored
==========================================================
```

3a. Raw data
----

* Have the raw data been stored by the main researcher?
[X] YES / [ ] NO
If NO, please justify:

* On which platform are the raw data stored?
  - [X] researcher PC: SPSS files containing raw data are stored on the researcher's PC (observation data on process quality in 'MEMOQ.MASTER.NULMETING.zsav', data from parent questionnaires in 'MEMOQ.MASTER.OUDERS.sav').
  - [X] research group file server: The same files are stored on the pp04-server (Shares (S:) > pp04archief > MeMoQ). However, data will be destroyed after 5 years due to contractual agreements with Kind en Gezin.
  - [X] other (specify): Raw data (i.e. observation notes and assessments of process quality, parental questionnaires) are partly stored in the faculty archive and in the archive of ECEGO (ExteriseCentrum ErvaringsGericht Onderwijs).

* Who has direct access to the raw data (i.e., without intervention of another person)?
  - [X] main researcher: Data were retrieved from a larger study (MeMoQ), commissioned by Kind en Gezin. Data will be stored at the pp04 server for 5 years (2016 - 2021) and thereafter need to be destroyed. In other words, the main researcher can access raw data until 2021.
  - [X] responsible ZAP: Idem, until 2021. Thereafter, data will be destroyed.
  - [ ] all members of the research group
  - [ ] all members of UGent
  - [X] other (specify): Raw data are owned by a third party (Kind en Gezin). Permission from Kind en Gezin is needed to access and use the data.

3b. Other files
----

* Which other files have been stored?
  - [X] file(s) describing the transition from raw data to reported results. Specify: Data processing is documented by means of data cleaning records, coding schemes and syntax files. All files are stored on the pp04-server (in the 'MeMoQ' folder, as well as in the folder of the main researcher: Shares (S:) > vakgroep > pp04acl > Jeroen >

_BACKUP > Documents > Werk > Doctoraat > Publicaties > ARTIKEL 4 > Data-analyse > Replication materials).

- [X] file(s) containing processed data. Specify: Files containing processed data (e.g. cleaned dataset, subset of data with variables and cases relevant to this study, aggregated dataset) are stored on the main researcher's PC and the pp04 server.
- [X] file(s) containing analyses. Specify: The outcome of multilevel analyses are stored in Excel sheets on the main researcher's PC and the pp04-server.
- [ ] files(s) containing information about informed consent
- [ ] a file specifying legal and ethical provisions
- [X] file(s) that describe the content of the stored files and how this content should be interpreted. Specify: See methodology section in the article. In addition, a 'read me' file describes the content of all relevant documents in the folder with 'Replication Materials'.
- [X] other files. Specify: Documents used to inform/recruit participants in the MeMoQ study (e.g. letter from the Minister to encourage childcare provider's participation [Deelname aan nulmeting MEMOQ.pdf], infomation brochure for participating childcare providers [Samenvattend draaiboek_nulmeting_groepsopvang.docx], cover letter of parent questionnaires with information on the aim of the study [Vragenlijst voor ouders_nulmeting_groepsopvang_DEF.pdf]).

* On which platform are these other files stored?
  - [X] individual PC
  - [X] research group file server
  - [ ] other: ...

* Who has direct access to these other files (i.e., without intervention of another person)?
  - [X] main researcher
  - [X] responsible ZAP
  - [ ] all members of the research group
  - [ ] all members of UGent
  - [ ] other (specify): ...

4. Reproduction
===

* Have the results been reproduced independently?: [ ] YES / [X] NO

* If yes, by whom (add if multiple):

```
   - name:
   - address:
   - affiliation:
   - e-mail:


v0.2
```

% Name/identifier study: The language of choice and the childcare choices of language minority families: A portrait of disadvantage (Chapter 3)
% Author: Jeroen Janssen
% Date: August 11, 2020

1. Contact details
==

1a. Main researcher

- name: Jeroen Janssen
- address: Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Gent
- e-mail: jerojans.Janssen@UGent.be

1b. Responsible Staff Member (ZAP)

- name: Prof. Michel Vandenbroeck
- address: Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Gent
- e-mail: Michel.Vandenbroeck@UGent.be

If a response is not received when using the above contact details, please send an email to data.pp@ugent.be or contact Data Management, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Ghent, Belgium.

2. Information about the datasets to which this sheet applies
==

* Reference of the publication in which the datasets are reported: Janssen, J., Spruyt, B., Van Droogenbroeck, F., & Vandenbroeck, M. (submitted for peer review). The language of choice and the childcare choices of language minority families: A portrait of disadvantage. Early Education and Development.

* Which datasets in that publication does this sheet apply to?: The sheet applies to all data used in the publication.

3. Information about the files that have been stored
==

3a. Raw data

* Have the raw data been stored by the main researcher?
[X] YES / [ ] NO
If NO, please justify:

* On which platform are the raw data stored?
  - [X] researcher PC: SPSS files containing raw data are stored on the researcher's PC (observation data on process quality in 'MEMOQ.MASTER.NULMETING.zsav', data from parent questionnaires in 'MEMOQ.MASTER.OUDERS.sav').
  - [X] research group file server: The same files are stored on the pp04-server (Shares (S:) > pp04archief > MeMoQ). However, data will be destroyed after 5 years due to contractual agreements with Kind en Gezin.
  - [X] other (specify): Raw data (i.e. observation notes and assessments of process quality, parental questionnaires) are partly stored in the faculty archive and in the archive of ECEGO (ExteriseCentrum ErvaringsGericht Onderwijs).

* Who has direct access to the raw data (i.e., without intervention of another person)?
  - [X] main researcher: Data were retrieved from a larger study (MeMoQ), commissioned by Kind en Gezin. Data will be stored at the pp04-server for 5 years (2016 - 2021) and thereafter need to be destroyed. In other words, the main researcher can access raw data until 2021.
  - [X] responsible ZAP: Idem, until 2021. Thereafter, data will be destroyed.
  - [ ] all members of the research group
  - [ ] all members of UGent
  - [X] other (specify): Raw data are owned by a third party (Kind en Gezin). Permission from Kind en Gezin is needed to access and use the data.

3b. Other files

* Which other files have been stored?
  - [X] file(s) describing the transition from raw data to reported results. Specify: Data processing is documented by means of data cleaning records, coding schemes and syntax files. All files are stored on the pp04-server (in the 'MeMoQ' folder, as well as in the folder of the main researcher: Shares (S:) > vakgroep > pp04acl > Jeroen >

_BACKUP > Documents > Werk > Doctoraat > Publicaties > ARTIKEL 3 > Data-analyse > Replication materials).

- [X] file(s) containing processed data. Specify: Files containing processed data (e.g. cleaned dataset, subset of data with variables and cases relevant to this study, aggregated dataset) are stored on the main researcher's PC and the pp04 server.
- [X] file(s) containing analyses. Specify: The oucome of all analyses are stored in Excel sheets on the main researcher's PC and the pp04 server.
- [ ] files(s) containing information about informed consent
- [ ] a file specifying legal and ethical provisions
- [X] file(s) that describe the content of the stored files and how this content should be interpreted. Specify: See methodology section in the article. In addition, a 'read me' file describes the content of all relevant documents in the folder with 'Replication Materials'.
- [X] other files. Specify: Documents used to inform/recruit participants in the MeMoQ study (e.g. letter from the Minister to encourage childcare provider's participation [Deelname aan nulmeting MEMOQ.pdf], infomation brochure for participating childcare providers [Samenvattend draaiboek_nulmeting_groepsopvang.docx], cover letter of parent questionnaires with information on the aim of the study [Vragenlijst voor ouders_nulmeting_groepsopvang_DEF.pdf]).

* On which platform are these other files stored?
  - [X] individual PC
  - [X] research group file server
  - [ ] other: ...

* Who has direct access to these other files (i.e., without intervention of another person)?
  - [X] main researcher
  - [X] responsible ZAP
  - [ ] all members of the research group
  - [ ] all members of UGent
  - [ ] other (specify): ...

4. Reproduction
==

* Have the results been reproduced independently?: [ ] YES / [X] NO

* If yes, by whom (add if multiple):

```
   - name:
   - address:
   - affiliation:
   - e-mail:


v0.2
```

% Name/identifier study: From Multiculturalism to Super-diversity in the Early Years: An Analysis of Curriculum Issues (Chapter 4)
% Author: Jeroen Janssen
% Date: August 11, 2020

1. Contact details

1a. Main researcher

- name: Jeroen Janssen
- address: Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Gent
- e-mail: jerojans.Janssen@UGent.be

1b. Responsible Staff Member (ZAP)

- name: Prof. Michel Vandenbroeck
- address: Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Gent
- e-mail: Michel.Vandenbroeck@UGent.be

If a response is not received when using the above contact details, please send an email to data.pp@ugent.be or contact Data Management, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Ghent, Belgium.

2. Information about the datasets to which this sheet applies

* Reference of the publication in which the datasets are reported: Janssen, J., Devlieghere, J., De Wilde, L., & Vandenbroeck, M. (submitted for peer review). From Multiculturalism to Super-diversity in the Early Years: An Analysis of Curriculum Issues. Comparative Education.

* Which datasets in that publication does this sheet apply to?: The sheet applies to all data used in the publication.

3. Information about the files that have been stored

3a. Raw data

---

* Have the raw data been stored by the main researcher?
[X] YES / [ ] NO
If NO, please justify:

* On which platform are the raw data stored?
  - [X] researcher PC: All 11 curriculum frameworks used within the study are stored in the folder 'Sample of (11) curricula' on the researcher's PC.
  - [X] research group file server: The same folder is stored on the pp04-server.
  - [ ] other (specify): ...

* Who has direct access to the raw data (i.e., without intervention of another person)?
  - [X] main researcher
  - [X] responsible ZAP
  - [ ] all members of the research group
  - [ ] all members of UGent
  - [ ] other (specify): ...

3b. Other files

---

* Which other files have been stored?
  - [X] file(s) describing the transition from raw data to reported results. Specify: See methodology section in the article.
  - [X] file(s) containing processed data. Specify:
  - [X] file(s) containing analyses. Specify: See findings section in the article.
  - [ ] files(s) containing information about informed consent
  - [ ] a file specifying legal and ethical provisions
  - [ ] file(s) that describe the content of the stored files and how this content should be interpreted. Specify: ...
  - [ ] other files. Specify: ...

* On which platform are these other files stored?
  - [X] individual PC
  - [X] research group file server
  - [ ] other: ...

* Who has direct access to these other files (i.e., without intervention of another person)?

```
  - [X] main researcher
  - [X] responsible ZAP
  - [ ] all members of the research group
  - [ ] all members of UGent
  - [ ] other (specify): ...


4. Reproduction
==========================================================
* Have the results been reproduced independently?: [ ] YES
/ [X] NO

* If yes, by whom (add if multiple):
   - name:
   - address:
   - affiliation:
   - e-mail:


v0.2
```

% Name/identifier study: (De)constructing parental involvement in early childhood curricular frameworks (Chapter 5)
% Author: Jeroen Janssen
% Date: August 11, 2020

1. Contact details

1a. Main researcher

- name: Jeroen Janssen
- address: Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Gent
- e-mail: jerojans.Janssen@UGent.be

1b. Responsible Staff Member (ZAP)

- name: Prof. Michel Vandenbroeck
- address: Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Gent
- e-mail: Michel.Vandenbroeck@UGent.be

If a response is not received when using the above contact details, please send an email to data.pp@ugent.be or contact Data Management, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Ghent, Belgium.

2. Information about the datasets to which this sheet applies

* Reference of the publication in which the datasets are reported: Janssen, J., & Vandenbroeck, M. (2018). (De)constructing parental involvement in early childhood curricular frameworks. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 26(6), 813-832.

* Which datasets in that publication does this sheet apply to?: The sheet applies to all data used in the publication.

3. Information about the files that have been stored

3a. Raw data

```
-----------------------------------------------------------

* Have the raw data been stored by the main researcher?
[X] YES / [ ] NO
If NO, please justify:

* On which platform are the raw data stored?
  - [X] researcher PC: All 13 curriculum frameworks used
within the study are stored in the folder 'Sample of (13)
curricula' on the researcher's PC.
  - [X] research group file server: The same folder is
stored on the pp04-server.
  - [ ] other (specify):

* Who has direct access to the raw data (i.e., without
intervention of another person)?
  - [X] main researcher
  - [X] responsible ZAP
  - [ ] all members of the research group
  - [ ] all members of UGent
  - [ ] other (specify):


3b. Other files
-----------------------------------------------------------

* Which other files have been stored?
  - [X] file(s) describing the transition from raw data to
reported results. Specify: See methodology section in the
article.
  - [X] file(s) containing processed data. Specify: An
Nvivo file 'Vergelijking curricula42.nvp' contains the
processed data.
  - [X] file(s) containing analyses. Specify: See findings
section in the article.
  - [ ] files(s) containing information about informed
consent
  - [ ] a file specifying legal and ethical provisions
  - [ ] file(s) that describe the content of the stored
files and how this content should be interpreted. Specify:
  - [ ] other files. Specify:


* On which platform are these other files stored?
  - [X] individual PC:
  - [X] research group file server:
  - [ ] other: ...
```

```
* Who has direct access to these other files (i.e.,
without intervention of another person)?
  - [X] main researcher
  - [X] responsible ZAP
  - [ ] all members of the research group
  - [ ] all members of UGent
  - [ ] other (specify): ...


4. Reproduction
==========================================================
* Have the results been reproduced independently?: [ ] YES
/ [X] NO

* If yes, by whom (add if multiple):
   - name:
   - address:
   - affiliation:
   - e-mail:


v0.2
```