

**EARLY CHILDHOOD AND CARE IN A TURNING POINT?
WE CAN TURN THE TIDE: RECLAIMING WELL-
BEING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE AS THE
FOUNDATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
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PRESENT PRESSURES EXPERIENCED BY

(PROFESSOR URBAN)

- 1) Early childhood educators to abandon the values of their profession and adopt 'school-readiness' curricula and assessment regimes instead**
- 2) Policymakers who are facing pressures from uniform global approach to early childhood where league table results (by OECD, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) seem to matter more than the well-being of every child**

(PULKKINEN)

- 3) Parents, particularly women whose work career, income and pensions are said to be threatened if they take care of their own children.**

The image of a child; viewpoints

- 1) Science; genes are decisive
- 2) Religious views; Christian, Muslim etc.
- 3) Philosophical: Locke, Rousseau etc.
- 4) Psychiatric/psychological views
 - Freud: child is a miniature adult
 - Behaviorism
 - Developmental psychological; Piaget, neuropsychology, etc.
 - Clinical views: Rogers, Maslow (self-fulfillment)
- 5) Convention of the Child's Rights (protection, provision, participation)
- 6) Economics views; OECD growth ideology, economics research

Economics Professor James Heckman

“The highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible, from birth through age five, in **disadvantaged families. ... The best investment is in quality early childhood development from birth to five for **disadvantaged children and their families**.”**

“Our economic future depends on providing the tools for upward mobility and building a highly educated, skilled workforce. Early childhood education is the most efficient way to accomplish these goals.”

The Heckman Equation

Invest

Invest in educational and developmental resources for disadvantaged families to provide equal access to successful early human development

Develop

Nurture early development of cognitive and social skills in children from birth to age five

Sustain

Sustain early development with effective education through to adulthood

Gain

Gain a more capable, productive and valuable workforce that pays dividends to America for generations to come

An alternative view of the child

The child is

- ***endowed with his/her inner potential to grow, learn and communicate, and to participate in his/her own way and with his/her own rights in our human society;***
- ***an agent of his or her own life, but in relation with others;***
- ***not an object that must be pushed and modeled into a shape that pleases the adult.***

Adults who are sensitive to the child's needs help him/her to unfold his/her uniqueness.

The quality of relationships with important adults, such as parents and teachers, and other children are important to his/her growth as a human being.

(Alliance for Childhood European Network Group)

Sources

Matthes, M. (2010). How to improve the quality of childhood: Setting the scene. In C. Clouder, B. Heys and M. Matthes (Eds.), Improving the quality of childhood in the European Union – Current perspectives (Vol. 1).

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Pulkkinen, L. (2014). Positive human development: A spontaneous or guided process? Policy lessons from 45 years of longitudinal research in Finland. In M. Matthes, L. Pulkkinen, L. M. Pinto & C. Clouder (Eds.), Improving the quality of childhood in Europe 2014 (Vol 5).

All volumes are available at:

www.allianceforchildhood.eu (publications)

The Whole System: an organisational perspective

| Age Category | Home Environment | Daycare and School Environment | Work Environment | Free time Environment | Virtual Environment |
|------------------|---|--------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 22 and older | | | | | |
| 19-21 years old | | | | | |
| 16-18 years old | <p>In each box there are persons and organisations active, that strive to attain their own objectives for that box.</p> <p>Often these organisations don't know each other, have different perceptions of the child, different objectives and work programmes that may clash with each other.</p> <p>There is not one organisations that overlooks the entire system.</p> <p>The same is true for scientific disciplines.</p> | | | | |
| 13-15 years old | | | | | |
| 7-12 years old | | | | | |
| 4-6 years old | | | | | |
| 0-3 years old | | | | | |
| Pregnancy | | | | | |
| Before pregnancy | | | | | |

A view of the child in the reformed national core curriculum for the comprehensive school (in force in 2016)

Comprehensive basic education is founded on the inherent value of childhood.

Every child is unique and valuable as he or she is. Every child has a right to evolve to his or her full measure as a human being and member of society.

In this process the child needs encouragement and individualized support and an experience that he or she is listened to at school, that his or her opinions are valued, and that his or her learning and well-being are important.

What is important is the experience that he or she can build together with other people the positive functioning and well-being of his or her community.

(Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet, 2014, p. 15)

A view of the family in relation to the child

Act on Child Custody and Right of Access (361/1983). © Ministry of Justice, Finland.

(1) The purpose of child custody is to ensure the welfare and balanced development of a child in accordance with the child's individual needs and wishes. The purpose is also to secure a close and affectionate relationship in particular between the child and his or her parents.

(2) A child must be ensured good care and upbringing as well as supervision and protection appropriate for his or her age and stage of development. A child should be brought up in a secure and stimulating environment and receive an education that corresponds with his or her inclinations and wishes.

(3) A child must be brought up with understanding, security and affection. A child must not be subdued, corporally punished or treated offensively in any other way. The growth of a child towards independence, responsibility and adulthood must be supported and encouraged.

Child-centered parenting:

Child-centered parents are consistently more capable of organizing their behavior from the perspective of the child by providing a context in which the child could feel the parents' warmth and acceptance, sustained involvement and interest in the child's activities, consideration of the child's opinions, and responsiveness to the child's needs for comfort and guidance."

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) adopted by the UN General Assembly

UN has convinced that **the family**, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community;

recognized that **the child**, for the fully and harmonious development of his or her personality, should **grow up in a family environment**, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding;

and that there are children living in exceptionally difficult conditions, and that such children need special consideration

Protection Provision Participation

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the **right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child**, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Is a child heard? The length of the daycare; the content of activity, noise, bullying

Daycare vs. Early Education (and Care, care dropped out in the Finnish translation)

The general objective for the daycare was in Finland by law from 1983 to 2015: to support homes in their task of rearing children

Early education by law since 2015: a planned totality of child rearing, teaching and care where **pedagogics** is particularly emphasized.

Remarks:

- The emphasis of pedagogics excludes parents who have not training in pedagogics, and highlights professionalism
- Home context for early education; early education as defined above begins from the birth, and parents have the major responsibility for their children

Policymaking in respect to the child

Parents' career lines, pensions. Present systems can be changed:

- * Parental support from common sources, not from the employers' of the parents
- * Caring children is counted as a productive work making eligible for a pension
- * Continued education is applied to people who return from parental leaves to work.