

# ICMEC and ten years of policy research: a conversation

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ECSDN meeting 9 March 2018



# ICMEC

<https://www.uel.ac.uk/schools/cass/research/the-international-centre-for-the-study-of-the-mixed-economy-of-childcare>

Founded in 2007 by Helen Penn and Eva Lloyd: The International Centre for the Study of the Mixed Economy of Childcare



# Systems theory

...if scholars continue to produce the same kinds of research on the same topics, there is likely to be little improvement in the way ECE is conceptualized and delivered. There is a need for new thinking about how quality is produced, how services can be more equitably distributed, and how societies can prevent the 'here-today, gone-tomorrow' approach to ECE policies.

(Kagan et al, 2016: 165)



# Applying systems theory in early childhood research

Systems theory generally and new institutional theory specifically, differ from conventional thinking in that they are concerned with multiple institutions and phenomena including the laws, policies, regulations, guidelines, and institutional structures that shape the nature of services offered to young children and their families

(Kagan et al, 2016: 164)



# Childcare markets research

- Lloyd, E. and Penn, H. (Eds) (2012) *Childcare markets – Can they deliver an equitable service?* Bristol: The Policy Press in association with the University of Chicago Press
- Lloyd, E. and Penn, H. (2014) 'Childcare markets in an age of austerity', *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 22 (3): 386-396



# ICMEC policy research

- Penn. H. and Lloyd, E. (2013) *The costs of childcare. A report for DFE*. London: Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre. Available from:  
[http://www.cwrc.ac.uk/resources/documents/Costs\\_of\\_childcare\\_July\\_2013.pdf](http://www.cwrc.ac.uk/resources/documents/Costs_of_childcare_July_2013.pdf)
- Penn, H. and Lloyd, E. (2014) 'How can government ensure that early care and education is of high quality in a market system? Learning from international experience', in Wolfe, T. (Ed.) *'Childcare' - business or profession?* Dublin: Start Strong. Available from:  
[http://www.startstrong.ie/files/Childcare\\_Business\\_or\\_Profession\\_Full\\_Report\\_Web\\_Version.pdf](http://www.startstrong.ie/files/Childcare_Business_or_Profession_Full_Report_Web_Version.pdf)

# Recent ICMEC policy research input

Frontier Economics (2016) *Feasibility study into evaluating the labour and childcare market impacts of Tax-Free Childcare and the Free Early Education Entitlement. A report prepared for HM Revenue and Customs and the Department for Education. HMRC Research Report 406. London: HMRC*

Available from:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/499168/Feasibility\\_study\\_into\\_evaluating\\_the\\_labour\\_and\\_childcare\\_market\\_impacts\\_of\\_Tax-Free\\_Childcare\\_and\\_the\\_Free\\_Early\\_Education\\_Entitlement.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/499168/Feasibility_study_into_evaluating_the_labour_and_childcare_market_impacts_of_Tax-Free_Childcare_and_the_Free_Early_Education_Entitlement.pdf)



# Recent ICMEC policy evaluation input

Paull, G. and LaValle, I. with Speight, S. and Jones, H. (2017a) *Evaluation of early implementation of 30 hours free childcare*. Research Report. London: Department for Education. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/30-hours-free-childcare-early-implementation-evaluation>

Paull, G., and LaValle, I. with Speight, S., Marshall, L. and White, C. (2017b) *Evaluation of early rollout of 30 hours free childcare*. Research Report. London: Department for Education. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-rollout-of-30-hours-free-childcare-evaluation>



# 30 hours extension evaluations

A good overview by Ivana LaValle, deputy director of the 2017 early implementation and 2017 early roll-out evaluations and Visiting Scholar attached to ICMEC:

<http://www.insidegovernment.co.uk/uploads/2018/02/ivana-la-valle.pdf>



# Current policy evaluation

‘Evaluation of the first year of national rollout of 30 hours free childcare’

The evaluation will take place in 12 local authorities (LAs) across England to assess the implementation and impact of the policy in the first year of national rollout.

Lead agency: Frontier Economics, with National Centre for Social Research and University of East London input

Evaluation report due late summer 2018



# 30 hours across the UK

- Scotland due to introduce 30 hours for all 3 and 4 year olds in 2020
- Wales is currently 'triallying' 30 hours in parts of 7 local authorities for children whose parents meet certain employment criteria with a view to a national roll-out in September 2018
- Northern Ireland is not planning to introduce 30 hours



# Does this observation apply?

...programmatic expansions that simply build on a dysfunctional structure are unlikely to produce significant gains for quality, much less for the equitable distribution of services or for their sustainability

(Kagan et al, 2016: 165)



# UK early childhood policy developments: some questions

- How to analyse these developments from a multi-disciplinary perspective?
- How to best examine them with ECS students?
- How to interpret relevant evaluation findings?
- How to explore the politics informing them?  
(Lloyd, 2015; Lloyd, 2017)
- How to examine them within a comparative framework, e.g. a European framework?
- How to explore realistic policy alternatives?



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# References

- Kagan, S.L., Araujo, M.C., Jaimovich, A. and Aguayo, Y.C. (2016) 'Understanding systems theory and thinking: early childhood education in Latin America and the Caribbean', in A. Farrell, S.L. Kagan and E. K.M. Tisdall (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Early Childhood Research*. Sage Publications Ltd (UK) Chapter 11
- Lloyd, E. (2015) 'Early education and care policy under the Coalition Government', *London Review of Education*, 13 (2): 144-156
- Lloyd, E. (2017) 'Early childhood education and care: poverty and access. Perspectives from England,' in Miller, L, Cameron, C., Dalli, C, and Barbour, N. (Eds) *The SAGE Handbook of early childhood policy*. London and New York: SAGE

