Understanding employment quality in childcare services.

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Anchors of employment quality: a framework

Goal:

- Developing a framework that enables case studies in different European countries.

Focus:

- Detection of differences in employment quality of childcare staff between the countries.
- Explaining these differences by the interplay between political choices and mechanisms.
- Recommendations
Childcare workers at risk

80% more chance at **psychological illnesses** than average worker – Sweden

*4th highest risk of becoming ill of all professions* – Sweden

84% of staff **not covered by CLA’s** – England

*More than 20% receives less than minimum wage* – England

*Having a second job is norm rather than exception* – Bulgaria

>50% **ages 50 or more** – Bulgaria

*50% of childcare staff report emotional distress* – Italy

*One in five childcare staff experience low professional realization* – Italy
But different causes in QWL

Voice and representation

Job content

Employment conditions

Working environment

Job and employment quality

Well-being
Trends in job content:
- *Pedagogical development time went down*
- *Administrative burden went up*
- *Less interaction with children*
- *More complex and greater groups*
- *More challenging educational tasks*

→ *Job content more complex*
England

Trends in employment conditions
- No redundancy rules
- Precarious employment contracts
- Low pay and no other compensations
- Limited training and qualifications not rewarded
- Limited career opportunities

Trends in industrial relations
- No CLA for private sector (84%)
- Almost no trade union coverage in private sector
- Limited voice and representation

→ “It’s like the far west out here”
Bulgaria

Trends in employment conditions
- Very low pay in public sector
- Long working times

Trends in job content
- Repetitive work in huge groups
- Conflicts with parents

Trends in working environment
- Old infrastructure (and ageing working force!)
- High noise and physically demanding work

→ Very low employment quality overall
Italy

• A lot of positive trends recently:
  – High quality standards & control (for both public & private provisions)
  – Strict requirements for working environment
  – High quality education requirements for childcare staff
  – Yearly training is mandatory and paid
  – Complex jobs but with high levels of autonomy and social support

• But still some weaknesses:
  – Stagnant wages (difference public and private provision)
  – Temporary employment contracts (difference public and private provision)
  – Limited career opportunities
  – Still a black market for childcare
Different explanations in policy mixes

Sweden:

Child development & gender equality

- *Increase in quality of services by promoting higher educational standards*
- *New public management ideals*
- *Budgetary restrictions (austerity) & regional differences*
Different explanations in policy mixes

England:

Female labour market participation
- *Pure marketization: childcare as subject of speculation and profit*
- *Austerity decreased parental incomes and already limited budgets & autonomy of local authorities*
- *Little public control*

Heritage of conservative family values
- *Childcare requires merely female skills*

→ Polarization of quality of services & employment / race to the bottom
Different explanations in policy mixes

Bulgaria:

Ambitious child development/equality ideals

- Public provision

- Limited budget (but not a result of austerity)

= generates low quality services & employment (and the need for second jobs and an informal sector)
Different explanations in policy mixes

Italy:

Recent positive trends result from clear policy choice

= Improving child development and female LM participation

In the past, a more traditional, family-based vision on childcare
+ regionally organized

→ Huge regional differences in provision and affordability of childcare
→ But general **upward trend in employment quality**.
Different recommendations

Sweden:
- Further professionalization to prepare for additional complexity
- More work means more staff
- Regional differences in budget

England:
- Recruitment of childcare staff in trade unions
- More public control on employment conditions / level playing field
- Clear system of qualifications
- Public provision as counterpart for race to the bottom of private sector
Different recommendations

Bulgaria

- *Making the job more attractive (pay levels, employment conditions, public recognition…)*
- *Investments in number and training of staff*
- *Recruitment of informal childcare staff in trade union*

Italy

- *Wage progression*
- *More stable and permanent employment contracts*
- *Developing career opportunities*
- *Counter the regional differences in availability/affordability*
Conclusions