

Notes on UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre Report Card 8: The Child Care Transition. A League Table of early childhood education and care in economically advantaged countries.

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New Zealand rates in the top 10 countries on the league table used in this report with 6 out of 10 (basic minimum standards only) benchmarks met. However, we still seem to have a colonial attitude about what we do here. This can be seen by the way we still seem to seek and import programmes in their entirety such as PAFT from Missouri and the latest Before Five documentation requiring subjective teacher's judgements about each child.

It is disappointing to note that NZ is third from last on the table for effective parental leave in providing 14 weeks @ 50% salary. Australia and USA are the last two on this benchmark with no statutory right to leave and no payment of earnings. 16 countries pay 80 – 100% of earnings for varying amounts of leave.

How can we show better support for our parents and babies?

- "...high quality care – and only high quality care – offers long term benefits to society in the form of increased productivity and incomes and higher returns on investments in education" (p31).
- "Returns on early childhood education can be as high as \$1 to \$8 but society over invests in remedial skill investments at late ages and under invests in the early years". (P 9)
- "Enriching early experience is far more decisive in promoting human capital formation than remedial education" (p 47 lit review)

Surely these statements are clear about ongoing and further investment and supporting parent, families and especially our youngest citizens!

The most important single factor necessary for quality is the relationship between the child and the teacher.

- Currently staff turnover in for-profit services tends to be higher (a factor which from the child's point of view, translates into instability of care) and makes this essential part of quality impossible. Note: (p18)

- Free choice in ECE improves language at 7 and spending less time in whole group activities improves children's cognitive performance (p 53 lit review)

How is this consistent with the current pressures to 'hot house' children with 'front end loading' of information and things they need to know and do before they are even physically ready?

Why are we ignoring this global research?

In light of this Report how can less training for Early Childhood teachers working with infants and toddlers possibly be justified as the government indicated they would allow?

- (page 26 states that the idea that a higher level of qualifications being necessary for teachers of older children is "dangerously out of date) i.e. **ALL** ECE must be trained especially those working with infants and toddlers
- "overall there is a consensus that childcare that is 'too early and for too long' can be damaging. (P12)
- P4 Currently childcare is driven by "needs and pressures of the moment, uninfluenced by long term vision or choice" (4)

Surely as these children are our future we need to be a bit wiser now for later when they are running the world? Who are the 'ideal citizens' we are creating and what environments will nurture these prospective leaders of the world? UNCROC Article 3 is clear that the 'best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration' how is this fitting with our current situation?

Children's rights begin before the age of five!

Latest research shows that if a child is stressed too much and does not have familiar trusted adult to provide the prompt, intimate reassurance to bring stress hormone levels down the brain's stress levels maybe mis-set. Cortisol produced by stress is known to damage the developing brain and produce stress related illness in later life.

Neuroscience is finding that 'loving, stable, secure, stimulating and rewarding relationships with family and caregivers in the earliest years of life are critical for almost aspects of a child's development i.e. that children under the age of one are best cared for by parents This Report also states that what parents do is more important than who they are" (lit review page 53)

This Report can be used to support us to make wise choices for our collective future in New Zealand. We cannot afford to ignore this

conclusive global research from 25 countries particularly the neuroscience which must mean taking into consideration support for our youngest children in NZ to become confident, competent learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society. (1996, Te Whaariki, Early Childhood Curriculum)

? Question about a fact. Many NZ Early Childhood Centres have more than 24 children attending at the same time. The largest are 45 – 50. Where did the number 24 for NZ come from? (See NZ profile in Annex of Benchmarks.).