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CHILDCARE WORKERS WITH CHILDREN UNDER 4

European Commission Childcare Network

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Report on an EC Childcare Network Technical Seminar

Leiden: April 27-28, 1990

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European Commission Childcare Network

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION CHILDCARE NETWORK

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Contents of the report

Background to the seminar

The European Commission Childcare Network was established as part of the EC Second Equal Opportunities Programme; it consists of an expert from each Member State and a Co-ordinator. In 1988, the Network produced a major report on childcare policies and services throughout the European Community - **Childcare and Equality of Opportunity**. As part of its continuing work, the Network was funded by the Commission to organise 4 technical seminars on priority issues - rural families, childcare workers with young children (under 4), quality in services and men as carers. The specific objective of these seminars was to make recommendations for action for the Commission to consider in developing (i)the European Community's Third Equal Opportunities Programme, which begins in 1991, and (ii)a Recommendation on Childcare, which will form part of the Action Programme to implement the Social Charter.

The seminar discussed in this report was concerned with childcare workers in services providing for th **youngest** age group of children, below the age of admission to **kindergarten** or **school**; in most countries, this means children under 3, but in some cases (such as the Netherlands) the age is 4 - hence the title of the seminar. The focus on workers with this age group of children followed from the findings of the Network's 1988 report which showed that childcare workers, especially with very young children, were overwhelmingly women; and that while the pay, conditions, training and status of childcare workers was in general poor, "the worst circumstances and lowest status are found among workers who mainly care for children under 3".

The poor conditions and status of these workers is a cause of concern for two reasons. First, there are serious implications for **women's employment.**

> "Childcare, especially of very young children, is devalued work. The pay and conditions bear no relationship to the importance, complexity and demands of the work. Like many jobs, it is regarded as unskilled because it is feminised.... Because of the poor pay and conditions of so many workers, childcare services in Europe contribute to the unequal position of women in the labour market;

they are a major source of low earnings and inadequate conditions".

Second, and equally important, there are adverse consequences for **children and quality of services.** The Childcare Network Report suggested that "poor pay and conditions do not encourage high levels of job performance, especially in a job which is very demanding (and) are more likely to lead to a high turnover, low morale and motivation". Evidence to support this view has recently come from a major American research - **the National Child Care Staffing Study** - which studied over 200 nurseries in 5 cities in the United States (a detailed summary of the main findings from this study is included in the seminar papers in Appendix 2).

This American study found clear evidence of poor pay and conditions, with "childcare staff (earning) abysmally low wages...less than half as much as comparably educated women". Overall, the quality of the nurseries was assesed as "barely adequate". Most significant however was the connection between wages and quality. Better quality centres had higher wages; they also had better adult working conditions, staff with better education and training and more workers caring for fewer children. Pay was also related to staff turnover; overall, staff turnover had nearly trebled between 1977 and 1988 and was currently 41% a year, but workers earning the lowest wages were "twice as likely to leave their jobs as those earning the highest wages". Moreover, children who attended lower quality nurseries with more staff turnover were less competent in language and social development. The report concludes that "by failing to meet the needs of adults who work in childcare, we are threatening not only their well-being but that of the children in their care".

The seminar programme and the preparation of this report

The seminar on childcare workers with young children was held in the Netherlands, and organised by the Dutch representative on the Childcare Network, Liesbeth Pot, and the Network Coordinator, Peter Moss. The seminar had 27 participants, from all Member States, 6 of whom were members of the Network; a full

list of participants is provided in Appendix 1.

The seminar began with a session on the nature of childcare work with young children; this was followed by three sessions on various aspects of training, including initial and continuous training for workers in childcare centres and training for other groups of workers. The morning of the second day had a session on pay and conditions, and another on the role of trades unions. In the afternoon, participants divided into small working groups to prepare conclusions and recommendations.

Four written papers were prepared and distributed in advance of the seminar (see Appendix 2 for the full texts), while 10 participants were also asked, in advance, to prepare specific verbal presentations for the seminar. All participants contributed to the discussions during the course of the seminar.

The final conclusions and recommendations presented below have been prepared by the Network members who attended the seminar, drawing on the proposals made by the small working groups. In doing this, the Network members were assisted by the high level of agreement among the working groups and between participants from different countries, both on general perspectives and specific recommendations. The extent of agreement was not only impressive, but suggests the possibility of a genuinely 'European' perspective on the subject of workers for childcare services.

The main conclusions from the seminar

1. Any discussion about workers in a service, for example about training or pay and conditions, must start from a clear concept of the service itself, and the nature of the work that needs to be done to meet the objectives of the service. In this case, we must ask - what is the purpose of childcare services for young children? What are the tasks that workers must perform? For the services we are considering, one purpose is to provide safe and secure physical care for children while their parents are at work. In this respect they are an essential requirement for an effective equal opportunities policy and to ensure equal treatment between men and women in

employment. Providing good physical care for children with employed parents is very important and necessary - but it is not sufficient. Services must be concerned with meeting the full range of children's needs, enhancing their development and enriching their experience; they have an educational role, using 'educational' in its broadest sense rather than its narrower, more traditional sense of formal learning in school. In short, the objective of services should be to improve children's quality of life as well as keeping them safe and healthy. Services therefore must be child-oriented - responsive to the individual and collective needs of children - and capable of benefitting all children, whether or not their parents are employed. Services should also be responsive to the needs of all parents, whether or not they are employed, and be able to work in close collaboration and partnership with parents. Finally, European societies are diverse - socially, ethnically, culturally - and services must reflect, value and be responsive to that diversity.

This broad concept of services for young children was shared by participants from many European countries, even though different terms were used in different languages to describe the concept - for example, **pedagogy** in Danish, **accueil educatif** in French and **educacion infantil** in Spanish. The existence of these words to describe the concept reflects a trend to put the concept into practice, for example in Denmark, Spain, and parts of Italy and France. At the same time, certain terms which have been used (and still are used) to describe services for young children - for example **childcare** in English, **garde des enfants** in French, **guarderia** in Spanish and **kinderopvang** in Dutch - appear inadequate to describe this broad concept.

This concept of services helps to define some of the main tasks that workers in these services have to be able to perform -providing safe and secure care, educational activities and, in general, a child-oriented environment; developing close and equal relationships with parents, as a basis for collaboration and support; and being responsive to the different needs, circumstances and backgrounds of children and parents.

2.Work with young children that adopts the broad approach described in (1) should be recognised and valued as a **professional** job. Concerns about possible adverse consequences of increased professionalism expressed in one of the written papers ('Some Thoughts on Problems of more Professionalisation of Childcare') were recognised, and require careful attention. They do not however justify rejecting a more professional approach to work with young children, based on a high standard of initial and continuous training.

3.The roles of parents and workers are quite different and working with young children is very different to being a mother (or father); it is not a job that anyone can do well and requires more than love. Workers must have an interest in and liking for children, but in addition training is essential. Recognition that work with young children is a professional job requires a high level of initial training - at least 3 years and at least at the same level as teachers of older children or medical nurses or social workers - and the training should be professional rather than vocational. Training should involve personal and professional development of theoretical knowledge and creative abilities, and close links between theory and practice in a continuous and integrated process which enables students to try out in practice what has been learnt in theory.

While training should provide specialised preparation for working with the 0-4 age group, it should also cover in some detail older children to provide a broader perspective on childhood.

The starting age for initial training should be at least 18, so that students would not begin work until 21 at the earliest.

4.As well as work with children, the job requires work with parents (a particularly important element) and also in and with the local community. The ability to work as a member of a team is essential; while workers who move to senior positions in institutions need the opportunity to learn particular management skills. These aspects of the work should be reflected in training. Finally, although

a high standard of training is necessary, it is important that this should not limit too much the range of women and men who are able to get places on training courses. Ways need to be found to provide access to initial training for students with good potential but who lack the normal academic qualifications - for example, older people who want to move into this type of work, and working class or ethnic minority candidates who have been failed by the school system. It is important that workers with young children reflect the social, ethnic and age composition of the wider society, so that for example in areas with a large number of ethnic minority children there are also a substantial number of ethnic minority workers.

5.After initial training is completed and workers have started in nursery centres, continuous training is essential. It is necessary for integrating theory and practice, for assisting workers to review, assess and analyze their situation and work, and for developing and implementing programmes of work; it provides workers with support, stimulation, and identity and helps them to renew their interest in working with children and to develop personally and professionally.

Continuous training can include work at an individual level, with opportunities for each worker to go on courses organised outside the context of their particular workplace. But it should also be organised at a group level, in the context of individual nurseries and involving all the workers in each nursery. It should be an integral part of each institution and the working life of each worker. It should be obligatory for all workers, available during working hours and requires appropriate structures and resources (as, for example, the system of pedagogical co-ordinators in Northern Italy who work with a small group of institutions to develop and implement continuous training which is undertaken in the 6 hours per week that all staff have for 'non-child' work (see seminar paper 'The complex role of day care education staff')).

6.Valuing the work as a professional job also requires appropriate pay. Trained workers should be paid at a level that is at least comparable to workers with a similar level of training or of responsibility (for example, a primary school teacher). Workers

also need appropriate working conditions, which reflect the value of the work and provide a work environment which facilitates good quality work. Relevant conditions include: good physical environment; pension rights; paid holidays and sick leave; adequate staff:child ratios; time in the working week away from children for continuous training, work preparation, meetings with other workers and parents and developing community links; and career prospects.

7.The sort of work with young children envisaged above will primarily take place in centres. However in some countries, 'organised childminding' plays an important part in publicly-funded services; some parents prefer this form of service to a centre and these preferences should be respected. Childminders in such schemes should receive pay that reflects the value of the work they do and their level of training. Normal employment conditions should also apply, for example paid holidays and sick leave and pension rights. They should receive regular supervision and support (visits at least every two weeks from a support worker); opportunities for themselves and the children they work with to meet with other childminders and children; access to training programmes; and support with equipment, toys etc.

8.Recognising the value of work with young children through appropriate training, pay and conditions is relatively expensive; good services cannot be provided on the cheap. In Denmark, for example, childminders in publicly-funded 'organised' schemes with 4 children receive wages that are only slightly lower than trained workers in centres (12,152 Dkr a month v. 12,855 Dkr); 5 weeks paid holiday; paid sick leave; visits 1-2 times a month from support workers; the opportunity to meet other minders every week; and free equipment and toys. The cost for a child is 40,000 Dkr a year - lower than the cost of a place in a nursery (for children aged 0-3) but higher than a place in a kindergarten (for children aged 3-6). Elsewhere childminding is sometimes attractive to Governments because it is regarded as 'low cost'; but as the Danish example shows, it can only be 'low cost' (that is substantially cheaper than the Danish costs) by reducing pay and conditions to well below the level that would be

expected by the great majority of workers in the labour force - in other words by exploiting the childminders and devaluing their work.

Parents cannot be expected to pay the full costs of services in which the workers receive appropriate pay and conditions; the sum involved is too high. If services are left to the private market, then either workers will have poor pay and conditions or many parents will be unable to afford good quality provision; inequalities in choice and quality will increase. Public funding to cover most of the cost is therefore essential if all children and parents are to have equal access to good quality services in which the workers are properly trained and paid and the work is recognised and valued as a professional job. Public funding is, however, also justified as the expression of social solidarity for families with children and of collective responsibility for the welfare and quality of life of children.

9.There are a number of 'centres of excellence' in services in Europe - for example, the initial training of workers in Denmark, the developing system of initial training in Spain and the priority access given to unqualified but experienced nursery workers, the organisation of continuous training in areas of Northern Italy, the support and training for childminders in 'organised' schemes in Denmark and Portugal. It is important that future developments encourage a levelling up of services in other parts of Europe to the standards of these 'centres of excellence'; any attempt to level down should be strongly resisted.

10.Publicly-funded services are essential to provide good quality services to children and appropriate pay and conditions to workers (the two aims being related). At present however most young children are cared for privately, in private nurseries, by nannies but mostly by childminders or relatives. Such provision cannot be immediately replaced by publicly-funded services - the process of developing sufficient publicly-funded services to meet demand is likely to take a number of years even if there is strong political commitment. Moreover some parents will prefer to use private solutions, in particular relatives (although the experience of Denmark suggests that the

number of parents using private solutions drops rapidly if good quality publicly-funded services are available; for example, by 1989 the proportion of Danish children under 3 looked after by relatives and private childminders had fallen to just 8% and 12% respectively, while far more children - 47% - were using the extensive system of high quality, publicly-funded services provided in centres and organised childminding schemes).

Private caregivers should be regulated, to ensure minimum standards which will protect children from harm; and private childminders **and relatives** should also receive support from public authorities, including opportunities for training, meeting together, the provision of toys and equipment.

11. More information is needed about all types of workers with young children (including relatives, childminders and workers in centres), to monitor their situation, assess changes and to help with planning to ensure an adequate supply of workers in the future. Information is needed on age, gender and ethnicity of workers; pay and conditions; training; turnover and the reasons workers enter and leave work with young children; job satisfaction; future job expectations. This should be seen as part of a wide range of information that is regularly needed for the effective management and planning of services, including information on parents' use of services and satisfaction with services; and the quality of services. The connection between these different areas of information needs to be examined and developed - for example between information on quality and on workers.

The American National Child Care staffing Study provides an important model. A similar study should be undertaken across the European Community. 12. In general, more research, particularly action research, is needed. There should be close links between research, practice and training, and between researchers, practitioners and students. The development of theory and knowledge should be based on close contact with centres and should draw on the practice in these centres.

13. Trades Unions have an important role to play in improving the position of

workers with young children, but in many cases have neglected this group, either failing to recruit them or paying inadequate attention to them as members. Trades Unions must be concerned not only with improving pay and conditions, but with improving the status of the work with young children through, for example, increasing public understanding of the nature and importance of this work. A priority must be to establish contact with parents and a close and supportive relationship; while the interests of workers and parents are not identical, they have more shared than conflicting interests.

14.**Finally, a number of connections need to be re-emphasised. Equal treatment for women in employment requires access to provide care for children while their parents are at work; this is essential. These services need to be of good quality - in the interests of the children, their parents and society as a whole. Good quality services need to be concerned with more than physical care and take a broad view of children's needs and development; such services should also be available to children whose parents are not employed. Good quality services also require the recruitment and retention of good quality workers, which in turn requires levels of training, pay and conditions that reflect the importance, demands and complexity of the work. This in turn will bring increased status, revaluing what has been devalued work.**

Recommendations from the Network members at the seminar

A.To the Commission

a.There should be a Directive on Childcare Services, setting as a general objective equal access for all children to good quality care and education services.

This Directive should require Member States to ensure 'appropriate' pay, conditions and training for workers in these services, as a necessary condition of quality and to ensure equal treatment for this large group of women workers. 'Appropriate pay, conditions and training' should be defined in a guidance accompanying the Directive, and should include:

i.initial training of at least 3 years at the same level as teachers, and with 18 years being the minimum age of entry;

ii.continuous training within normal working hours available to and obligatory for all workers;

iii.the pay of trained workers (defined as those with the initial training outlined in (i)) to be at least at the same level as workers with similar levels of training or responsibility;

iv.at least 50% of workers in centres to be trained.

v.the pay of untrained workers or of workers with lower levels of training to be at a level equivalent to at least 75% of trained workers.

Member States should be given a 5 year transitionary period to implement changes required by the Directive.

b.The Commission should fund a small working group to prepare more detailed proposals on the contents and organisation of initial training for workers; this should be related to, and preferably be integrated with (in a joint working group), further work to define the purpose of services and the definition and development of quality. The group should prepare their final conclusions within 18 months, after having held consultations with interested individuals and groups in each Member State.

The conclusions of this working group should form the basis for the guidance on childcare workers and quality which should accompany a Directive on Childcare Services.

c.The Commission should fund a programme of visits and exchanges between workers and people involved in the training of workers; and should establish a network of innovative projects involved in the training and support of workers. A database of information on each project would be established and made readily available; exchanges would be made between projects; and seminars and conferences would be organised. This network should be seen as one of several networks, each including projects in a particular priority area and closely linked to the existing Childcare

Network.

d.The Commission should undertake the regular collection of information from Member States on the position of workers with young children, including training; pay and conditions; supply and turnover.

B.To Member States

a.Each Member State should develop a comprehensive and coherent policy to ensure equal access for all children to good quality care and education services, with a clear timetable for achieving this objective. This policy should include meeting the minimum standards on training and pay proposed above (see 1a).

b.Member States should develop a system for predicting the future demand for workers and the anticipated supply, as part of a policy objective of ensuring an adequate supply of workers.

c.Member States should take action to ensure that workers with young children reflect the ethnic and social diversity of the areas in which they work.

d.Member States should provide accessible information to parents about care and education services, and take measures to increase parents' awareness of these services.

e.Member States should regulate, supervise and support all forms of privately funded childcare services; they should also provide support to grandparents and other relatives providing childcare.

f.Member States should collect information on a regular basis on the supply of services for young children (including private services such as grandparents and childminders); the use parents make of these services, parental satisfaction with services and parental preferences; the quality of services; and situation of workers in these services.

3.To Trades Unions

a.Trades Unions should actively seek to recruit all types of workers with young children (and workers with older children).

b.Trades Unions representing workers with young children in different Member states should meet regularly to exchange information and consider developments at a European level.

c.Trades Unions with members who work with young children should examine their structures to ensure the participation of these workers (who are overwhelmingly women) and the adequate representation of their interests.

APPENDIX 1

List of seminar participants

Irene Balaguer (Spain)*

Sandra Benedetti (Italy)

Suzon Bosse-Platière (France)

Pamela Calder (UK)

Hedi Colberg-Schrader (Germany)

Manuela de Carvalho (Portugal)

Teresa Debbi (Italy)

Anne Dethier (Belgium)

Angeles Domingo (Spain)

Perrine Humblet (Belgium)*

Marijke Jacobs (Netherlands)

Claus Jensen (Denmark)

Jytte Jensen (Denmark)

Peter Moss (UK)*

Vibs Neesen (Denmark)

Margaret Nolan (Ireland)

Louis-Marcel Pechillion (France)

Theresa Penha (Portugal)

Emile Pirlot (Belgium)

Liesbeth Pot (Netherlands)*

Paul Prusen (Luxembourg)

Eduarda Ramirez (Portugal)*

Ioanna Ravani (Greece)

Greta Sandler (UK)

Elly Singer (Netherlands)

Rosa Maria Tarradellas (Spain)

Tine Webster (Netherlands)

* - member of EC Childcare Network

APPENDIX 2

Background papers prepared for the seminar

PROFESSION: CHILDCARE WORKER

A review of ideas on mothering and professionalisation of the day care and education of children.

Who cares for the children when the parents have to work or study and are not at home? Should it be a family care giver or a childcare worker in a childcare centre? What should the task of these people be? What qualifications are required? How much should they earn, and what are their career prospects?. Answers to these questions will have to be found soon, because childcare is without doubt becoming a profession. More and more women are obliged or would like to work outside the home, and not many fathers are willing or even able to take care of the children. Moreover, grand-mothers, aunts and neighbours who are ready to look after a child are becoming scarce.

Firstly, the profession of "childcare worker" or "family care giver" is a developing profession. When it comes to training, pay, further training, institutions and functions, nothing has been fixed - everything is still possible. Secondly, childcare workers and family care givers are faced with the challenge of forging a professional identity in an area in which the images of "mother", "child minder" and "teacher" are already firmly fixed in people's minds. There are already a large number of paid and/or professional educational services. Minding other women's children in exchange for remuneration is undoubtedly one of the oldest jobs. Care for young children has been institutionalised for two centuries now, with infant schools, kindergartens, nursery schools, day care centres and play groups. Not only have educational experts - teachers, psychologists and psychiatrists - have been with us for some time, but modern standards of "good mothering" have been greatly influenced by their theories.

It is against this kaleidoscope of images and the needs associated with them (emotional security, status, power and professional earnings) that we have to create a new image of the profession of carer for children whose parents work away from home. When discussing the details of this new profession, we must take a fresh look at the old clichés of mothering, "child minding" and professionalism. The question is and has always been whether the childcare worker should be more of a "mother" or a "teacher". Should childcare workers be educationalists with special training which makes them more expert on the subject of children than "ordinary" people such as parents? Or should it be more of an emotional and personal relationship with the children? And if the latter, aren't (semi-)volunteers the best-qualified childcare workers?

The question of what exactly is meant by "professional" work is often left rather vague: does it mean paid work, or work carried out within an official organisation or institution, or work for which training is necessary? With the new profession of "childcare worker" we have to reconsider all these stereotypes. The aim of this introduction is to examine the assumptions on which these stereotypes are based. Particular attention will be paid to **"family thinking"**, the creation of a separate **children's world** and **hierarchical relations between mothers and experts**. The report finally takes a closer look at several models for "childcare workers".

1. Mothers and education experts

I would like to begin by examining the relations between mothers and education experts. In theoretical models, the following distinctions are often made:

- Mothers establish a loving relationship with their child, while professionals maintain a more distant relationship with the (groups of) mothers/parents and (groups of) children, who change over the years.

- Professionals have the advantages of objective knowledge and specialisation, while mothers have to fall back on their own experience (if any) and (often) need advice from professionals.

- Professionals earn money by taking responsibility for a specialised part of the children's education, while mothers at home are not paid for the daily care and attention which they bestow on their offspring.

The relations between mothers and professional workers have developed over the years, and have also had an impact on the care of children outside the home. In order to give a more specific idea, I would like to briefly discuss the history of professional involvement in childcare in the UK and the Netherlands[1].

The image of the professional educator was born of the thinking of the Enlightenment and the belief in the **superiority of science**. Beginning in the 18th century, certain pedagogues, psychologists and social reformers dreamed of a better society, thanks to the contribution of science to education. According to these Enlightenment thinkers, the child is naturally "good", and if it is educated properly, society will improve. According to the 19th century pedagogues, the effects of early experience are so strong that any bad influence must be guarded against from the very youngest age. This assertion directly questions the competence of the parents, the mother in particular. If early experiences can be so devastating, dare we entrust education to a mother at all?

The answers to this question show that even today, educational experts are ambivalent towards mothers. On the one hand, mothers are put on a pedestal: a good mother makes a positive contribution to society through the way in which she brings up her children. On the other, mothers are pilloried for the "bad behaviour of their children", i.e. truancy, indiscipline, behavioural and psychological problems. For two centuries now, educational experts have searched for ways to teach parents "the right way to bring up their children", preferably **without intervening directly in the family upbringing.**

Mothers were taught, and still are today, how a "healthy" child "normally" develops, through mothers' group and "parenting" courses. Today, people accept advice and outside inspection by consulting centres, regarding the physical and psychological development of their children. Childcare centers are also seen as a means of distributing expert advice, enabling the family upbringing to be corrected or complemented. I will come back to this subject later.

However, before going further I should emphasise that the relation between experts and mothers was seen as hierarchical, even though the mother remained responsible for the daily upbringing of the children. In concrete terms, mothers were supposed to apply what the experts already knew better in theoretical terms. Also, mothers and children from deprived backgrounds were in need of specialist assistance and outside inspection. Middle class mothers took an interest, and still do, in scientific knowledge concerning children and their upbringing: motherhood as an alternative career, in other words.

A second factor in the growing involvement of professionals with children is the **separation of the family and paid work**. From the 18th century onwards, growing numbers of mothers were responsible for looking after the children and for the housework, while the fathers practically disappeared from the children's lives. At the same time, it became more and more difficult for children to "grow into" the external, adult and masculine world outside the family. Thus we have the appearance of a "separate children's world", which had to be "educationally" filled with games, teaching aids etc. In our civilisation, the prototypes of the separate children's world are the playroom in the homes of the better off, and the school. Pre-school education was then created in order to fill the gap which had appeared between the family environment and the school/outside world.

The development of educational techniques for filling this "children's world" was not an easy task. What do you do with a class of 20 to (gulp!) 600 small children crammed into a single room? It took a century or so before construction games, dressing up wardrobes, dolls' houses, play/teaching aids, developmental games etc. made their appearance in educational establishments for young children. Educational experts played a very important part in developing educational techniques specially for young children. Examples are Pestalozzi, Frobel, Montessori and Isaacs, to mention only some of the "greats".

This "small child pedagogy" made its way bit by bit into family life. As the outside world became more and more hostile to children because of traffic, mothers felt the need to have games and to be familiar with educational techniques in order to occupy their children and stimulate their development. Furthermore, the "experts" proclaimed that mothers needed their advice (see the first of the factors quoted regarding the involvement of educational experts).

And so in this way the assistance and control of the experts partly replaced the assistance and control of the family or neighbours.

2. "Child-oriented" versus "mother-oriented" childcare centres.

Childcare centres and pre-primary schools were in many cases been established as a means of influencing and extending the family upbringing and filling the gap between the world of the family and the outside/school world. This is obvious when we look at the types of "extra-familial" services with administrators and educationalists considered positive, and still consider positive today, namely:

- Childcare centres which provide basic education, such as infant schools and kindergartens in the 19th century, together with various nursery schools and day care centres in the 20th. The ages of admission and the opening hours have varied, from full time from the age of one to several hours per week for children admitted to an educational/day care service. These were often meant specifically to prepare the children for school. Nowadays, it seems that "stimulating" a child's development within a group and under the guidance of an expert is an obligatory addition to family upbringing, representing the first step to a social life (at school) outside the family environment.

- Childcare centres whose aim was or is to compensate for the failings of the family life of children from lower social classes or ethnic minorities. One of the main objectives of infant schools in the 19th century, for example, was to combat criminality and immorality by getting the children out of the parental environment as soon as possible. In our own century, during the sixties and seventies there was a boom in "compensatory education" in childcare centres. Even today, great importance is attached in the Netherlands to childcare services for children of minorities, in order to inculcate Dutch language and customs from the very earliest age.

- Childcare centres whose aim is to prevent, detect and solve problems to do with children's upbringing, through expert monitoring and assistance. For example, one particular aim of kindergartens in the 19th century and nursery schools in the present century was and is to support mothers by organising parent meetings, family visits and coffee mornings. In the Netherlands, play centres are considered important as "finding spots" for problem children. The theory is that within the closed family circle, certain problems of child development may not be apparent. A few hours of social contact outside the family circle are therefore essential in the life of the child.

All those childcare centres whose objectives are to improve, correct or complement the family education in cases where the mother remains at home are often termed **child-oriented**. They are aimed in particular at (improving) the education and development of the child. As a general rule, they are appreciated and well received. However, they are vulnerable in periods of rationalisation or economic recession. In the Netherlands, for example, during the depression of the 1930s the age of admission to pre-primary schools was raised from 3 to 4 years (Clerkx, 1984). Similarly, in the late 1980s, the right of access to education from the age of 4 became the subject of heavy controversy, under the pressure of rationalisation measures (Pot, 1988).

By contrast, all those **care centres for children whose mothers work outside the home** have been **resisted or kept to the margins**, until very recently. The first "day care centres" were set up around 1950. They were meant for children whose mothers had to work for financial reasons or who were not able to keep their children for a whole day long, for psychological reasons or because of a physical handicap. They were in fact "emergency services", at least up until 1970. Around that time, things started to change. Feminists demanded childcare facilities as a fundamental right. Mothers with young children wanted to go on working, and demanded the right to economic independence. During the 70s and 80s, the government and private industry in Britain and the Netherlands took a rather dim view of these claims, at the very most proposing a small extension of the crèche system.

As for the educational experts, they were at first shocked. A child should not be sacrificed for the mother! Too early a separation with the mother could have consequences for the child's development. Such facilities would not be **child-oriented** but instead **mother-oriented**. Instead of providing "education" they would provide "care" (in Dutch, the term used is "opvang" - literally "catching" - implying that something has fallen, is out of balance or has been thrown away). During the 1970s, studies of the effects of keeping children in care centres betrayed a double standard towards child-orientation and mother-orientation. On the one hand, studies were aimed at discovering the positive effects of childcare centres on the intellectual development of deprived children - not much was expected of mothers from lower social classes! On the other, in the case of children with working mothers, research was aimed at trying to find negative effects on emotional development. After all, mothers should stay at home! In both cases, research concentrated on children attending care centres half-time or full-time from the age of one upwards.

3. The influence of old stereotypes on the new profession

What does the history of expert and institutional involvement with young children have to do with the modern profession of "childcare worker"? As I understand it, it reveals a certain number of assumptions and stereotypes which form obstacles for the new profession. I would like to deal with these one by one.

3.1 Family with mother at home

Until recently, government policy and most scientific thinking concerned with young children shared the same starting point: both took it as self-evident that mothers should remain at home. The task of the professionals was to concentrate on educational sub-specialisms: "pre-school education", "stimulating", "compensating", and guiding the education of the children through the education of the mother. Tenderness, emotional relationships, care and education in the broader sense remained the privilege of the mother. This model (i.e. the mother at home) was superceded with the creation of services for caring for children with working mothers or parents. I needn't dwell on the hue and cry that followed. All those who have had anything even remotely to do with childcare have experienced the negative reactions. At the moment, the tide is turning in the Netherlands, but the accent is still on "care" (or "catching", in Dutch). Only rarely has it been admitted that if a child spends three or four days away from home, then the parents are in fact delegating part of their children's education.

3.2 Day care : un(der)paid women's work

The importance which many experts attach to the very early years is inversely proportional to the wages of mothers and their substitutes. Caring for children is first and foremost a work of love for mothers at home. Mothers do not earn anything for their care work; instead they are maintained by the breadwinner or receive an allowance. The financial recompense of substitute carers such as childcare workers and family care givers is not much better. In the Netherlands they often paid the minimum wage or even much less. The working conditions are often bad. Childcare workers and family care givers have hardly any career prospects. In other words,

educating children is under-valued women's work. Only trained experts with well-defined specialisations in education were and are in some cases well-paid.

Now that more and more mothers are working away from home, the financial worth of the mother's contribution is now becoming apparent for the first time. One unavoidable question in the future debates about the quality of childcare will be: **how much are we prepared to pay for our children's education?**. Or, what is good care for our children worth to us?

3.3 Recognition, status and hierarchy

Childcare workers will probably agree unanimously that their work breaks the mould of traditional family upbringing and that it should be reasonably paid. They will be much less unanimous when it comes to the question of qualifications. Untrained childcare workers and family care givers have hardly any status. In the past, the professional status of salaried educational experts was always linked to their training, objective knowledge and specific qualifications. We are all familiar with the problems associated with this model: academic arrogance, distancing from parents, and too little personal knowledge of and involvement with the parents and children. For the moment, efforts are being made to fill the gap between experts and parents by means of assistance, professional reorientation and education. However, the results are far from satisfactory. The root of the problem is what do we mean by "expert"? What sort of "expertness" do we expect of the new childcare workers and family care givers who take over responsibility for part of the children's education when the mother works away from home?

3.4 A separate children's world

We are used to dividing children into categories according to their ages, without reference to the social context in which they grow up. Very young children and their mothers are relegated to the margins of society. Now, thanks to childcare facilities, mothers have more chance of making contacts and finding work away from the family circle. But what are the consequences of this for the family care givers and for the children themselves? Granted, childcare centres enable women to widen their social contacts, but the children run the risk of becoming even more isolated in a totally artificial "children's world" (Liljestrm, 1983). We already accept that children do not have any idea about what their father does, but should household work also disappear from their lives? After all, one of the tasks of educationalists and educational organisations is to introduce children to the world about them.

4. The childcare worker as mother

According to some, such as Monika Jaeckel (1990), we should beware of creating a different sort of expert. In her argument, Jaeckel leads a direct attack on the model of the professional pedant. According to her, children really need love and affection. However, you don't get degrees in love and affection. On the contrary, academic knowledge creates barriers between the childcare worker and the children and their parents. As an alternative model, she offers the

childcare worker as **loving, caring mother**. Jaeckel prefers semi-volunteers who spend a couple of years working with children. This is the maximum period, as it is just not possible to keep building up personal bonds with new children. Any longer, and you burn out. Monika Jaeckel is not the only one to defend this opinion. A British researcher, Barbara Tizard (1986) also prefers the mother as the model for childcare workers. In her discussions of childcare workers' qualifications she bases her conclusions to a great extent on Bowlby's **attachment theory**. This deals with the long-term relationship between childcare worker (substitute mother) and child, i.e the mother/parent-child relationship. According to a small-scale study carried out in the Netherlands, childcare workers and family care givers in baby groups attach a great deal of importance to the close bond that develops between them and the child, and separation can sometimes be very painful (Meeuwig, 1989). Some childcare workers go as far as to say that, as mothers, they would never leave their child with someone else.

This position has the advantage of being very close to the point of view of parents in the Netherlands, and certainly in other countries as well. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any statistics on how many parents actually share this viewpoint. However, the idea of giving children a place in society once more through semi-professional care certainly has its attractions, with local adults caring for children in small facilities, instead of institutions which are liable to become a "separate children's world".

However, this model also has its faults. There will sometimes, perhaps too often, be sudden breaks in the child-adult relationships, as a result of people moving, changes in employment and changes in the group. The childcare workers and family care givers must maintain relationships not only with the children but also with the parents. "Shared mothering" does not fit the traditional role of mother. This may lead to confusion of roles and to tension between the substitute mother and the real mother or parents. Moreover, in a childcare facility, a childcare worker does not look after just one or a few children as at home, but a group of eight to twelve children, and therefore has to employ different educational techniques. I will come back to this later.

But before leaving the present point, it should emphasised that some parents reject the childcare worker-as-mother model, as to them smacks too much of the traditional mother image which they reject. Nevertheless, too sharp a distinction between "practical" and "academic" knowledge also poses problems. Mothers' and parents' ideas about "strong bonds" and "loving relationships" are doubtless greatly influenced by the theories of Bowlby, Winnicott and many others who in the past have condemned childcare services.

5. The childcare worker as group teacher

Another model for the role of childcare worker is that of "teacher" or "educator" of a group of children. Lilian Katz's article "Mothering and Teaching" (1980) presents an example of this model. Like Monika Jaeckel, Lilian Katz highlights the problems of burn-out among childcare workers. She looks for a solution in the opposite direction, namely a clearer distinction between the roles of mother and teacher.

Katz takes as her starting point the differences between mothers and childcare workers, as regards both their position and their working conditions. Teachers are trained for the job, unlike mothers. Teachers deal with a group of children, in collaboration with colleagues, in an environment specially created for children. They devote all their time and energy to the children, but they also impose restrictions and regulations for the times of sleeping, eating and admission. A mother, by contrast, deals with only one or two children in an environment which must also serve the other family members (the adults). Mothers have more leeway for improvisation, but are restricted by their household tasks and other obligations.

The emotional relationship is also different. Parents establish a permanent relationship with their children, whereas the childcare worker - child relationship is only temporary. Childcare workers are aware of this, and so take care to distance themselves from the children.

In her article, Katz attempts to define a number of dimensions which differentiate mothers from childcare workers; according to her, such differences are necessary. The parent-child relationship should aim at "optimum attachment", "optimum irrationality" and "optimum spontaneity". The teacher-child relationship by contrast should aim at "optimum detachment", "optimum rationality" and "optimum intentionality". According to Katz, the devotion of parents to their children is irreplaceable. Children know that their parents will do anything for them, and that they can always count on their parents. As Katz sees it, childcare workers should offer a more rational, more stable and more predictable environment, which will give children the emotional peace necessary to play with each other.

According to Katz, role confusion can cause a great deal of trouble. Child workers run the risk of serious errors when they advise mothers or parents to be more rational and organised than they naturally are in their relations with their child. Such advice is liable to undermine the confidence of mothers or parents in their own parenting skills. Conversely, childcare workers who want to "mother" invest too much of themselves and burn out too quickly.

Katz's viewpoint presupposes that childcare workers should develop their own field of specialised knowledge and qualifications. To give a specific example: in the Netherlands, the theory of attachment is very much in vogue at the moment. Mothers and parents are taught that they should react sensitively, promptly and appropriately to the signals given by their children. This will promote firm attachment between child and parents, which is essential in order to provide a basis of confidence. The essence of the attachment theory is the parent/child two-way relationship.

What is liable to happen if we give childcare workers the same advice as we give to mothers? They will probably get the idea they have to build up a one-to-one relationship with all children, and will always fail. It is just not possible to treat eight children as if your were alone with each one. Moreover, the real task of the childcare worker as teacher, namely to create a congenial group situation in which their is still plenty of space for individual children, would have to take second place. Childcare workers provide a daily routine, with group rules and opportunity for play, so enabling children to fit into the group and the routine. They teach children how to deal with rivalry, quarrels, joy and celebration. They institute little rituals for saying goodbye, and so on. Childcare workers are constantly concerned with educating children within a group.

The viewpoint of Katz is probably also shared by childcare workers and parents in the Netherlands. The study previously quoted (Meeuwig, 1989) showed that most childcare workers hesitate between the "mother" model and the more distant model of the trained childcare worker with special tasks and responsibilities.

But Katz's model also has its disadvantages. It is more suited to group education in day care centres than to family care facilities. The professional knowledge which her model implies is available in the Netherlands at the level of individual day care centres, but it is not very systematised or transferable.

Another problem is that in her model, day care centres can become artificial children's worlds or "playschools", in which children and toddlers have to fit into a group programme at a very early age. I am not sure to what extent the model is applicable to baby care. Also, the formal definition of roles may mean that parents will miss the informal confidence of more "motherly" carers.

6. Shared education

In both of the models of childcare worker or family care giver just described, the essential element is the relationship between carer and child. The task of the carer is defined as working with children. Personally, I find this definition much too narrow. At least three groups are involved in childcare, each with their own interests: parents, children and the carers themselves. As I see it, the quality of child care provision depends to a great extent on the quality of the cooperation between parents and childcare workers, especially where very young children are involved. In contrast to schoolchildren, babies and toddlers cannot make any clear distinction between what happens at home and what happens at school or in the day care centre. For example, a baby's life is largely determined by biorhythms such as eating and sleeping. Therefore there has to be consultation between family and institution about afternoon naps (so that the children are still manageable at home in the evening) and about bedtimes at home (if they are too late, then the children are impossible at the day care centre). In the Netherlands there is now a debate going on about the minimum number of days per week children should go to the day care centre. The childcare workers prefer three or four set days, in order to be able to create a group. On the other hand, some parents who only work one or two days a week do not see why they should have to send their children to the care centre oftener than this.

The effect of childcare centres is to open up the closed, private family circle a little, expanding and enriching the world both of the children and of the parents. But this poses a new question, namely who takes care of which aspects (Katz, 1980b)?

7. Other models of childcare worker

So far, we have looked at three models for the childcare worker, namely the mother, the teacher and **education sharer**. However, these are by no means the only models. We are also familiar with the model of the childcare worker or family care giver as **child minder**, whose main tasks are changing nappies, feeding, putting to bed making sure that no accidents occur. In the Netherlands, this model is not popular either with child workers or with parents. Carers in day centres complain that their work degenerates into simple child minding when too few carers have to look after too many children, for example when staff are ill. More is probably expected from family care givers and from "ordinary" mothers, for example, attention, stimulation, holding conversations and so on.

Yet another model is the **expert assistant** for parents. In the Netherlands, this model is to be found in policy documents dealing with the prevention of educational problems. Here, the task of the childcare worker is to provide low-level help and to give early warning of problem behaviour. This model fits the old hierarchical picture of mothers/parents on the one hand and experts on the other. The childcare workers are the lowest-ranking in the whole network of expert helpers around parents and children. It is not known to what extent this picture is shared in practice by parents, childcare workers and family care givers.

Finally, there is the model of the **teacher** who stimulates and educates the children in a planned way in a group situation. This model has already appeared indirectly under the heading of "group teacher". It is probable that, for many parents in the Netherlands, this model is only acceptable to parents of children aged three, four and upwards.

8. Conclusions

From all of the above it will be obvious that it is impossible to define a unified model of the profession of "childcare worker". Parents have varying wishes and preferences, which again vary according to the ages of the children. The supply has to match the demand. However, on the basis of the above, we can define some basic principles and points of conflict.

1. Educational work must be reasonably paid, even if family care givers, for example, have not received any special training for their work. Caring properly for children, and cooperating or maintaining good contact with the parents is complex, demanding work which demands recognition.

2. Professionalisation of education (i.e. salaried work, and/or work in institutions and/or carried out by trained personnel) brings many problems and pitfalls for which solutions will have to be found. Examples are the obvious hierarchy between trained experts and parents; the exclusion of parents from an important part of the education of their children; too close or too distant a relationship with the children; and even greater isolation of children in a separate children's world.

3. More job profiles for child carers will have to be developed, with appropriate training requirements. Parents should be able to choose a particular type of childcare, based on their own concepts of education and shared parenting. Furthermore, the choice on offer should vary to take account both of the locality and of the target groups (parents and children).

4. "Shared education" is something new in our culture. If we want to ensure quality, we have to make concessions and recognize the value both of family upbringing and education by family care givers and day care centres. New traditions of education will have to be developed.

   Parents will have to acquire new knowledge and skills for collaborating with child carers and family care givers, and learn how to judge them and watch what they are doing.

   The same applies to child carers and family care givers. They must learn how to work in the three-way relationship with parents and children. Furthermore, childcare workers in day centres will have to learn new pedagogical techniques for working with children just a few months old.

Note This evaluation is based on the historical-theoretical study of the mother-child relationship and education outside the family: Elly Singer (1989). An English translation of this study is due to be published in 1991 by Routledge, London/New York. For the sake of readability, I have kept the number of notes to a strict minimum.

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SOME THOUGHTS ON PROBLEMS OF MORE PROFESSIONALISATION OF CHILDCARE

Prepared for the workshop of the EC Childcare Network in Oud Poelgeest, Leiden, The Netherlands. Spring 1990

The wave of professionalisation in childcare, which in West-Germany started its climb in the seventies, has come to a turning point.
The question we face today in the FRG is high fluctuation of (highly qualified) childcare-workers, the phenomenon of professional "burn out" after 3-5 years of childcare work and a shortage of childcare workers, also prevalent for instance in countries like Sweden, where childcare standards are among the highest in all of Europe.

The basic underlying problem is how to make a profession out of a love relationship - because that is what child-rearing is basically about.
What qualifies a person to enter into a warm, open and emotional relationship with a child? To be open to dialoque, to read the messages a child sends, to grow with the growth of the child?

A problem of professionalisation in childcare is the concept of qualification we have developped in industrial society, leading away from person care. Basically, in our society, dealing with machines, systems and technology is considerd more qualified than dealing with people.
In health care, for instance, professionalisation has led to the supervision of machines that document functions of the human body. This is considered as higher qualified than talking to the patient, touching the patient, relating to their needs as a person.

In childcare, the farther away you are in dealing directly with the children, the higher qualified you will be likely to be, working with administrative aspects of childcare or - at the top of the hierarchy - dealing with theories of socialisation and childcare. Often it can be the least qualified personell in a childcare institution who supply the emotional warmth, the attentiveness, the caring atmosphere necessary for quality childcare.

Qualification doesn't necessarily prevent a childcare worker to develope a caring attitude towards children, just as unqualified personell do not automatically portray this quality. It seems to be, however, to a large degree a personality trait that makes a good childcare worker, something developed in life, not in school.

The universal low-paying status of childcare work in industrial societies is based on a qualification concept that devalues what dealing with people is all about. Therefore strategies trying to raise the status of the profession by introducing more qualification run into problems and paradox.

For instance, one problem of an increasing professionalisation is the tendency of specialisation, status and hierarchy that comes with the package, creating a distance to the parents.
The problems of professionalisation in social work generally have led to the growing impact of self-help groups, whose succes is often based on unhierarchical structures, the reevaluation of experience as competence and an atmosphere of friendship and closeness.

In the field of childcare the parent initiated childcare groups are strongly motivated by the whish of parents to reflect and extend their competence in child-rearing by being involved in childcare, by the exchange of experiences, knowledge, observations and ideas that is generated by participating in group childcare.

Qualification and professionalisation can create barriers towards the parents, towards acknowledging their competences in child-rearing; competences which stem from living with children, from relating to them on a day to day basis and not from a certificate.

The experience that stems from practice, from experience, from life is devalued in our society, and the actual compentence (unqualified) parents developpe from their relationships to their children can threaten the professional identity of childcare workers, whose school-based certificate not always serves as a base of security in dealing with practical issues and situations in children's groups and in actually relating to children.

A devensive and protective attitude towards the professional status can evolve from experiences of insecurity and ambiguity of what and who qualifies for childcare. After all, what do people go to school for, if it doesn't give them status?
This can hinder a cooperative attitude and relationship towards parents since a productive cooperation can only thrive on the mutual acknowledgement and evaluation of respective competences and experiences of both the professionals and the parents and not on a hierarchical teacher-scholar, expert-dilettant or professional-client basis.

In West-Germany there is much debate currently about the reform of social services, about reducing negative effects of professionalism. The essence seems to be that the danger of alienation and indifference of bureaucratic attitudes is linked to institutions themselves and to professional longterm work in institutions. The greatest structural problem of professional carework is the lack of personal involvement; involvement which is difficult to repeat over and over again with changing generations of children.

One perspective being develloped in this discussion is to introduce more elements of non-professional but paid care-work. Cooperation of professionals with part-time or short-term involvement of women in the neighborhood, young men doing civil service instead of going to the army etc.

A cooperative and peer relationship to parents and unprofessional care-givers is an integral part of a stronger orientation and opening towards the community, something which is being discussed as of growing importance for the future of childcare. The erosion of community life and neighborhood networks in modern society is an erosion of care, being felt increasingly by the elderly, but also by the children in our society.

The separation of public and private spheres in industrial society has led to the exclusion of children from public life. Children are considered private - a part of family life - in as much as adults are concerned and are ghettoized in specific children's worlds of childcare when adults are attending to other matters, or when they are to be trained for adult life (pre-school and school). This has led to a lack of consideration for children in public life and to an erosion of common practice and know-how in dealing with children.

The story of the passer by, who comes running to the parents to inform them that their child is drowning in the river and that they should do something, instead of reaching out a hand to pull the child out of the water to save it from drowning, is unfortunately no joke.

Institutional childcare can become a focus in revitalising neighborhoods, in recreating community life and in reintegrating children into public and adult life, if efforts are made towards opening institutional childcare to cooperation with parents, with self-help and grass root groups in the community, with "unprofessional" childcare workers like day-care mothers and grandmothers - in West-Germany still the largest category of childcare for working parents. Such a process involves stepping down from status, hierarchy and specialist positions connected with professionalisation.

To sum up: maybe the direction of the discussion on professionalisation should turn from providing more professionals in childcare to providing better conditions in society under which both professional childcare workers and unprofessional childcare workers such as parents, grandparents and citizens, can develope their potentional and stronger culture of care and caring for children. Qualification and training should be developed on the basis of support and awareness for the relationship and personality aspects of dealing with children.

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THE COMPLEX ROLE OF DAY-CARE EDUCATION STAFF

The definition of the education role of day care centres, the need to launch a comprehensive, well structured permanent vocational training programme and the creation of reference education (Co-ordination) structures to chart the requisite methodological strategies for retraining projects are the key planks of a policy platform for improving day care services. These planks were defined during the conference on "The Educational and Social Values of Day Care Centres" organised by the Emilia - Romana Region in October 1979.

In the wake of this conference, a permanent training programme got under way in a systematic manner. With a view to redifining the role of day-care centre educators, it provides harmonious conditions to ensure quality day care service in Emilia Romana for the years to come.

The professional competence of a day-care educator is not easy to define. More specifically, what makes this job difficult is not only having to apply theoretical training and education theory in daily practice, but also and especially because educating such young children (0 to 3 years of age) requires, in addition to professional skills, in-depth knowledge of methods, contents, cultural value and information disseminated in daily activities.

Furthermore, the image of the day care educator is still suffering from numerous cultural preconceptions and stereotypes heavily scented with "charismatic" reference models based on **dedication,** emotional commitment, a capacity to feel love for the children; the latter deemed the prodominant prerequisite high and above over any ability to perform this type of activity properly. These cliches refer to a role model for women and their "maternal instict" that can temporarily replace a mother, rather than a professionally trained individual with the requisite skills to assume responsibility and its education role.

In a day-care centre, the actual work of educators is made all the more difficult and complex because of the nebulous character of education directives, which often cannot be translated into practical activities, materials and games. What characterises this type of work, is more the way an activity is suggested, a **style** of communication needed to give the education dimension concrete form, so that a more favourable inter-personal context can be created, as well as a meaningful relational communication to make the suggested game attractive, interesting and worth considering.

We must also underscore that often, children arrive at the day care centre when barely three months old, and consequently the centre can, like the family home, be considered as the place where a child begins to develop his or her identity through the relation between the ego and what lies outside that ego, i.e. the environment and the others.

The educator must therefore be capable of an art of communication that will project him or her as an "emotional receptacle" for the child's anxieties; of restructuring the relational field without any emphasis on and absolute certainty of his or her own world view and perspective, but on the contrary, of taking into account and reflecting the needs and emotions of a child.

The numerous research studies on the topic have revealed that a child is capable of differentiating feelings of attachment so as to identify clearly all individuals that enter his or her universe, from the parents to other members of the family to day-care centre education staff.

Making oneself identifiable, interesting, significant, a point of existential reference for a child, requires great observation skills to pick up the most important signals that manifest the needs of a child and to orient one's educational work accordingly.

Permanent vocational training

In light of the foregoing, permanent vocational training can be considered as a required methodology, one that helps render the educative setting more comprehensible, while making it easier to draw up a restructuring strategy where the agents are the education actors themselves. This approach rebuffs traditional training programmes which are not only irregular, but with education modules and curricula often rigidly defined by "experts," remaining thus abstract because they are remote from the real education needs and problems without any application in practice.

We must avoid the models transmitted and received passively, the dichotomy between theory and practice, the frustrations arising from an inability to translate theoretical training into practical organisation. It is better to promote meetings and comparisons between different models, the juxtaposition of scientific research and research conducted on the field by the actors themselves, so that the experiment can develop and progress as it finds confirmation within the group of actors. (1) The latter can then suggest it in a wider circle consisting of educators and parents in a reciprocal process of training and dialogue. This example of training based on the group (the collective body of educators) affords an opportunity to create group identity, to get a better grasp of the duties of each and everyone who feels supported by theoretical training and practical education emerging from a responsible relationship with the children, colleagues and parents.

The quality of service depends on qualified staff who have a crucial role to play in relations with the family. This does not mean that they should encourage the latter to delegate authority and lose its prerogatives in the child's upbringing; but quite the contrary, on having them share the educative experience together with the knowledge and cultural dynamics of early childhood.

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(1) In Italy, Law 1044 of 1971 which established municipal day-care centres stipulates that the educational action and programming of educational activities in day care centre fall under a collective body consisting of educations and assisting staff who participate in drawing up the curriculum.

A competent, responsible educator acts as a mediator of a the experiences and relations a child is cultivating and a source of new balance between the children, the family and the day-care centre.

The responsibility for bringing up and educating children must be shared. We must break with the dictates of tradition whereby the family is the trustee of feelings whereas institutions take care of teaching and instruction.

Nor should the educator's capacity to assume his or her role be taken for granted under any circumstances, given the problems he or she has to confront each and every day.

The educational work cannot be based on abstract theories and cultural stereotypes. Educators feel an increasing need with each day that passes for an educational curriculum based on reality, on familiarity with the social and cultural environment in which they operate, as well as on the child's background with its rich array of experiences, needs, emotional relationships -- all of which should be taken into consideration.

For these reasons, they cannot carry out their tasks without being thoroughly familiar not only with cultural and theoretical data, but also with the child's relationships and experiences, of which the educator him/herself is an integral part.

These various reflections should necessarily lead us to consider vocational training as one of the preconditions of the educational programme at a day-care centre.

Staff retraining must in turn be considered as an integral part of the organised service offered by day care centres. It must not acquire either an exceptional or an occasional character if it is to contribute to the preparation of an educational work programme, where the educators can define the conditions, methods, actions, objectives, materials and supervisory instruments.

This concept of training does not mean that theoretical knowledge can be done away with; on the contrary, once translated and converted into a working hypothesis, it becomes an integral, indeed vital part of the educational programme.

Whereas the contents of the training provided by the Education Co-ordination or by outside experts (where necessary) are discussed by all involved, when compared to the prevailing conditions in the field, it means that education staff are afforded an opportunity to rework and reorganise information, convert it into knowledge and include it in the group's curriculum.

In short, considerations relative to permanent training mean that education staff must have the appropriate instruments to decipher their working environment, so as to be able to interpret it, chart a common education course for all operatives in the same day care centre, implement it with due monitoring and work towards improving educational techniques and honing their own professional skills.

Educational Co-ordination of day-care centres: Role and tasks

The Educational co-ordination of day-care centres is a very innovative instrument for the programming, study, organisation, monitoring and recapitulation of the educational programme; indeed, it ensures the continuity of the day-care educational experiment.

There is a close link between the tasks of educational co-ordination and the objectives set for day-care centres. More specifically, if we accept that the quality criteria on which day care centres rely as educational institutions are linked to the organisation of service, the educational programme and the professional skills of educators, it is worth underscoring that the role of such co-ordination and its action programme are in turn based on three quality vectors.

In view of the fact that permanent training for educators given in groups is a significant choice since it can analyse and inspect the education programme simultaneously, the capital importance of a co-ordination team becomes apparent. Such a team can ensure that permanent training experiments continue while becoming a point of reference for educators.

Its role consists of organising retraining programmes while seeking, together with education staff, of ways to meet actual needs even more thoroughly. The co-ordination team also participates in drawing up the curriculum and in determining the methodology to be applied in the experiments.

Nevertheless, it is worth underscoring in particular the role of the co-ordinator of a permanent training scheme beyond the guidelines set out for programming, experimentation and monitoring of an educational programme.

Training in groups requires the creation of an area where discussion can pinpoint elements likely to enhance or undermine a relationship (both between adults and with children), and in general, growth and development relations.

Furthermore, and this is particularly applicable to day-care centres, upbringing must focus and be based on an interpersonal relationship with the child, because even before being perceived as a learning place, a day-care centre is a laboratory for trying out different ways of living together.

This dimension elucidates the truly central role of the person who co-ordinates the work of the group. Such a person must not only be particularly well versed in early infancy, but must also be perceptive as to what is happening inside the group. The importance of the co-ordinator and his presence inside the group are therefore vital in that, not being directly involved in the relational and operational dynamics of the group (unlike the education staff, he is a permanent member of the collective body), he or she perceives his or her role to comprise that of a communication mediator, making this person a constant reference and a stimulus for analysis and discussion.

The person who assumes this role must come across as an operative-researcher and thus an observer taking part in the dynamics of the working group, affording both himself and all

involved, an opportunity to consider the experiment and to generalise it by rendering research methods uniform, and by constantly coming up with new investigative instruments.
The professional skill of such a person must be based on the creation of cultural and professional assets and not on ready-made solutions imposed from above in order to avoid such problems as delegating responsibility or the dependence of operatives on him or her.

Despite an overall unfavourable climate for professional dialogue, a co-ordinator must be an impetus for team work inside a group, so that educators can share their personal skills and knowledge even better and succeed in creating a collective source of knowledge available to all.

We think it is important to underscore that the co-ordinator / group leader must gear the dynamics of all involved not so much on the group itself, but rather on the educational and operational programme he wishes to attain. This means that he must also motivate the group so that they do not become dependent either on him or her personally, or in regard to the other operatives in the educational process; but that they can acquire an independent decision-making capacity in order to be able to face any and all eventualities and behaviour and attitude on the part of a child, so that educators can formulate independent educational hypotheses and answers, but not individualistic or contradictory.

This non-contradictory dimension is ensured and brought about by collective consideration and discussion which forges the instruments needed to anticipate, look ahead and act accordingly.

CHILDCARE: A NEW FIELD FOR THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

In the space of just a few years, childcare has become an important field for the trade union movement in the Netherlands.

With the growing demand for childcare in industry, there was a commensurate growth in "wildcat" projects to cater for it.

The FNV (Federation of Dutch trade unions) eventually decided not to leave the future of (company-based) childcare to the mechanisms of the free market, but instead to play an active, guiding role in these developments itself.

At the end of 1988 a project was started with the aim of developing childcare as a new field of trade union activity.

The origins of this involvement lay in the FNV women's liberation policy. Suitable and adequate childcare facilities are a basic social condition, if women (and men) are to combine paid work and caring for children.

Furthermore, childcare is the textbook example of under-valued women's work. With the prospect of an enormous expansion in this "women's work", the FNV decided that it was its task to give it form and shape.

On a national level, there is a roaring gap in representing childcare interests; since recently there is no longer any organisation to play a guiding role in promoting content and quality. The FNV is therefore meeting a crying need, to judge from the response to the activities of its childcare project.

There is also the trade union AbvaKabo, which is a member of the FNV and which represents government personnel and employees in the subsidised sector. Childcare employees can organise themselves within AbvaKabo to defend their direct interests in the area of working conditions and legal rights.

The trade union and the Federation of course have different roles to play in the field of childcare, although in this period of rapid development the demarcation lines are liable to be blurred.

As a trade union federation, we are continually confronted with potential dilemmas. Developments which appear to be favourable for users of childcare facilities - who after all the people with whom the FNV is primarily concerned - may represent a deterioration in the working conditions of the employees. Typical examples are the extended hours of day care centres, or the lowering of charges. A greater role for companies in the extension of childcare facilities - something for which the FNV pleads - carries with it risks for the quality of the care provided, and thus for the childcare workers, especially if company economics are allowed to play too great a role.

Incentive measures

The childcare sector is faced with the same absurd inversion as education: the younger the children, the lower qualified the personnel can be, and the less they are valued in material and immaterial terms. This is certainly the case where caring for healthy, "normal" children is concerned. Society's undervaluing of the caring and educational tasks of "housewives" has had a great influence on the low status given to working with small children. This is despite the fact that the risk of "burnout" associated with this type of work is highest when working with young children. According to the FNV project, considerations of the position of workers, their conditions of employment and material recompense are only meaningful if the quality of childcare in the future is taken into account. This in turn raises the question of the type and function of these facilities, and thus the working conditions of those caring for young children.

In the Netherlands at this moment, these questions are more pressing and relevant than ever. In January 1990 a four-year incentive measure for childcare came into force. During this period, the government will provide financial incentives for the setting up of new childcare facilities, ranging from 150 million guilders this year to 290 million in the fourth year. This is designed to expand the number of places in childcare centres and with family care projects, to begin with for children aged 0 to 4. However, there is still no substantive policy, let alone a vision of the longer-term future.

The passive attitude of the Dutch government has meant in the past that subsidised, professional childcare centres remained a marginal phenomenon. Less than 1% of children from 0-4 years - pre-school age in the Netherlands - were able to make use of day care facilities. The phenomenon of "family care givers" as a more or less institutionalised provision is of recent origin: since 1986 the government has been carrying out an experimental policy of subsidising family care projects.

The labour market

From the beginning of the 1980s onwards, with the enormous demand for day care places there has been free market provision for those with the means to pay for it. This was the result of, among other things, the growing participation of women in the labour market, a development which occurred relatively late in the Netherlands.

A number of companies and organisations set up crèches themselves. Private individuals offered day care on a commercial basis, available only to better off parents or sponsored by employers for the benefit of more highly qualified personnel.

There has been a recent trend towards places financed by a combination of subsidies and company funding. Where possible, this development is encouraged by the FNV.

Market developments (i.e. labour market developments) were thus responsible for the growth of all sorts of non-subsidised care facilities, with very little control over the quality of the facilities or over the quality of the personnel and their working conditions.

Since 1987, the FNV has led a much more active policy, aimed at structural extension of childcare facilities. This inevitably brings with it need to reflect on the quality of the facilities, and how to improve it. This is necessary not only for the users - children and their parents - but also in order to improve the working atmosphere and working conditions of the people who work there, so that they can go on working with dedication and with pleasure.

The FNV's long-term goal is for childcare to become a community service, in the same way as e.g. education, available to everybody and affordable by all.

Having sufficient quantity and quality of day care therefore demands structural solutions. The number of women at work will continue to expand, not only because this is what women themselves want, but also because it is necessary as a result of demographic trends. Childcare is a necessary precondition if they are to be able to work. There are also pedagogical arguments for part of the education of young children taking place outside the family: changing personal relationships, more one parent families, fewer children in the family and poorer living conditions. Together, these developments also mean that childcare must be seen as a developing area of work, with its own professional identity, great responsibilities and its own objectives, instead of being looked on as it is now, namely as an emergency solution for "gaps" which mothers are liable to fall through.

Short-term strategy

The labour market is now the driving force behind the growth in childcare, in addition to emancipation motives. However, if labour market motives remain the dominant principle of government policy, this is liable to pose threats for the quality of employment in childcare, and thus for the quality of the care itself.

There are other dangers in present-day government policy. The incentive subsidies can only cover 40% of the operating costs of new day care places, on the basis of a cost which permits decent working conditions for those employed and enables quality standards to be maintained. The government's aim is to encourage industry to contribute.

At national level, employees' and employers' organisations have recently agreed to cooperate in matters affecting female employment, with heavy emphasis on arrangements and facilities for combining work and care. In addition to recommendations for collective bargaining agreements in this area, the government is being urged to negotiate more with both sides of industry in order to extend childcare facilities.

Encouraging the rapid growth of childcare under unfavourable conditions would have the effect of making working in childcare particularly unattractive! In a labour-intensive activity such as this, there is a great temptation to cut costs by saving on employment. The FNV is acutely aware that we in the Netherlands are entering a critical phase for childcare, not only for the type of care itself but also for the development prospects for the profession.

The employment situation in day care centers

At present, it is still not possible to bring childcare for 0-4 year olds in the Netherlands under a single category of work. The existing facilities are derived from various work traditions, and family care givers are a completely different story.

In day care centres in particular, the emphasis until now has been on the "care" aspects. Undeveloped ideas about "motherhood" predominate, for want of a shared, official concept of the specific expert skills required by childcare workers. There is still no particular professional training, and there is no clear division of functions, and so no clear recognition.

Employment

According to a provisional estimate based on a 1989 FNV survey, some 4000 people are now paid as childcare workers in day care centres. Around 15% of the childcare work is done by volunteers, rising to 50% in some cases in non-subsidised facilities. Volunteer work is typical of the childcare sector - no-one would dream of working as a volunteer in an engineering works! However, it is looked on as natural in the childcare sector, as women's work. We regularly come across cases of facilities in the start-up phase with insufficient funding, where workers are paid half the time and work as volunteers for the rest.

It is estimated that in the present incentive period at least new 6000 childcare "jobs" will be created. This does not take into account the growing number of jobs in management, policy development and all sorts of support functions. The growth in employment in day care centres will largely depend on the growth in the number of family care givers during this period, since both draw on the same pool, and the local authorities decide which type of facilities are given preference.

At present, childcare workers are mainly seen as "child minders", not as people with responsibility for education. If childcare is to remain a permanent feature of care and education of young children, then corresponding importance must be given to pedagogical tasks.

At present, the training backgrounds from which childcare workers are mostly drawn are health care and the caring professions in the welfare sector, usually but not always oriented towards young children.

The work is hardly ever recognised as a specialisation. The pay is low and the conditions are bad. There are no training leave, pension schemes or arrangements for travel expenses. It happens regularly that a care worker has to cope with a group of children alone, usually when the care centre is open for more than 8 hours or during holidays. It is also not unusual for care workers in (subsidised) day care centres to even be responsible for the cleaning and washing. After all, mothers at home are responsible for that sort of thing! In commercial day care centers, it is not unknown for the care workers to be obliged to do painting and maintenance work; according to the management, this creates even greater involvement in the work!

Such cases underline the complexity and the lack of understanding of the tasks facing childcare workers.

Continuity is an essential criterion for judging the quality of education, and childcare is no exception. In practice, there appears to be a high rate of absence due to illness, and of people leaving the profession. Although there has never been any official research in this area, extensive spot checking by the WIK (Child Care Workers) working group gave a clear indication of this. Interestingly, the drop-out rate was highest among the more highly-qualified care workers, for whom there is a lack of career opportunities. The low status and poor working conditions undoubtedly also play a role.

There is a salary scale for day care centres based on the collective bargaining agreement (CA) for the welfare sector. This includes day care staff and their principles, together with their administrative personnel. This agreement was declared to be "generally binding" only at the end of 1989, under pressure from the trade union, so that it now also has to be applied in non-subsidised day care centres. This is an important contribution towards evening out the great differences in working conditions between the various day care centres. Nursery nurses in infant schools and school-based care facilities come under another CBA (social and cultural work), with significantly better salary scales.

Coming under a CBA gives important legal guarantees. However some people are critical of CBAs for maintaining undesirable situations. A typical example is the distinction between nurse and assistant nurse, which is seen as unjust.

Wage surveys

Dissatisfaction over pay scales for those employed in day care centres led to employees' and employers' organisations carrying out a survey of job content and pay scales.

One factor which will be of crucial importance in the near future for the profession, and for the interests of the people who work in it, is whether people are willing and able to anticipate the changes which are necessary. In other words, it is necessary not just to lay down job descriptions now but to make allowance for development in these job descriptions in the future. The job descriptions laid down now will form the basis for negotiations on wage scales and working conditions. There is therefore a danger that the survey will be too definitive, and will have the effect of freezing developments at too early a stage.

Recent surveys have also been carried out in the field of work organisation, with the aim of obtaining a picture of childcare as a distinct area of work, including the work itself and the various management and external support functions. In addition to day care centres, these surveys have covered school-based care, pre-primary schools and family care projects. The last of these is considered separately.

Family care

Family care givers in the Netherlands do not come under any particular category. Until recently, this type of care existed mainly as a private solution in order to get round the lack of care facilities.

However, the government became very keen on this type of care, partly under the influence of the Belgian example. Family care fits very well into the government's views, in which education is seen as a private matter. Since 1986 the government has financed a number of family care projects on an experimental basis. There are also 100 or so projects on a commercial or voluntary basis.

So far, the FNV has been extremely dubious about this type of development. In practice, family care givers are substitute mothers - badly paid home workers without any legal position. The result is that more and more women are being drawn into a twilight labour situation, without any rights but with huge responsibilities. Family care givers work in the grey area of poorly paid home work. At present there are no qualification requirements for family care givers, and hardly any quality criteria.

Exponential growth is expected in the next four years. In February 1990, the ministry responsible mentioned a possible number of 25,000 family care givers by 1994! But even if the figure is much lower, this form of care will account for a considerable proportion of all childcare in a few years time. If family care is to become a fully-fledged type of childcare in its own right, then to begin with the legal position of family care givers will have to be improved. Whether of not the trade unions should take up this challenge is now being hotly debated within the movement!

The way things are at the moment, family care cannot guarantee sufficient quality. Since there is no relation of employment, as a family care giver you cannot make any demands. No training is required. There is no replacement in case of illness, so there is no guarantee of continuity of care. A certain amount of professionalisation is also necessary here. One measure that could be envisaged is to set a minimum number of days in order to differentiate between types of family care facility.

Job descriptions will have to be developed for the different categories of family care givers, and for family care project workers and coordinators. These projects must be set up in a professional way from the beginning. This will make possible careful recruiting and selection. Family care givers should have the right, and the duty, to follow an introductory course, in order acquire a minimum level of knowledge and skills. There should also be opportunities for supervision and further training. Various types of cooperation with day care centres will be necessary, at least for long-term family care projects. There are already a number of experimental projects on this basis. Bringing family care givers and children together in a playroom for a couple of half days every week can be important not only of the children but also for the family care givers, enabling them to swap experiences and work out replacement arrangements, for example in case of illness.

A more professional status for family care givers can open up other employment prospects, for instance in group care facilities. There should be further training opportunities for this.

At the moment, however, family care in the Netherlands presents a fairly dismal picture. The type of care and its extent are still being examined. People are starting to think about responsibility for management in connection with experimental family care projects. The government is subsidising a bureau in order to coordinate all family care projects. Within the FNV, the debate on family care has been reopened.

A single category of employment

In the interests of the quality of childcare, its professionalisation and the upgrading of the work, the various facilities - day care centres, school-based care and family care projects - should be grouped together as a single category of employment. This will strengthen the profession and give it more recognition.

The key to developing professionalism is through the organisation of the work.

Separate, professional training with differentiation between the various functions is necessary. If quality is to be maintained as a dynamic concept in a newly-developing profession, then a large number of quality control facilities must be built into the organisation of the work. This means that supervision, team discussions, opportunities for consultation and further training must all form part of the work. These facilities must all be available to the workers during working hours. Conditions for further professionalisation must be created at city, regional and national level.

The present tendency towards cooperation between day care centres and larger scale facilities can be favourable for working conditions. For example, it makes things easier for replacement in case of illness, holidays and training leave, and all forms of support can be better organised.

In particular, it is important for childcare to be looked upon as "made to measure" work. This means that there must be enough training places for coordination and supervision within the institutions. At present, for reasons of cost-cutting, there is a threat of management tasks being transferred to external offices, for example the city authorities.

Upgrading the work and giving special importance to quality improvements will lead to greater demands being placed on the workers: greater training obligations, a wider range of responsibilities, etc. Many childcare workers at the moment feel themselves insufficiently equipped to guide children or parents in pedagogical matters. This means that opportunities will have to be built into the work for workers to develop themselves. It is also possible to create career opportunities within one particular type of childcare work, for example by creating opportunities for specialisation. This will make the work more attractive.

This year the trade union expects to obtain wage rises for childcare workers, including management functions. This will contribute to improving the status of the profession, and

making it more attractive. This is absolutely necessary, in view of the expected growth in this area.

The AbvaKabo trade union has promised to campaign for wage improvements. The problem however is that the level of organisation within the profession is low, which of course makes it more difficult to defend its interests.

Finally

The trade union federation in the Netherlands is putting its weight behind the extension of childcare facilities. Improving the position of women is an important part of this. Demands for childcare measures are being put forward in CBA negotiations. As a result, childcare is more and more coming to be a part of policy on working conditions in the Netherlands, and is coming out of the fringe position in welfare work which it has occupied up to now.

Proposition 1

A trade union policy aimed at the extension of childcare must not be limited to quantitative objectives. Only by constantly linking quality with quantity can the interests of users (parents and children) and childcare workers be served.

Proposition 2

With the increasing involvement of private industry in childcare, there is a danger of becoming dependent on fluctuations in the labour market, economic considerations, etc. As a proponent of private industry playing a greater part in childcare, the trade union shares responsibility for seeing that pedagogical quality is maintained as an independent criterion in setting up childcare facilities.

Proposition 3

Upgrading the profession of childcare workers and improving the primary and secondary working conditions are only meaningful in the context of a strategy for optimum quality of childcare.

Proposition 4

The FNV pleads for grouping all types of childcare work under a single category. Within this category, the FNV however considers it necessary to differentiate between, e.g., group facilities and family care facilities, and also between different types of family care. Policy on working conditions for these different sub-categories of workers must also be differentiated.

Proposition 5

In championing the cause of childcare, the trade union movement in the Netherlands has taken on a complex challenge! The interests of workers, users and employers in this field are far from parallel.

Marijke Jacobs

FNV 2000 projekt kinderopvang

February 1990

EXTRACT FROM "DAYCARE IN THE USA"

by PROFESSOR ALISON CLARKE-STEWART, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Paper given at a Conference at the Thomas Coram Research Unit
London University Institute of Education, February 27 1990

CAREGIVERS' BEHAVIOR

Children also are more likely to develop social and intellectual skills if the caregivers in their day care centers are

••responsive (they answer the children's questions, respond to their requests),

••positive (giving praise, smiles, making life in the day care center enjoyable),

••accepting (following the children's suggestions as well as listening to them, praising the child who does it wrong as well as the one who does it right),

and they are

••informative in their interactions with the children (giving reasons, explanations, lessons).

Children's development is advanced if their teachers

••read to them

••and offer them choices and give them gentle suggestions,

rather than

••simply hugging and holding them,

••or helping them (unless the child asks for help), and

••rather than directing, controlling, restricting, and punishing them.

These kinds of teacher behavior have been associated with poorer development, not advanced development, in day care children. In my study, for instance, caregivers who initiated more physical contact, physical help, and physical control with the children they were in charge of, had children who did more poorly in the assessments we made of their social and mental competence. Children in this and other studies do best when interactions with the caregiver are stimulating, educational, and respectful, not custodial or demeaning.

If teachers are very busy and there are many children demanding their attention, it seems to make a difference just how much one-to-one conversation the teachers manage to have with the children, but if conversation is relatively frequent, once again, it is the quality of the one-to-one conversation (its positive tone, responsive and accepting nature, informative content) that seems to be more important than the sheer amount. Again, we see that once a floor of quantity has been achieved, it is quality of care that matters.

Researchers of course have also asked how these positive kinds of behavior -- responsive, accepting, positive and informative -- are associated with the caregiver's background. Their studies show that caregivers who are most likely to behave in these positive ways are those with more experience as child care professionals, those who have been in the day care program longer, and those who have higher levels of training in children development. On all these dimensions, however, the relation appears to be a curvilinear one. That is, past a certain point, having more experience, or stability, or training is not advantageous.

Teachers who have more professional experience are likely to be more responsive, accepting, positive, and so on, than teachers with less experience, but only up to about 10 years or so of experience. Teachers with more than 15 years experience in the field have been observed in several studies of day care to provide less stimulating and educational interaction than caregivers with less experience. There are several possible explanations for this finding: the most likely are burnout (teachers just get worn down after years of challenging and demanding working conditions, constant giving or themselves, for meager economic rewards); generational or age effects (the younger generation of teachers may be more positive than the older generation), or selective attrition (the better teachers have become administrators or politicians). We need further research to sort out these possibilities.

Stability of the caregiver in a particular day care setting, similarly, is related to the quality of care in a curvilinear way. Staff turnover is clearly negatively related to day care quality: the more staff changes the worse for the program. And when a caregiver stays in one day care center for three or four years this is better than staying for only a year or two. But beyond this length of time, staying longer does not improve the quality of care the caregiver provides. Staff stability is an important aspect of day care quality, not only because it is good for children to form relationships with their daily caregivers and vice versa, but also, I suspect, because such stability indicates that the center offers good working conditions, adequate wages, and high morale. In the National Staffing Study centers rated higher on overall quality, centers in which children spend less time in aimless wandering and scored higher on a test of intelligence, had higher wages and lower turnover. It is reasonable thus that staying in one day care center for three or four years is a positive sign, and within this period that staying longer is better. But beyond this period, staying longer does not improve the quality of care the caregiver provides. What is important is offering adequate wages and benefits to entice teachers to stay for more than a year. In the National Staffing Study, the number one suggestion for how to improve child care quality, made by 90% of the teachers sampled, was to pay better salaries for child care work.

In the National Staffing Study, too, higher quality centers are had better educated and trained teachers. This association between training and quality of care has appeared in many earlier studies and caregiver training is now generally considered to be a sine qua non of quality care. But, here again, the picture is not so simple. Although having no training in child development is clearly worse than having some, more training is not a guarantee of better care; taking 10 courses is not necessarily better than taking 6. It depends on the content and quality and variety of the courses. As it is, there is some suggestion that when teachers have taken more training in the child development (at least in the courses that are available or that are most likely to be taken by child care workers in America) they develop an academic orientation, which translates in the day care classroom into an emphasis on school activities (reading, counting, lesson, learning) to the exclusion of activities to promote children's social or emotional development. Formal training in child development is indeed good background for providing a day care environment that promotes children's intellectual development, but it is not necessarily so good for children's social development. In my study, for example, the caregivers who had had more formal training in child development had children who were advanced intellectually but were significantly less competent in interactions with unfamiliar peers.

WHO CARES?
CHILD CARE TEACHERS AND THE QUALITY OF CARE IN AMERICA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
NATIONAL CHILD CARE STAFFING STUDY

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The National Child Care Staffing Study was coordinated by the staff of the Child Care Employee Project and funded by a consortium of foundations including the Ford Foundation, the Foundation for Child Development, the A.L. Mailman Family Foundation and the Spunk Fund.

A shortage of trained child care teachers threatens the existing child care delivery system. *Who Cares? Child Care Teachers and the Quality of Care in America* is the report of the National Child Care Staffing Study, the most comprehensive examination of center-based child care in the United States in over a decade. It reveals that inadequate compensation is fueling a rapidly increasing and damaging exodus of trained personnel from our nation's child care centers. By failing to meet the needs of the adults who work in child care, we are threatening not only their well-being but that of the children in their care. These findings call for a national child care policy that provides increased compensation, improved work environments, and expanded educational opportunities for child care teachers.

INTRODUCTION

As the twentieth century draws to a close, public debate about child care in America has shifted. No longer is the question, "Should resources be allocated to these services?" Rather, discussion now focuses on what form support for child care will take. To date, pressures to expand the supply yet contain the cost to parents have shaped our public policies about child care. Financial considerations have consistently shortchanged efforts to improve child care services. Nevertheless, the supply of child care remains precarious and the fees for services lie beyond the means of many families.

Inattention to quality has had its costs: child care centers throughout the country report difficulty in recruiting and retaining adequately trained staff. Nearly half of all child care teachers leave their jobs each year, many to seek better-paying jobs. As the nation deliberates on what is best for its children, the question of who will care for them grows increasingly critical.

A commitment to pay for quality requires an understanding of the ingredients demanded by quality. It is widely accepted that a developmentally appropriate environment –one with well-trained and consistent staff in sufficient numbers, moderately-sized groupings of children, and proper equipment and activities– will lead to good care. But the fact is that child care staff are leaving their jobs at a rate almost three times higher than a decade ago. This high rate of turnover forces us to examine child care as a work environment for adults, and not just as a learning environment for children. In all work environments –from factories to hospitals– working conditions affect the quality of products produced or services provided. In child care, children's experience is directly linked to the well-being of their care givers. Good quality care requires an environment that values adults as well as children.

As a nation we are reluctant to acknowledge child care settings as a work environment for adults, let alone commit resources to improving them. Even though many Americans recognize that child care teachers are underpaid,[1] outdated attitudes about women's work and the family obscure our view of teachers' economic needs and the demands of their work. If a job in child care is seen as an extension of women's familial role of rearing children, professional preparation and adequate compensation seem unnecessary. Attributing child care skills to women's biological proclivities implies that teachers' jobs are more an avocation than an economic necessity. While such assumptions contradict the economic and educational realities facing those who teach in child care centers, they provide an unspoken rationale for depressing child care wages and containing costs.

Faced with a burgeoning demand for services, a pool of consumers with limited ability or inclination to pay the full cost of care, and restricted government and corporate funds, our nation has implicitly adopted a child care policy which relies upon unseen subsidies provided by child care teachers through their low wages. But as we are painfully realizing, this policy forms a shaky foundation upon which to build a structure to house and nurture our children while their parents earn a living.

HIGHLIGHTS OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Classroom observations, child assessments and interviews with center directors and teaching staff in 227 child care centers in five U.S. metropolitan areas provided the following information about child care teaching staff and the quality of care. Teaching staff includes all staff who provide direct care to children.

- **The education of child care teaching staff and the arrangement of their work environment are essential determinants of the quality of services children receive.**
  - Teaching staff provided more sensitive and appropriate caregiving if they completed more years of formal education, received early childhood training at the college level, earned higher wages and better benefits, and worked in centers devoting a higher percentage of the operating budget to teaching personnel.
- **The most important predictor of the quality of care children receive, among the adult work environment variables, is staff wages.**
  - The quality of services provided by most centers was rated as barely adequate. Better quality centers had:
    - higher wages
    - better adult work environments
    - lower teaching staff turnover
    - better educated and trained staff
    - more teachers caring for fewer children
  - Better quality centers were more likely to be operated on a non-profit basis, to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, to be located in states with higher quality standards and to meet adult-child ratios, group size, and staff training provisions contained in the 1980 Federal Interagency Day Care Requirements.
- **Despite having higher levels of formal education than the average American worker, child care teaching staff earn abysmally low wages.**
  - This predominantly female work force earns an average hourly wage of $5.35.
  - In the last decade, child care staff wages, when adjusted for inflation, have decreased more than 20%.
  - Child care teaching staff earn less than half as much as comparably educated women and less than one-third as much as comparably educated men in the civilian labor force.
- **Staff turnover has nearly tripled in the last decade, jumping from 15% in 1977 to 41% in 1988.**
  - The most important determinant of staff turnover, among the adult work environment variables, was staff wages.
  - Teaching staff earning the lowest wages are twice as likely to leave their jobs as those earning the highest wages.
- **Children attending lower-quality centers and centers with more staff turnover were less competent in language and social development.**
  - Low- and high-income children were more likely than middle-income children to attend centers providing higher quality care.
- **Compared with a decade ago, child care centers in the United States receive fewer governmental funds, are more likely to be operated on a for-profit basis, and care for a larger number of infants.**

(For a fuller discussion of the findings, see p. 8)

Improving the quality of center-based child care and addressing the staffing crisis demands the commitment of more public and private resources. The National Child Care Staffing Study findings suggest the following recommendations.

1. Raise child care teaching staff salaries as a means of recruiting and retaining a qualified child care work force.
2. Promote formal education and training opportunities for child care teaching staff to improve their ability to interact effectively with children and to create developmentally appropriate environments.
3. Adopt state and federal standards for adult-child

ratios, and staff education, training, and compensation in order to raise the floor of quality in America's child care centers

4. Develop industry standards for the adult work environment to minimize the disparities in quality between types of child care programs.
5. Promote public education about the importance of adequately trained and compensated teaching staff in child care programs in order to secure support for the full cost of care.

STUDY DESCRIPTION

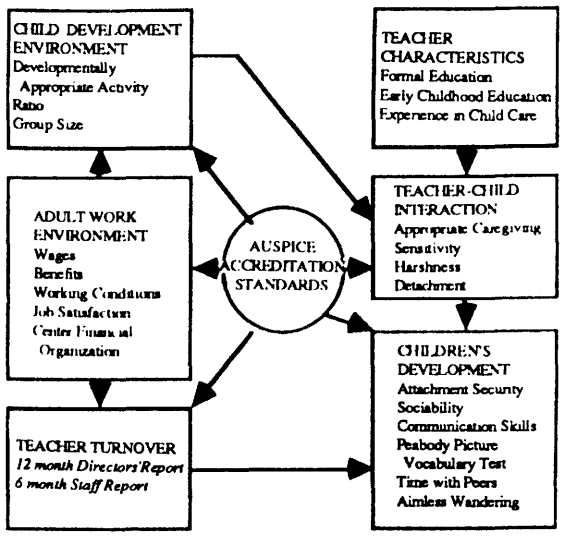
PURPOSE AND GOALS

The National Child Care Staffing Study (NCCSS) explored how teachers and their working conditions affect the caliber of center-based child care available in the United States today. To begin our investigation, we identified the aspects of child care represented in *Figure 1*:

Our purpose was to describe each of the areas and examine the relations among them. Our experiences in child care and previous research suggested the pathways between these components of center-based care. This investigation targeted three major goals:

Goal #1. To examine relations among child care staff characteristics, adult work environments, and the quality of child care provided for children and families in center-based care

Previous research suggests that if the ratio and group size did not rise above certain levels and if staff were trained in early childhood education, appropriate interactions between children and adults occurred, and, in turn, positive developmental outcomes for children were found. Thus, we expected that teachers with more professional preparation would be more likely to engage children in sensitive and appropriate interactions. We also hypothesized that teachers who taught in environments arranged to optimize child development would be more sensitive and appropriate with the children. We anticipated that children who participated in more sensitive and appropriate interaction with their teachers would be more socially and emotionally competent



NOTE The following analysis plan was used to test the model. Within each area (e.g. Teacher Characteristics, Turnover) we used multivariate analyses of variance to compare centers with different auspices, coincidence with FIDCR provisions, accreditation, and family income. We used multiple regression techniques to test relations indicated by arrows on the diagram and to test the relative contributions of auspice, correspondence with regulations, accreditation, and percentage of government funding to explain variance within each domain. All findings reported in the text are statistically significant.

But we also wanted to extend this understanding of quality in light of the staffing crisis. We wanted to learn how the adult work environment affects the quality of care. We hypothesized that teachers who taught in child care centers with better work environments (particularly better compensation and working conditions) would be more satisfied with and committed to their careers, less likely to leave, and more likely to provide an appropriate child development environment for the children. We expected that children in centers with lower staff turnover would have more positive child care experiences.

Goal #2. To examine differences in child care quality, child care staff, and adult work environments in centers that varied with respect to standards, accreditation status, auspice, and the families served

We hoped our investigation would shed light on the efficacy of child care standards, the pros and cons of various types of center care, and variation in services available to children from different family incomes. There are currently no federal regulations with which centers are required to comply, and state standards vary dramatically. But in the past decade, two bodies of guidance —the Federal Interagency Day Care Requirements (FIDCR)[2] and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Center Accreditation Project[3]— have been developed which reflect the most widely respected expert judgment about child care settings. In the absence of mandatory regulations, the FIDCR and the NAEYC provide the best voluntary standards by which to explore the relationship between quality and regulation. Thus, we compared the quality of accredited centers with the quality of non-accredited centers, and the quality of those centers meeting selected FIDCR provisions with those that met none. Additionally, we compared the quality of centers in five states which each have very different child care regulations

To examine how center type affects child care quality, teaching staff, and adult work environments, we compared child care centers operating under four different auspices: (1) Non-profit, non-church-run; (2) Non-profit, church-run, including synagogues; (3) For-profit chains, centers that are one of several operated by a single owner on a local or national basis; and (4) Independent, for-profit.

While parents are responsible for selecting child care, their choices are constrained by finances. We compared child care quality, teaching staff, and adult work environments of centers serving families from different socioeconomic backgrounds (high, middle and low-income) in order to better understand which centers serve which families and the variation in quality

Goal #3. To compare center-based child care services in 1988 with those provided in 1977

In order to identify trends in center based care over the last decade, we compared our findings to those of the National Day Care Supply Study conducted by Abt Associates in 1977.[4]

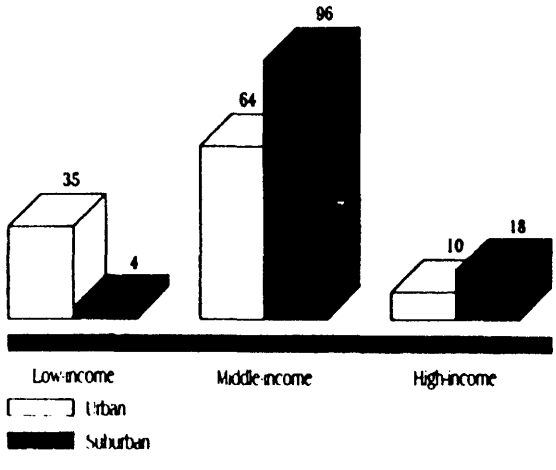
METHODS

The National Child Care Staffing Study examined the quality of care in 227 child care centers in five metropolitan areas in the United States Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, Phoenix, and Seattle. In contrast to the 1977 National Day Care Supply Study that surveyed child care centers in every state by phone, the NCCSS examined extensively care in these selected communities which represent the diversity of center-based care throughout the country. We began collecting data in February 1988 and finished in August 1988. Classroom observations and interviews with center directors and staff provided data on center characteristics, program quality, and staff qualifications, commitment, and compensation. In addition, in Atlanta, child assessments were conducted to examine the effects of varying program and staff attributes on children.

THE SAMPLE

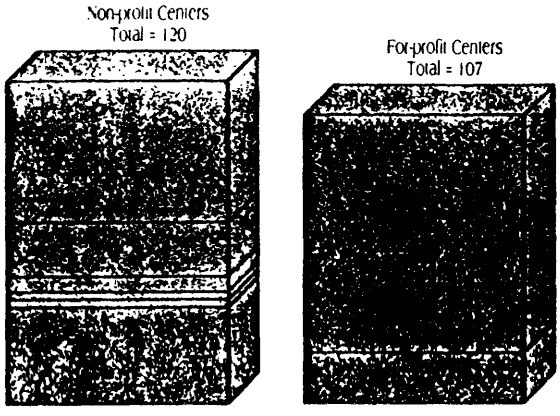
We used a stratified random sampling strategy to generate a sample of child care centers that matched the proportion of licensed centers serving low-, middle , and high-income families in urban and suburban neighborhoods in each Study site.[5]

FINAL SAMPLE OF PARTICIPATING CENTERS (Based on income of families served)



Sixty-one percent of all eligible centers asked to be involved in the study agreed to participate. Refusal rates were higher among those centers in middle-income (42% refused) and high-income (38% refused) census tracts, than among those in low income (23% refused) tracts. No differences in participation rates characterized urban and suburban centers. Centers were more likely to agree to participate if their legal status was non-profit (21% refused) rather than for-profit (39% of independent for-profits and 42% of chains refused).

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION AUSPICE



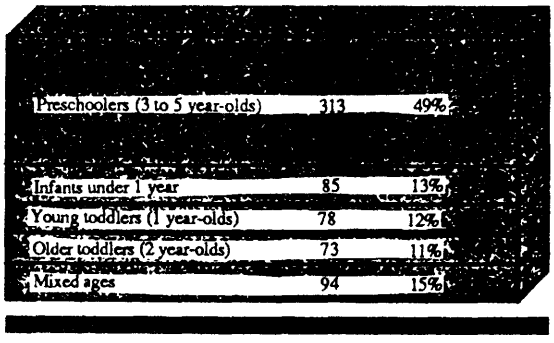
Non-profit Centers
- Total = 120
- Community-based = 53
- Business or hospital = 19
- University = 6
- Public school = 3
- Parent cooperative = 2
- Church-run = 37

For-profit Centers
- Total = 107
- Independently operated = 89
- Part of local or national chain = 18

Telephone screening interviews with all center directors revealed that those who agreed to participate reported higher (i.e., better) staff-child ratios in their centers than did the directors who refused. This suggests that the final sample of 227 centers may, on average, consist of higher-quality centers than in the eligible population as a whole.

In each center, three classrooms were randomly selected for observation, one each from among all infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms. Only two classrooms were observed in some centers that did not enroll infants. Where possible, mixed-age classrooms were included to provide three classrooms per center.

CLASSROOMS OBSERVED BY AGE OF CHILDREN



Number after description indicates number of classrooms observed.

We randomly chose approximately two staff members from each participating classroom to interview and observe. In this report, "Teachers" refers to teachers and teacher/directors. "Assistants" refers to assistant teachers and aides. Sixty-six percent (865) of the final sample of 1,309 teaching staff members were teachers (805 teachers and 60 teacher/directors) and 34% (444) were assistant teachers (286 assistant teachers and 158 aides).

Two children, a girl and a boy, were randomly selected for assessment from each target classroom in Atlanta. Two hundred and sixty children constituted the child sample: 53 infants, 97 toddlers and 110 preschoolers.

THE MEASURES

The complexity of the investigation required a varied approach to collecting data. On average, the research team in each site, consisting of trained observers and interviewers, spent three days in each center.

Quality Observations

The quality measures consisted of observations of classroom structure, overall quality, and interactions between the teaching staff and children.

Overall quality was assessed with the **Early Childhood**

Environment Rating Scale[6] for each observed preschool classroom and the **Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale**[7] for each of the observed infant and toddler classrooms. These scales provide a comprehensive assessment of the day-to-day quality of care provided to children. Individual items can range from a low of 1 to a high of 7. From a factor analysis of the scale items derived two subscales: (1) *Developmentally Appropriate Activity* (e.g., materials, schedule, and activities), (2) *Appropriate Caregiving* (e.g., supervision, adult-child interactions, and discipline).

Researchers recorded *Ratios* and *Group Size* at regular intervals during a two-hour observational period per classroom. Hour-by-hour staffing patterns in every center classroom (including those that were observed) were obtained through interviews with directors.

We observed staff-child interaction in each classroom using a scale of **Staff Sensitivity,**[8] to derive scores for *Sensitivity* (e.g., warm, attentive, engaged), *Harshness* (e.g., critical, threatens children, punitive) and *Detachment* (e.g., low levels of interaction, interest and supervision). Scores range from routine caregiving (e.g., touching without any verbal interaction) to intense caregiving (e.g., engaging the child in conversation, playing with an infant while changing diapers).

Director and Staff Interviews

In interviews about structural aspects of the program, including limited budget information and staff characteristics, each director provided information about the teaching staff's demographic and educational backgrounds, compensation, working conditions and turnover. Directors also provided their estimates of the socioeconomic status (low-, middle- and high-income) of all children enrolled in the center.

The six staff members from each of the observed classrooms participated in an individual interview consisting of seven sections: personal background, child care experience, wages and benefits, other jobs, educational background, professional satisfaction and recommendations for improving the child care profession. Six months after the initial staff interview (August 1988 - February 1989), we reached 71% of the staff by phone to obtain data on actual turnover rates.

Child Assessments

We assessed children's development in several ways. The child's security of attachment to adult care givers and sociability with adults and peers were measured using the *Waters and Deane Attachment Q-Set*[9] and the *Howes Peer Play Scale*.[10] Teachers rated communication skills using the *Feagans & Farran Adaptive Language Inventory*.[11] To assess preschool children's language development, we administered the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test*.[12]

FINDINGS

CHILD CARE TEACHERS

Who works as child care teachers and what are the characteristics of individual teachers that promote effective caregiving? The following picture emerged from our findings.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

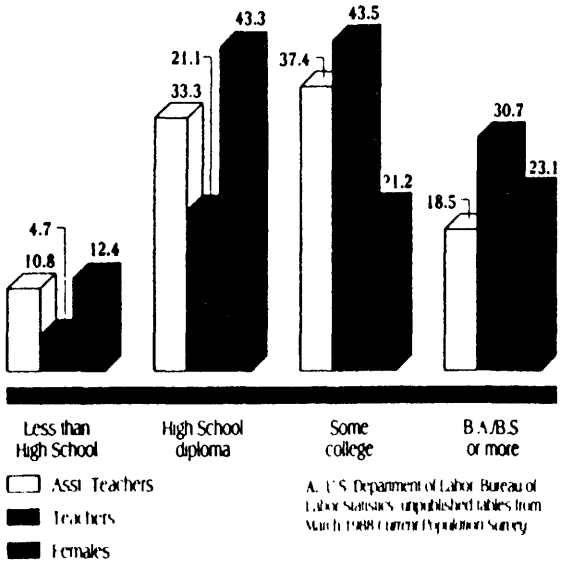
The proportion of child care teachers who were women and their age distribution changed little between 1977 and 1988.[13] Ninety-seven percent of the teaching staff in our Study were female and 81% were 40 years old or younger (only 7.1% were under age 19). Still, the child care work force is remarkably diverse. Twice as many of the teaching staff were members of minorities in 1988 (32%) than in 1977 (15%). The sample was about evenly split between married (46.3%) and single (53.7%) staff. Sixty-five percent of the married staff members and 21% of the single staff had children.

PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION AND EXPERIENCE

Staff in our sample were well educated. **While less than half of women in the civilian labor force have attended college, more than half of the assistant teach-**

ers and almost three-quarters of the teachers in our study had some college background.

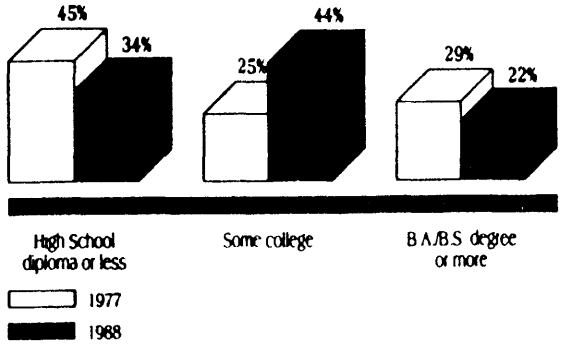
EDUCATIONAL LEVELS OF CHILD CARE TEACHING STAFF AND OF THE FEMALE CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE, AGES 25 - 64



A. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, unpublished tables from March 1988 Current Population Survey

Although, in 1988, more of the teaching staff had completed some college, fewer had received a college or graduate degree than in 1977

EDUCATIONAL LEVELS OF TEACHING STAFF: 1977 - 1988



Sixty five percent of teachers and 57% of assistant teachers had some course work in early childhood education or child development within the formal educational system --at the high school, vocational school, college or graduate school level. Half of the teaching staff with specialized training had received it at the college level or above.

Our child care teaching staff was substantially more experienced in 1988 than in the past. Twenty-nine percent of the teachers and 58% of the assistants had been teaching in child care three years or less when interviewed. But 19% had been working in child care for 10 years or more. In 1977, only 5% had been in the field this long.

PROFESSIONAL IDENTIFICATION

Sixty-six percent of our teaching staff viewed child care as a career rather than as a temporary job. This was particularly true of those with specialized training in early childhood education. Even among those who left their current position, one-third stayed in the early childhood field.

Yet commitment to child care as a career did not translate into membership in professional organizations. Only 14% of the teaching staff belonged to a child-related professional group. Only 4% of the teaching staff were represented by a trade union. Teachers belonging to professional organizations had more formal education. **Those belonging to either a professional organization or a union had more specialized training and experience, earned $1.50 more per hour, and were less likely to leave their jobs.**

FROM TEACHER BACKGROUND TO TEACHER BEHAVIOR

Teachers with different educational backgrounds behaved differently with children. In general, the amount of formal education obtained by a teacher was the strongest predictor of appropriate teacher behavior, with specialized training emerging as an additional predictor in infant classrooms. The amount of experience did not predict teacher behavior. In all age classrooms, the teaching staff's level of formal education best predicted Sensitive less *Harsh*, and less *Detached* caregiving. Our findings differ from the National Day Care Study's[14] in which specialized child-related training, regardless of formal education, best predicted staff behavior.

THE WORK ENVIRONMENT FOR ADULTS

Teachers' wages were the most important predictor in the adult work environment for both measures of quality associated with positive child development: Appropriate Developmental Environment scores and ratios. Teachers with higher salaries worked in centers with better environments for children. Wages and benefits were higher and working conditions better in centers that arranged for staff to have overlapping shifts. These findings suggest that when child care dollars are used to pay staff more, the quality of care for children is greatly enhanced.

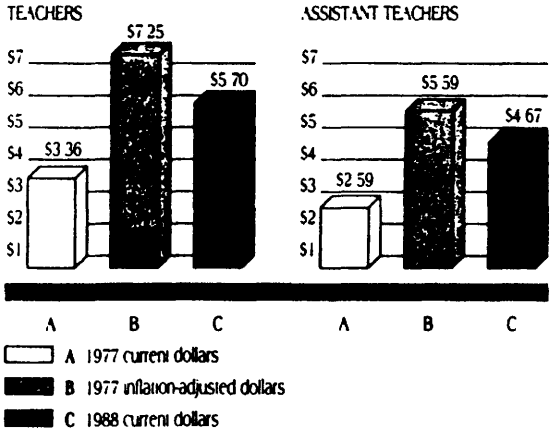
COMPENSATION

Yet child care teaching staff constitute a very poorly paid work force. **The average hourly wage in 1988 was $5.35 which is an annual income of $9,363 for full-time (35 hours/50 week year-round) employment. The 1988 poverty threshold for a family of three (the average family size in our sample) was $9,431 a year.**[15] Fifty-seven percent of our sample earned $5 per hour or less. Most got no yearly cost-of-living or merit increases. A minimum wage of $4.55 per hour was proposed by Congress and vetoed by the President in 1989. Forty percent of the staff in our sample would now be paid more if it had been implemented.

WHAT TEACHERS RECOMMEND TO IMPROVE CHILD CARE QUALITY:	
BETTER SALARIES FOR CHILD CARE WORK	89%
IMPROVED BENEFITS	80%
INCREASED SOCIAL RESPECT FOR CHILD CARE WORK	79%
ONGOING OR CONTINUING EDUCATION	70%
A CAREER LADDER IN CHILD CARE	65%

Despite gains in overall formal education and experience, child care teaching staff were paid even less in 1988 than in 1977. Wages, when adjusted for inflation, dropped dramatically: Teachers' earnings fell by 27 percent and assistants' by 20 percent.

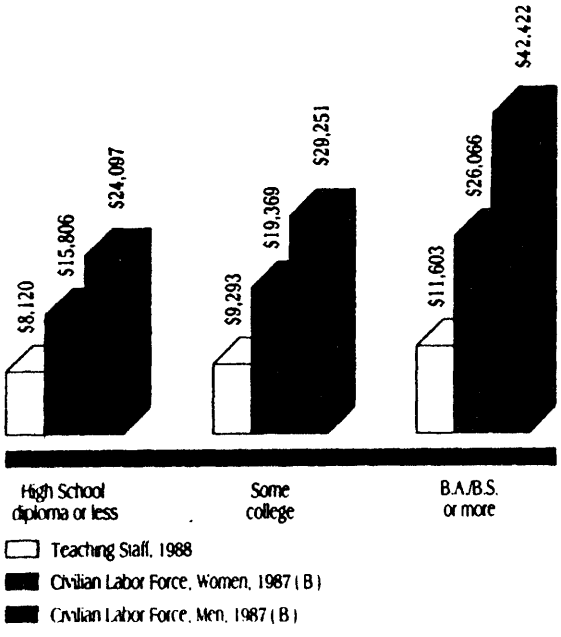
AVERAGE STAFF WAGES: 1977 - 1988



Child care teaching staff are typically paid to work year-round for 35 hours each week. The wages of child care teachers are essential to their family income. Forty-two percent of the teaching staff contributed at least half of their household income. One-quarter of the teachers contributed over two-thirds of their household earnings. To supplement their income, one-quarter of full-time teaching staff in 1988 worked a second job while only seven percent did so in 1977.

It is staggering how little child care staff earn compared with what other comparably educated women in the work force earn. When child care wages in our Study are compared with the wages of comparably educated men, the disparities are even more striking.

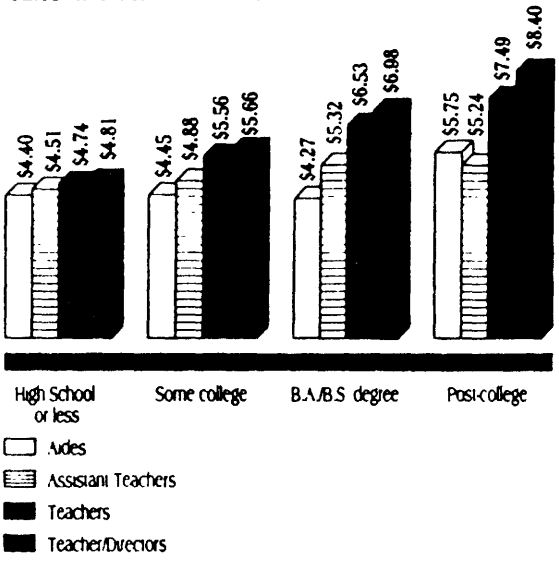
CHILD CARE TEACHING STAFF WAGES VERSUS CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE WAGES (A)



A Full time annual earnings based on 35 hours per week/50 weeks per year
B 1988 data not available
Source Money Income of Households Families and Persons in the United States 1987 Current Population Reports, Series P-6, No 162, Table 36

Examining variation in child care wages by staff position reveals a very slight wage scale. Teachers and teacher/directors earned, on average, $1.03 more per hour than did assistant teachers and aides. **Little incentive exists for teaching staff to obtain more education, training, or experience.** As seen in the following chart, the only notable increase in wages occurred for college graduates. Yet this amount would not cover the cost of that education.

WAGES BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL FOR DIFFERENT TEACHING STAFF POSITIONS



Most child care teachers, even full-time staff, received minimal employment benefits. **Out of the entire sample, two out of five received health coverage and one out of five had a retirement plan.** Other than sick leave and paid holidays, the only benefit offered to a majority of the staff was reduced fees for child care. Teachers earning the lowest wages received the fewest benefits.

WORKING CONDITIONS

The two-thirds of full-time teaching staff were paid, on average, for 40 hours per week. But they averaged an additional four hours per week preparing curriculum, fundraising, or meeting with parents and staff for no pay.

Seventy percent of the teaching staff worked without a written contract. Forty percent had no written job description. Only four percent were protected by a collective bargaining agreement.

JOB SATISFACTION

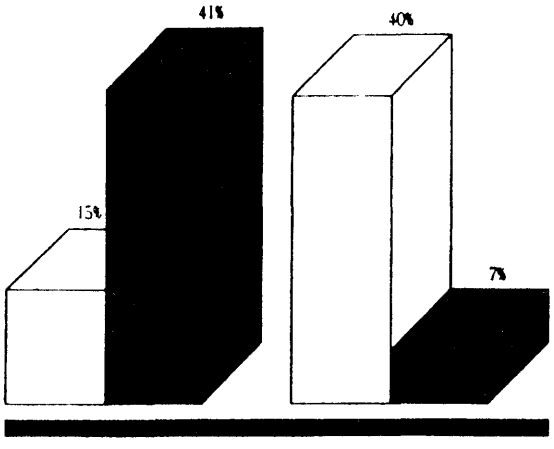
Although dissatisfied with their compensation, teachers expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the day-to-day demands of their work. Their greatest sources of gratification included participating in the growth and devel-

opment of children, autonomy on the job, and relations with colleagues.

STAFF TURNOVER

Staff turnover rates were disturbingly high. **Across all participating centers, directors reported an average, annual turnover rate of 41 percent. The follow-up calls revealed a staff turnover rate of 37 percent over just six months.** The number of directors reporting no staff turnover in their center plummeted between 1977 and 1988.

TEACHING STAFF TURNOVER: 1977 - 1988



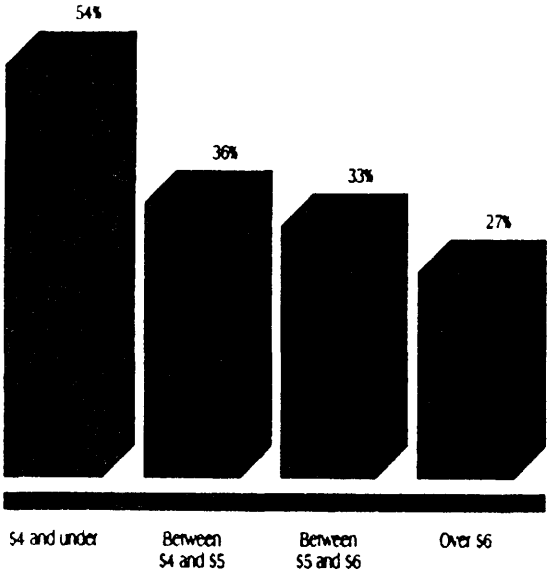
(A) Source: *Day Care Centers in the U.S.: A National Profile 1976-1977*. Abt Associates, Cambridge, Mass., 1978 (National Day Care Study)
(B) National Child Care Staffing Study, weighted data for comparison with the National Day Care Study

Compared with staff who remained in their centers, those who left were more likely to be new to the field and to have less specialized training. They worked in centers with lower quality preschool (but not infant) classrooms, as measured by the *Developmentally Appropriate Activity* scale. Staff who left also showed less *Appropriate Caregiving* in preschool classrooms and more *Detached* behavior towards all ages of children.

How the Adult Work Environment Affects Turnover

The most important predictor of staff turnover, among the adult work environment variables, was staff wages. In centers paying lower wages, directors reported a larger share of their teaching staff had left in the last 12 months. The follow-up telephone calls to the teaching staff confirmed these reports –actual turnover rates were higher in centers paying lower wages. **Teaching staff earning $4 per hour or less left their jobs at twice the rate of those who earned over $6.** Close to three-quarters of those who left found better-paying jobs in early childhood or other fields.

TURNOVER RATES FOR TEACHING STAFF WITH DIFFERING WAGES (SIX-MONTH TURNOVER)



How Turnover Affects Children

Turnover is detrimental to children. **Children in centers with higher turnover rates spent less time engaged in social activities with peers and more time in Aimless Wandering.** They also had lower *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* scores compared with children in centers with more stable teaching staff.

VARIATIONS IN CENTERS

CHARACTERISTICS OF CENTERS

Between 1977 and 1988, the average center enrollment increased from 49 to 84 children. Accordingly, the average number of care givers per center increased from 8 to 15. For-profit centers constituted 41% of centers in 1977 as compared with 47% of the centers participating in the National Child Care Staffing Study. For-profit centers' share of total enrollment also rose from 37% in 1977 to 51% in 1988. Government funding as a proportion of total revenues dropped from 29% in 1977 to 17% in 1988.

The racial composition of the children shifted in the last decade. While there were slightly more whites (63% v. 70%) and fewer blacks (28% v. 21%) in 1988, there were more non-whites from other racial groups (9% v. 13%). The age composition of the children also changed dramatically. In 1977, 14% of the enrolled children were infants and toddlers (two years old or younger). In 1988, this figure had grown to 30%. Thus, the proportion of preschoolers shifted, dropping from 52% to 46% and the proportion of kindergartners and school-age children dropped from 35% to 23%.

CHILD CARE ENVIRONMENTS

Centers in our sample provided a very wide range of child development environments. Quality varied widely for each of our child development environment measures: the *Developmentally Appropriate Activity* score derived from **Environment Rating Scales**, *Ratios*, and *Group Sizes*.

Developmentally Appropriate Activity

The average *Developmentally Appropriate Activity* scores were 3.17, 3.57, and 3.56 for infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms, respectively. A score of 3 indicates "minimally adequate" care on this measure; a score of 5 indicates "good" care, placing the average classroom in the sample at a barely adequate level of quality. At least two-thirds of the classrooms, for all ages of children, fell below a scale score of 4, and, at most, 12% of the classrooms met or exceeded the "good" score of 5.

Ratios

The Federal Interagency Day Care Requirements recommended ratios of 3 infants to 1 adult, 5 toddlers to 1 adult, and 10 preschoolers to 1 adult. On average, we observed ratios of 3.9 infants to 1 adult, 5.8 toddlers to 1 adult, and 8.4 preschoolers to 1 adult. While we observed 3:1 ratios in 36% of the infant classrooms, 30% of the classrooms had ratios of 5:1 or worse. For toddlers, 46% of the classrooms had ratios of 5:1 or better, but 22% had ratios of 8:1 or worse. Preschoolers fared better; 76% of their classrooms had ratios of 10:1 or better and only 7.4% had ratios of 15:1 or worse.

Group Size

The FIDCR recommends group sizes of no more than 10 infants to two-and a half-year-olds, 16 two-and a half to four year-olds and 20 four to six year-olds. On average, we observed group sizes of 7.1 for infants (under 1 year old), 9.6 for toddlers (1 and 2 year-olds) and 13.5 for preschoolers. Eighty-nine percent of the infant classrooms, 63% of the toddler classrooms, and 71% of the preschool classrooms had group sizes coinciding with the FIDCR recommendations.

Staffing Patterns

Most centers change their staffing arrangements during the course of the day. Between nine A.M. and five P.M., one teacher was alone with the children in 55% of infant and toddler classes and 57% of preschool classrooms. Working alone, an infant teacher cared for 3 to 8 children, a toddler teacher cared for 3 to 14 children and a preschool teacher cared for 6 to 22 children. In approximately 15% of the classrooms, staff had no overlap at the beginnings and ends of their shifts, and thus no opportunity to communicate information about the children.

TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTION

The average *Appropriate Caregiving* scores were 4.15, 4.10, and 4.39 for infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms, respectively. This places the average caregiving in classrooms for all ages of children below a level of quality

that indicates "good" care (a score of 5) on this scale. About 30% of all classrooms met or exceeded the "good" score of 5.

From Quality Environments to Teacher Behavior

Teachers in environments with high *Developmentally Appropriate Activity* ratings and lower *Ratios* (i.e., better) were more *Sensitive*, less *Harsh* and less *Detached* when interacting with the children. Contrary to previous studies, group size did not predict teacher behavior.

COMPARISON WITH QUALITY GUIDELINES

Federal Interagency Day Care Requirements

How do centers that meet an acceptable threshold of quality differ from those which don't? To answer this question, every participating child care center was compared according to how they met the three major provisions of the 1980 FIDCR: ratios, group size, and teacher training. Centers that met all three provisions had staff with more formal education, higher levels of early childhood education training, and more experience. They also had more *Developmentally Appropriate Activity* for all ages of children.

Teachers in centers meeting the FIDCR provisions were more Sensitive, less Harsh, and engaged in more Appropriate Caregiving with the children, thus suggesting that standards may contribute to the creation of a warm and caring child care environment.

Centers meeting the FIDCR provisions paid better wages and provided better benefits, except for reduced fees for child care. Teaching staff in these centers reported higher levels of job satisfaction. Finally, directors reported higher staff turnover in centers that did not meet the FIDCR provisions. Centers meeting the FIDCR provisions charged higher parent fees.

COMPARISON OF WAGES, BENEFITS, AND TURNOVER IN CENTERS THAT MET THE FEDERAL INTERAGENCY DAY CARE REQUIREMENTS' (FIDCR) PROVISIONS FOR RATIOS, GROUP SIZE, AND TRAINING (A)

	Centers Meeting No FIDCR Provisions(B)	Centers Meeting All FIDCR Provisions
Average Hourly Wage	$4.43	$6.07
Annual Turnover (Directors' Report)	65%	32%
Percentage Receiving Health Benefits(C)	5%	51%
Annual Days of Sick Leave	3 days	6 days
Percentage Receiving Retirement Benefits	2%	24%
Percentage Receiving Cost-of-living Adjustments	18%	45%
Percentage Receiving Reduced Fee for Child Care	77%	48%

A Data are staff reports unless indicated
B 21% of centers met all, 68% met some, and 11% met no FIDCR provisions.
C Includes partially and fully paid health benefits

State Regulations

Sites vary dramatically in the proportion of centers that met or failed to meet the FIDCR provisions. This variation corresponds to the stringency of state child care standards. Boston has very rigorous child care regulations whereas Phoenix and Atlanta have among the most lax. In Boston, 46% of centers met all of the FIDCR provisions; every center met some of the provisions. In contrast, only 7% of the Phoenix centers met some of the provisions and 20% failed to meet any. Centers in Boston had higher *Appropriate Caregiving* and *Developmentally Appropriate Activity* scores than did centers in Phoenix or Atlanta. There was a strong relation between state regulations and observed ratios. Centers in Phoenix and Atlanta had worse ratios than centers in other sites for children of all ages.

Accreditation

Fourteen of the 227 centers in each of our sites had completed the center accreditation process sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young

Children. These centers had staff with more formal education, higher levels of early childhood education training, and more experience than non-accredited centers. Accredited centers had more *Developmentally Appropriate Activity*, more classroom staff, and better infant and toddler *Ratios*. Teachers were more *Sensitive* and engaged in more *Appropriate Caregiving*.

Accredited centers paid better wages and, with the exception of reduced fee child care, provided more benefits. Accredited centers were also more likely to provide regular cost-of-living increases, paid preparation time and written job descriptions. Staff in accredited centers reported higher levels of satisfaction with supervisor and director relations but lower levels of satisfaction with their ability to resolve their own work and family conflicts. Although accredited centers did not charge parents higher fees than non-accredited centers, they did serve children from higher-income families.

Auspices

Differences characterized the four types of centers: independent, for-profit; chain, for-profit; non-profit; and church-sponsored. Educational levels and early childhood training were higher for teachers in non-profit centers than for teachers in either type of for-profit or church centers. Staff in non-profit centers had more experience than staff in for-profit centers.

Non-profit centers had more *Developmentally Appropriate Activity* than did independent, for-profit centers. Non-profit centers also had better *Ratios* than either type of for-profit center. They had more teaching staff in the classroom than any other auspice and were more likely to have two adults in a classroom at any given time than either type of for-profit center. Non-profits were more likely to arrange overlapping shifts for staff than were for-profit centers.

Teachers in non-profit centers were more likely to engage in *Appropriate Caregiving* than were teachers in the other types of centers. Teachers in independent, for-profit centers were more *Harsh* and less *Sensitive* than teachers in other programs.

Non-profit and church centers paid higher wages than did either type of for-profit center. Non-profit centers provided better employment benefits, with the exception of reduced fees for child care, than did church and for-profit centers, and church centers provided better benefits than did independent, for-profit centers.

Both the six-month teacher turnover and the directors' report of the previous 12-month turnover were higher in for-profit centers than in non-profit centers.

WAGES, BENEFITS, AND TURNOVER IN CENTERS OF DIFFERENT AUSPICES (A)

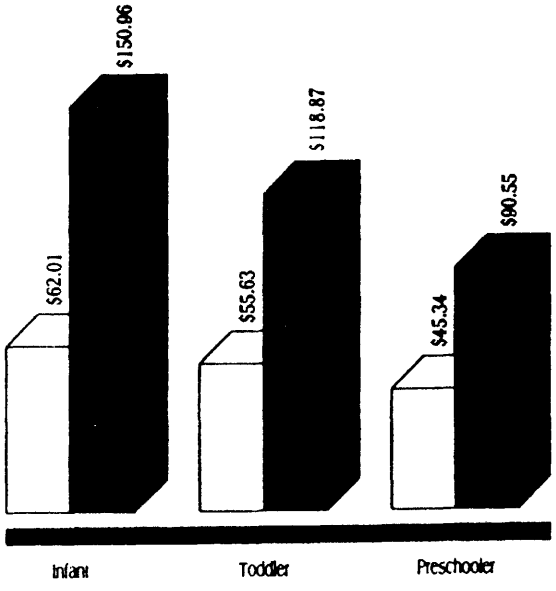
	Chain for profit	Independent, for profit	Non-profit, church-sponsored	Non-profit
Average Hourly Wage	$4.10	$4.76	$5.04	$6.40
Annual Turnover (Directors' Report)	74%	51%	36%	30%
Percentage Receiving Health Benefits (B)	21%	16%	24%	61%
Annual Days of Sick Leave	3	2.5	4.5	8
Percentage Receiving Retirement Benefits	8%	5%	13%	34%
Percentage Receiving Cost-of-living Adjustments	14%	19%	34%	54%
Percentage Receiving Merit Increases	45%	44%	41%	39%
Percentage Receiving Reduced Fee for Child Care	76%	65%	54%	50%

A These data are staff reports
B Includes partially and fully paid health benefits

These different types of centers have the same financial resources but receive funds in different proportions. Non-profit centers received a smaller proportion of their incomes from parent fees (59%), compared with church-run (83%) centers and both types of for-profit (87%) centers. The percentage of income from government funds accounted for this difference, with the non-profits receiving 33% of their budget from this source. Partly as a result of this subsidy, non-profit centers had significantly larger overall budgets than did the other centers, controlling for

total enrollment and proportion of full-time enrollment. Combined corporate and charitable funding accounted for just seven percent of any type of center's income. The fees that parents paid for child care differed dramatically by site and by age of child but not by auspice.

MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM WEEKLY FEES FOR FULL-TIME CHILDREN



NOTE: The minimum and maximum fees for each age group represent the lowest and highest average parent full-time fee found in a single participating site. The maximum fee is consistently charged in Boston. Atlanta and Phoenix charge the lowest fees.

Even when budgets were adjusted for differences in contributed space, total enrollment, and proportion of full-time enrollment, both types of non-profit centers spent a higher proportion of their budgets on teaching staff than did for-profits. Non-profit and church-run centers allocated 62% and 63% of their budgets to teaching staff salaries and benefits, respectively. For-profit centers, independents, and chains allocated 49% and 41%, respectively. Similar trends were found for percentages of budgets devoted to total personnel costs.

A final distinction among the differing auspices concerns the socioeconomic status of their clientele as reported by center directors. Children from low-income families were most likely to be in non-profit centers. In contrast, children from middle-income families were disproportionally found in for-profit centers. Children from high-income families were found primarily in non-profit centers and, to a lesser extent, in independent, for-profit centers. Church-sponsored centers tended to serve children from low- and middle-income families.

What do these differences among centers tell us about quality? Auspice was the strongest predictor of quality. The second predictor of quality for infants and toddlers was whether or not a center met the FIDCR provisions. The second predictor of quality for preschoolers was NAEYC accreditation. The presence of government funds had little predictive value. **Non-profit centers, regardless of whether they received government funds, provided better quality care than for-profit centers that did or did not receive government funds.**

FAMILY INCOME AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CARE

Across numerous indicators of quality, we found that children from middle-income families were enrolled in centers of lower quality than were children from low-and high-income families. Children from middle-income families were found in centers with worse staff-child ratios, lower staff wages, and fewer staff with specialized training.

Accordingly, children from middle-income families were more likely to be in classrooms that were observed to offer less *Developmentally Appropriate Activity* and *Appropriate Caregiving*, with only one exception. Preschoolers from middle-income families were in classrooms with higher ratings of *Appropriate Caregiving* than were preschoolers from low-income (but not high- income) families. Children from high-income families experienced lower rates of staff turnover than did children from the two lower-income groups.

These patterns in quality of care correspond to income differences in parent fees. High-income families paid the highest fees, regardless of their child's age. But, non-subsidized, low-income families paid somewhat higher fees than did middle-income families.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Without major improvements in their salaries and working conditions, qualified teachers will continue to leave the child care field for jobs that offer a living wage. Action is required at many different levels of society to meet the challenge of improving the adult work environment in child care and thus the developmental environment for millions of children.

Parents are the starting point. They have the highest stake in improving the stability and quality of care for their children. They can intervene to improve services by demanding that federal and state governments, as well as industry, increase their commitment of resources. Early childhood education professional organizations, resource and referral agencies, direct service providers, training institutions, advocates and, of course, teachers have an important role to play in upgrading the quality of America's child care.

Five major recommendations emerged from the findings of the National Child Care Staffing Study. The first three recommendations, focusing on public and private resource allocation and regulation, are directed toward federal and state governments and employers. The last two recommendations are aimed at providers of direct and support services to child care, including businesses, and involve redefining practices and priorities within the early childhood education field. Suggestions about how to achieve these changes are listed below each recommendation.

1. **Increase child care teacher salaries to recruit and retain a qualified child care work force.**
   - Establish salary levels that are competitive with other occupations requiring comparable education and training.
   - Earmark funds for salary enhancement in all new and current federal and state allotments for child care.
   - Increase the federal minimum wage and ensure that it covers all child care teachers in order to raise the salary floor in child care centers.
   - Encourage significant investment of new public and private resources for child care to help low- and middle-income families meet the cost of improved salaries in their child care programs.
   - Establish reimbursement rates for all publicly-funded child care that reflect the full cost of care based on improved salaries for teachers. Designate state level commissions to regularly assess child care reimbursement rates.
   - Systematize federal, state, and local efforts to collect data on the child care work force.

2. **Promote formal education and training opportunities for child care teachers to improve their ability to interact effectively with children and to create developmentally appropriate environments.**
   - Develop career ladders in child care programs to reward education and training and encourage continuing education for all levels of teaching staff.
   - Include resources for specialized early childhood education training in all new public and private funding for child care.
   - Expand current federal and state college loan deferment programs for elementary and secondary school teachers to include early childhood teachers seeking specialized training at the college level.
   - Establish a national training fund to provide education stipends to individuals currently employed in a child care setting and seeking two-year and graduate degrees in early childhood education.

3. **Adopt state and federal standards for adult-child ratios, staff training, education, and compensation in order to raise the floor of quality in American child care centers.**

- Implement national regulations based on the FIDCR provisions and NAEYC Accreditation Project criteria.
- Require states seeking federal child care dollars to adopt national guidelines.
- Encourage child care centers to participate in NAEYC's Center Accreditation Project.

4. **Develop industry standards for the adult work environment to minimize the disparities in quality between types of child care programs.**
   - Devote a minimum of 60% of center budgets to teaching personnel expenditures in order to maintain adequate salaries and to reduce turnover.
   - Provide an employment benefits package for all teaching personnel which includes paid health coverage, a retirement plan, paid sick leave, vacations and holidays, and an annual cost-of-living adjustment.
   - Implement policies that include regularly scheduled paid time for curriculum perpetration, staff meetings and in-service training.
   - Charge higher fees for services and create sliding fee schedules to assure equity in the percentage of family budgets dedicated to child care expenses.
   - Encourage child care teachers to join professional organizations and unions committed to improving their compensation and working conditions
   - Create sliding fee scale membership rates to encourage lower-paid child care teachers to join professional organizations.

5. **Promote public education about the importance of adequately trained and compensated teachers in child care programs to secure support for the full cost of care.**
   - Include information about the significance of the adult work environment in all child care training programs.
   - Encourage Resource and Referral Agencies to develop materials to assist parents in assessing the adult work environment, compensation levels and turnover rates when evaluating the quality of child care services.
   - Establish improving compensation as the top priority for the public education efforts of professional organizations in the field.
   - Encourage state and federal governmental agencies to educate parents about quality child care by developing a checklist for rating centers in regard to wages, turnover and staff-child ratios

CONCLUSION

Amidst the child care debate facing our nation, a consensus is emerging that high quality early childhood services are essential to the developmental and economic well-being of our children and families. The National Child Care Staffing Study raises serious concerns about the quality of services many American children receive. But our findings also clearly indicate how services can be improved if, as a society, we will devote the necessary resources to accomplishing this. America depends on child care teachers. Our future depends on valuing them.

Footnotes

[1]Louis Harris and Associates, Inc. (April, 1989). **The Phillip Morris Companies, Inc. Family Survey II: Child Care.** New York: Phillip Morris Companies, Inc.

[2]In 1980, the Federal government adopted, and almost immediately rescinded, the FIDCR which contains three regulated ingredients of quality: the ratio of children per adult care giver, the group size in classrooms, and the child-related training of the teaching staff. We compared centers in our sample which coincided with FIDCR standards along these identified dimensions with those that did not. **Federal Register, Part V**, Volume 45, No. 55, Wednesday, March 19, 1980, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of the Secretary, H.E.W. Day Care Regulations, pp. 17870-17885.

[3]The NAEYC is the largest early childhood education professional association. NAEYC operates a voluntary, nationwide accreditation program for all early childhood center-based programs. After a thorough review, centers that meet certain standards of care receive accredited status. **Accreditation Criteria & Procedures of the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs**; Sue Bredekamp, Editor; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1984; pp. 1-2.

[4]Coelen, C., Glantz, R., & Calore, D. (1978). **Day Care Centers in th U.S.: A National Profile, 1976-1977**. Cambridge, Mass: Abt Associates.

[5]First, the eligible pool of centers was identified from updated lists of licensed child care centers. Eligible centers in addition to being licensed, provided full-time, non-residential care for at least 9 months per year, enrolled at least 15 children, and employed at least 6 teaching staff members. Second, the final sample of participating centers was selected from this eligible pool. This selection used a stratified, random sampling strategy. Specifically, the eligible pool of centers in each site was divided into six groups based on their location in (1) low-, middle-, or high-income Census tracts (using site-specific median incomes to establish

income cut-offs), and (2) urban or suburban neighborhoods. The final sample of centers was then randomly selected, using replacement sampling to handle refusals, to match the proportion of eligible centers in each of these six income and density groups. Thus, if 30% of the eligible centers in a site were located in low-income, urban neighborhoods, 30% of the final sample for that site consisted of centers in low-income, urban neighborhoods.

[6]Harms, T., & Clifford, R. (1980). **Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale**. N.Y.: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

[7]Harms, T., Cryer, D., & Clifford, R. (1980) **Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale**. N.Y.: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

[8]Amett, J. (in press). Caregivers in day care centers. Does training matter? **Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology.**

[9]Waters, E. & Deane, K.E. (1985). Defining and assessing individual differences in attachment relationships: Q-methodology and the organization of behavior in infancy and early childhood. In I., Bretherton & E., Waters (Eds.) Growing points of attachment theory and research. **Monographs of the Society for Research in Childhood, 50**, (Serial No. 209). Pages 41-65.

[10]Howes, C. & Stewart, P. (1987). Child's play with adults, toys, and peers: An examination of family and child care influences. **Developmental Psychology, 23**, 423-430.

[11]Feagans, L. & Farran, D. (1979). **Adaptive Language Inventory**. Unpublished, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[12]Dunn, L.M. (1984). **Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (revised)**. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.

[13]To make comparisons between the Supply Study of the National Day Care Study and the National Child Care Staffing Study, the proportion of centers that (1) were profit versus non-profit and (2) enrolled or did not enroll subsidized children (none versus less than 5 or 20% of enrollment versus more than 5 or 20% of enrollment) were made equivalent in the two samples using a weighting procedure.

[14]Roupp, R., Travers, J., & Glantz, F., & Coelen, C. (1979). **Children at the Center: Final Report of the National Day Care Study**. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates.

[15]U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, unpublished data.