



Re-forming the Education and Care Workforce in England, Scotland and Sweden

England and Scotland (in 1998) and Sweden (in 1996) transferred responsibility for early childhood education and care (early years services) and childcare for school-age children (school-age childcare) from welfare to education departments. Policy Brief 12 provided an overview of this process. In this Policy Brief we focus on one issue: has an education-based administration led to a reformed workforce?¹

England

Prior to 1998, England had a workforce that was divided and hierarchical. Teachers, who were generally graduates with relatively good pay and conditions, worked in nursery, primary and secondary compulsory schools. At the other extreme came family day carers, with little training and very poor pay. In between came centre-based 'childcare workers', both early years and school age, and classroom assistants, most often in classes for 3 to 5 year olds and providing additional support for children with special needs. Training and pay for both, though better than for family day carers, were low.

Since 1998, the workforce has remained divided and hierarchical. There has been a large increase in classroom assistants, due to government policy, and a fall in the number of family day carers, due to falling supply. Policy has focused on improving the training of the childcare workforce: for example, through more 'in-service' training; rationalising the plethora of qualifications to create a 'climbing ladder' to facilitate staff moving upwards and sideways; and new progression routes, for example a 'senior practitioner' qualification. Recruitment to childcare work has also been a priority: for example, through a national recruitment campaign and setting targets for under-represented groups such as men.

Scotland

In many respects, the situation before and after 1998 has been similar to England. There are, however, some significant differences. A report on the future of the teaching profession has led to significantly increased

teachers' pay and a widening of the gap between teachers and other key groups, including childcare workers and classroom assistants. A second report recommended the establishment of a single workforce planning exercise covering arrangements for recruitment, training and professional development of the workforce in children's services. A workforce mapping exercise is currently underway. The New Community Schools initiative, intended to offer a more integrated approach to education, health and family support, is linking services and introducing new types of workers: 'integration manager' (or equivalent) posts have been established in many areas; while Glasgow has clustered nursery, primary and secondary schools into 'learning communities', each with a lead principal who can come from any level of school.

Sweden

Prior to 1996, there were three main professions. Pre-school teachers (förskolllärare) worked in early years services and with younger children in school; schoolteachers worked with children across the compulsory school spectrum, and with 16 to 19 year olds in upper secondary schools (gymnasia); while free-time pedagogues (fritidspedagog) worked in school-age childcare services. The three professions were trained separately, and schoolteachers had a rather higher level of training and pay, but the differences were not that great. All three professions were trained at a higher education level, schoolteachers for at least 3½ years, pre-school teachers and free-time pedagogues for 3 years.

There were some assistants, mainly in early years services. But they were a minority, with the trend being for more professional staff. Most family day carers were employed by local authorities, and better paid than in England and Scotland; training levels were low in all three countries.

A strong movement to 'whole day schools' had integrated schools (including 'pre-school classes' for 6 year olds) with school-age childcare services. In many cases, whole day schools had teams drawn from the three professions, working with groups of 6 to 9 year olds. Clusters of services – early years, school-age childcare and schools – were increasingly managed by a *rektor*, whose professional background might be in any of the three professions. Professional boundaries were blurring.

Post-1996, there has been sweeping workforce reform. A new training system was introduced in 2001 covering work with children and young people from birth to 19 years. The three main professions and training systems are becoming

¹ This policy brief is based on a research study funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (R000239373) conducted by Peter Moss and Pat Petrie (Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, London), Bronwen Cohen and Jennifer Wallace (Children in Scotland), with the support of Bjorn and Lisbeth Flising (University of Goteberg) A book based on the research study, *A New Deal for Children? Re-forming Education and Care in England, Scotland and Sweden*, will be published by The Policy Press in May 2004.

one profession with one system of training. All students will now do a degree course of at least 3½ years, and all graduates will be called ‘teachers’.

Eighteen months of the course involves common studies taken by all students - whether proposing to work with 18-month olds or 18-year olds. This general field of education, according to the Swedish Ministry of Education, “should comprise, on the one hand, areas of knowledge that are central to the teaching profession, such as teaching, special needs education, child and youth development, and on the other hand, interdisciplinary subject studies”. The remainder of the course involves more specialised studies: for example, in early childhood work and in particular subject areas. Students do not have to decide the work in which they will specialise as teachers until after they have started their training; in the past, they had to decide before choosing which training to take.

Conclusions

Following transfer of responsibility for all services to education, England and Scotland have made incremental improvements without a fundamental restructuring of the workforce, which continues to be divided between teachers, classroom assistants and childcare workers. The workforce has become more differentiated, with the introduction of new ‘senior practitioner’ positions and more classroom assistants. Large gaps in training, pay and status between teachers and other groups remain.

Sweden has gone for structural reform. The objective is a single profession, working with a wide age range and across different settings – from young children in nursery to teenagers in gymnasia. The thinking is radical, that integration requires new practice *across the system* – not traditional methods of school teaching extended down the age range. For example, a physics teacher at a gymnasium may find inspiration from pedagogical practice developed in early years or school-age childcare services. At the same time, the reform carries considerable risks. Concerns are expressed that too many students will opt for school teaching, creating shortages in early years services: for while training is now integrated, schoolteachers still enjoy somewhat better pay and other conditions. The reforms have been introduced over a short period, yet require radical changes in the way universities train teachers.

Learning from experience

Experience in all three countries suggests that closer relations between different services require new types of managers able to work across different services. But reform at practitioner level depends on several conditions, including shared concepts and public investment. Integration in Sweden has been supported by re-thinking concepts of the child and of learning and by a well-established concept of pedagogy, which addresses children young people holistically and aims to support their all round development. Reform of the Swedish workforce is also based on sustained and substantial public investment, which has led to the erosion of training and pay

differentials between the professions whose training has now been integrated. According to OECD, Sweden spends 2 percent of GDP on its early years services alone.

Neither condition applies in England or Scotland. Divided workforces reflect a deep-seated conceptual split between ‘childcare’ and ‘education’. Even after recent increases, public expenditure in England on early years *and* school-age childcare services is less than 0.3 percent of GDP. Far more investment is needed to reduce differentials between occupations, and there is a major obstacle to this. England and Scotland – like most English-language countries – have a ‘childcare’ system based on private providers operating in a market. Government funding is relatively low, mainly a demand subsidy (e.g. tax credit) paid directly to lower income families: most services themselves are not publicly funded.

It is unclear whether systems depending heavily on parental fees can sustain a radical reform of the ‘childcare’ workforce, to bring it up to the teaching workforce in terms of training and pay. Providers may agree that childcare workers need better training and pay. But who will pay? Tax credits in Britain are received by 3% of families: on average they get £39 a week, when the average cost of a nursery is £120. Parents pay a lot, yet staff have low earnings. Facing increasing recruitment problems, as demand for workers increases and supply reduces, the divided, hierarchical staffing structure in England and Scotland may be not only an obstacle to an integrated approach to services but also unsustainable.

Lifelong learning starting from birth and a blurring of borders - between formal and informal learning and between care and education – requires a wide view. Discussion of integration cannot be limited to early years services: it must encompass services for pre-school *and* school-age children and both ‘childcare’ services *and* ‘schools’. A holistic approach to children and young people needs to be matched by a re-formed workforce, in which differences in training, status and pay between those working with younger and older children disappear.

Peter Moss

Thomas Coram Research Unit
Institute of Education, London

The *UNESCO Policy Briefs on Early Childhood* is a series of short, flash notes on early childhood and family policy issues. It seeks to answer various questions that policy makers have about the planning and implementation of early childhood and family policies. For further information and the electronic version of the *Briefs*, please check:

<http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/ecf/html/policy/ecbrief.htm>

For comments and inquiries, please contact:

UNESCO, Early Childhood & Family Education Section
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 PARIS 07 SP, France
☎ 33 1 45 68 08 15, fax: 33 1 45 68 56 26, sh.choi@unesco.org