

Recent Policy Changes in Israeli Early Childhood Frameworks: Hope for the Future

Authors : Yaara Shilo

Abstract : Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Israel has undergone extensive reform and now requires daycare centers to meet internationally recognized professional standards. Since 1948, one of the aims of childcare facilities was to enable women's participation in the workforce. A 1965 law grouped daycare centers for young children with facilities for the elderly and for disabled persons under the same authority. In the 1970's, ECEC leaders sought to change childcare from proprietary to educational facilities. From 1976 deliberations in the Knesset regarding appropriate attribution of ECEC frameworks resulted in their being moved to various authorities that supported women's employment: Ministries of Finance, Industry, and Commerce, as well as the Welfare Department. Prior to 2018, 75% of infants and toddlers in institutional care were in unlicensed and unsupervised settings. Legislative processes accompanied the conceptual change to an eventual appropriate attribution of ECEC frameworks. Position papers over the past two decades resulted in recommendations for standards conforming to OECD regulations. Simultaneous incidents of child abuse, some resulting in death, riveted public attention to the need for adequate government supervision, accelerating the legislative process. Appropriate care for very young children must center on quality interactions with caregivers, thus requiring adequate staff training. Finally, in 2018 a law was passed stipulating standards for staff training, proper facilities, child-adult ratios, and safety measures. The Ariav commission expanded training to caregivers for ages 0-3. Transfer of the ECEC to the Ministry of Education ensured establishment of basic training. Groundwork created by new legislation initiated professional development of EC educators for ages 0-3. This process should raise salaries and bolster the system's ability to attract quality employees. In 2022 responsibility for ECEC ages 0-3 was transferred from the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of Education, shifting emphasis from proprietary care to professional considerations focusing on wellbeing and early childhood education. The recent revolutionary changes in ECEC point to a new age in the care and education of Israel's youngest citizens. Implementation of international standards, adequate training, and professionalization of the workforce focus on the child's needs.

Keywords : policy, early childhood, care and education, daycare, development

Conference Title : ICECSE 2023 : International Conference on Early Childhood and Science Education

Conference Location : Helsinki, Finland

Conference Dates : July 06-07, 2023