

Institution: University of East London
Unit of Assessment: 25
Title of case study: Contributing to the development of national and international early childhood policy
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>UEL's International Centre for the Study of the Mixed Economy of Childcare (ICMEC) researches service costs and equity risks associated with the marketisation and privatisation of early childhood education and care (ECEC). Its interdisciplinary research, which is frequently cited in national and international policy documents, has contributed to policy debate within the European Union, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation and other supra-national bodies, and informed the UK Government's development of ECEC and child poverty policies.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The impacts described here arise from research undertaken within ICMEC, which was established in 2007 by Helen Penn (UEL Professor of Early Childhood since 1999) and Eva Lloyd, (UEL Reader in Early Childhood since 2007). The collaborative and individual research underpinning its establishment reflects its co-directors' expertise in distinct - as well as overlapping - areas within the field of early childhood studies, but is unified by its focus on the viability, quality and accessibility of publicly-supported early childhood services. The complementary and mutually reinforcing emphases within Lloyd and Penn's work are further unified within ICMEC's analytical framework, which may be characterised as policy ethnography. This approach encompasses analyses of national and international policy documents, official statistics and academic literature, alongside key stakeholder interviews.</p> <p>Penn's national and international research highlights the increasing delivery of early childhood provision by private-for-profit businesses and its repercussions for related services [1]. It has informed much subsequent work in this area, including her widely-cited EU report about policy rationales underpinning ECEC services [2]. Between 2009 and 2011, she coordinated EU research on financing and regulation of childcare as part of a wide investigation of welfare service privatisation across EU countries. Since around 2000, Penn has also analysed the operation of private-for-profit childcare in the global South, notably for UNESCO [3]. She undertook a secondary analysis of the OECD Family Database for a study for the Department for Education (DfE) commissioned by the UK Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre (CWRC), an independent centre funded by the DfE to provide high quality research, analysis and expert advice on childhood wellbeing. [4].</p> <p>While Lloyd works primarily on UK policy developments [5], her research has likewise informed ICMEC's focus on childcare marketisation and privatisation and their relationship to child poverty. In a 2009/10 study she compared UK childcare policy with that of the Netherlands [6], and in 2013 contributed a Dutch case study to Penn's research on comparative childcare costs commissioned by the Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre. She has also contributed to national evaluations and surveys commissioned by government departments from the National Centre for Social Research including its influential 2009 evaluation of the piloting of free education for disadvantaged two year olds [7]. To this and other commissioned studies - which particularly explored the impacts of childcare policy developments on disadvantaged families - Lloyd contributed policy and research background and co-wrote conclusions and recommendations, highlighting the role of the mixed economy of childcare in the outcomes. ICMEC has produced a significant and growing body of interdisciplinary work on the nature and operations of mixed economies of childcare, particularly in terms of the growth of private for-profit provision and its impacts on the viability, quality and sustainability of early childhood services and equity more generally. Lloyd and Penn have tracked this market's growth, often in interdisciplinary collaborations with both academic and public policy colleagues [8]. The ICMEC international seminar series, run annually at UEL since 2007, has both facilitated the expansion of this collaborative, cross-disciplinary approach and enhanced opportunities to deliver research impact by bringing together mixed audiences of academic and think tank researchers, local and central governmental policymakers, childcare business leaders, practitioners, journalists and students.</p>

3. References to the research

- [1] Penn, H. (2009a) 'International perspectives on quality in mixed economies of childcare', *National Institute Economic Review*, 207, (1), pp. 83-89. doi: 10.1177/0027950109103687
- [2] Penn, H. (2009b) *Early childhood education and care: key lessons from research for policy makers*. Report for the European Commission Directorate of Education and Culture on behalf of the Network of Experts in Social Sciences of Education and Training. Brussels: European Commission. <http://www.nesse.fr/nesse/activities/reports/ecec-report-pdf>
- [3] Penn H. (in press) '*Childcare markets: implications for equity and quality*'. *UNESCO Handbook of Early Care and Education*. Paris: UNESCO. (Due for publication autumn 2013)
- [4] Penn, H. and Lloyd, E. (2013) *The costs of childcare*. CWRC Working Paper No. 18. London: Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre. <http://www.cwrc.ac.uk/projects/1154.html>
- [5] Lloyd, E. (2012) 'Poor children's future access to early years provision', in Judge, L. (ed.) *Ending child poverty by 2020: progress made and lessons learned*. London: Child Poverty Action Group, pp. 46-50: <http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-ECPby2020-1212.pdf>
- [6] Lloyd, E. and Penn, H. (2010) 'Why do childcare markets fail? Comparing England and the Netherlands', *Public Policy Research*, 17 (1), pp. 42-48. doi: 10.1111/j.1744-540X.2010.00600.x
- [7] Smith, R., Schneider, V., Purdon, S., La Valle, I., Wollny, Y., Owen, R., Bryson, C., Mathers, S., Sylva, K. and Lloyd, E., 2009, *Early Education Pilot for Two Year Old Children - Evaluation*. Research Report DCSF-RR134. London: DCSF. <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/10651/1/DCSF-RR134.pdf>
- [8] Lloyd, E. and Penn, H. (eds.) (2012) *Childcare markets – can they deliver an equitable service?* Bristol and Chicago: The Policy Press/University of Chicago Press. <http://doi.org/p4n>

4. Details of the impact

ICMEC's research has delivered impacts for policy-makers, childcare professionals and families with young children within the UK, Europe, and also the global South. This is achieved not only via its co-directors' provision of expert advice to those stakeholders, but also through their contributions to national media debate and discussion and, subsequently, to enhancing public awareness of and engagement with their research and with important associated issues. In recognition of these many significant impacts, Lloyd was awarded an OBE (2013).

Contributions to and influence on the development of international policy: Penn's extensive work for OECD generated numerous requests for her provision of expert advice to international policy-makers and practitioners, including in Canada, where it has been widely promoted by the Childcare Research and Resource Unit, a clearing house for pertinent national and international policy research [a]. In New Zealand, government advisers and early childhood provider representative groups have also used ICMEC research to articulate high level policy recommendations [b]. Within the EU, Penn has undertaken studies for various EU directorates and contributed to EU presidential conferences in Hungary (2011), The Czech Republic (2009) and Cyprus (2012). In 2010, the Education Directorate convened a special conference for senior policy makers in Brussels to discuss her paper on ECEC [2]. Penn has also worked widely in Southern Africa, where research impacts derive particularly from her links with local Non Governmental Organisations. Dr Marito Garcia, chief economist for Africa in the World Bank's Human Development Division, accepted Penn's invitation to launch an important World Bank publication at a 2010 ICMEC seminar run in partnership with the Overseas Development Institute [c]. The launch of that publication - which proposed ways forward for ECEC policy and practice in Southern Africa - at an ICMEC event, demonstrates the international standing and influence of the Centre's research in this area. The Global South strand of ICMEC's work also generated Penn's keynote on financing ECEC, given at the 2010 first UNESCO World Conference on Early Childhood to an audience of global policy makers. That presentation's publication in the Russian education journal *Pedagogy and Practice* and in a UNESCO ECEC Handbook [3] means that it has also informed a large practitioner audience both within and beyond Russia.

Contributions to and influence on national policy: In 2009 Lloyd co-authored the national evaluation of the piloting of free education for disadvantaged two year olds [7]. This is the first reference listed among the body of studies forming the evidence base for policy options and proposals set out in two key policy documents steering this initiative's further development under

the Coalition Government; key evaluation findings are cited prominently among its evidence base [d]. This work led the DfE to trial new approaches to improving quality in provision for targeted two year olds after 2010, paving the way for the expansion of the current offer to reach 40% of two year olds by 2014/15. This programme is now the Coalition's major child poverty initiative. The OECD childcare costs research was commissioned on the DfE's behalf to inform the Coalition Government's 2012 Childcare Commission [4]. Having been widely referred to in the written and broadcast media, its publication coincided with the Government's response to this Commission's recommendations. Both this paper and Lloyd and Penn's co-edited book on childcare markets [8] have directly informed political discussion and debate within and beyond both parliamentary houses. For example, on 15 June 2012 Lloyd met with Crossbench Peer the Earl of Listowel to discuss the book's findings. The day after its publication, he mentioned *Childcare Markets* in a House of Lords debate, referring to ICMEC's work in support of the contention that private-for-profit involvement in mixed social welfare markets may be problematic.

Penn and Lloyd discussed childcare market issues raised in their *Costs of Childcare* report with Sharon Hodgson MP, Labour's Shadow Minister for Children and Families, in December 2012. Hodgson has since asked questions in the House about this research and referred to ICMEC's work in a Committee meeting on the 2013 Children and Families Bill [h]. ICMEC's co-directors were also invited to a January 2013 high level meeting called by Shadow Education Secretary Stephen Twigg MP to discuss future childcare policy and the Labour Party's own Childcare Commission. ICMEC's position was subsequently cited in Labour party documentation [i]. These citations in parliamentary discussion and policy documents demonstrate the contribution by this research to high level debate about the UK childcare market and thus to present and future early childhood service quality, accessibility and affordability.

ICMEC research has also informed policy development via its authors' contributions to policy and strategy advisory boards. Between 2010 and 2012, Lloyd was a member of an Expert Panel advising the NICE Public Health Interventions Advisory Committee (PHIAC) on the development of guidelines promoting the social and emotional wellbeing of vulnerable children under five, published in 2012. As a result of her input, these guidelines reflect an enhanced understanding of the effect of the British childcare market on the sustainability and quality of early childhood provision for vulnerable children [e]. From 2011- 2013, she was the only academic member of the Co-production Steering Group, a high-level advisory group convened by Ministers at the DfE and Department of Health. In this role she made a significant contribution to the planning and drafting of proposals in the Coalition Government's 2011 policy statement *Families in the Foundation Years*, and to their subsequent implementation [f].

This resulted in an increased emphasis on provision quality as a pre-condition for beneficial developmental outcomes for children. Lloyd also co-chaired the DfE's Early Education Co-production Group, which was selected as an Expert Reference Group for the 2012 National Audit Office inquiry into value for money in delivering the free early education entitlement for three and four year olds. NAO's influential report prompted the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee to require DfE to make changes to ECEC monitoring and regulation processes at local and national level [g]. Both Lloyd and Penn participated in numerous childcare policy roundtable discussions held by government departments, the Greater London Assembly and public policy think tanks such as IPPR, IFS, Policy Exchange and the Resolution Foundation, as well as having individual discussions with national policymakers. They were among six experts invited to a September 2012 Department of Work and Pensions Roundtable discussion forming part of DWP's work programme for the 2012/1213 Coalition Government Childcare Commission. They contributed advice about the likely effect on service quality and equality of access of the for-profit sector's rapidly increasing childcare market share. Indicative of ICMEC's national standing as an authoritative source of such research was the fact that two of the other four experts present were current and past ICMEC Advisory Board members.

Contributions to practitioner press and popular media discourse about childcare-related issues: In spring 2012, politicians mooted childcare deregulation in order to reduce its costs (for instance by relaxing adult/child ratios); concrete deregulation proposals followed in a January 2013 DfE policy paper, *More Great Childcare*. Responding to these, Lloyd and Penn used ICMEC research to highlight deregulation's risks to ECEC quality, its lack of impact on costs, and the

inappropriateness of the international examples used in support of these proposals, in the practitioner press. They also contributed several analysis and opinion pieces, some co-authored with members of the Centre's network of scholars. The OECD childcare costs research and the comparative study of the Dutch childcare market featured in ensuing media debates on childcare costs and ratio changes. In subsequent media appearances by Lloyd and Penn they shared these studies' key facets with large national audiences. Since May 2012 ICMEC's co-directors have made at least 10 live media appearances and ICMEC's research has featured on national television and radio programmes, including BBC 2 Newsnight, Sky TV News, Sky TV Adam Boulton Politics show and on the Radio 4 programmes Today, You and Yours, Woman's Hour and PM. Apart from mentions on Channel 4 and BBC1 News, ICMEC's Dutch childcare market research was used in Channel 4's FactCheck web pages to query the accuracy of the government's statements on ECEC. In the same period ICMEC's research was cited in the *Sunday Telegraph*, the *Observer*, the *Independent on Sunday*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Irish Times* and *Metro* [j]. In June 2013 the ratio relaxation plans were dropped by the Coalition government, a decision influenced in part by ICMEC's research findings. The public attention attracted by media coverage of this debate promoted enhanced public awareness and engagement with issues relating to ECEC marketisation.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[a] ICMEC citation by the Canadian Childcare Research and Resource Unit and its contributions to policy debate beyond that Unit: <http://bit.ly/18a8Slw>

[b] For the influence of ICMEC research on New Zealand ECEC policy see May, H. and Mitchell, L. (2009) *Strengthening community-based early childhood education in Aetoroa - New Zealand*. Report of the Quality Early Childhood Education Project. Wellington, NZ, pp.15-17.

[c] The World Bank report on Southern Africa's ECEC policy and practice launched at a 2010 ICMEC seminar is: Garcia, M., Pence, A. and Evans, J. (eds.) (2010) *Africa's Future, Africa's Challenge – Early Childhood Care and Development in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

[d] Output 7 [above] is cited in: Department for Education (2011) *Disadvantaged Two Year Olds Entitlement to Early Education: Options for Extended Eligibility*, Impact Assessment (IA). London: DfE; and Department for Education (2011) *Disadvantaged Two Year Olds Entitlement to Early Education. Equality Impact Assessment*. London: DfE (particularly p. 2). Available on request.

[e] NICE Public Health Innovations Advisory Committee's draft guidance on social and emotional wellbeing in the early years lists Lloyd role as Expert Adviser during 2010-2012: <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/index.jsp?action=folder&o=58878> p. 32.

[f] The impacts of Lloyd's work on early childhood policy can be corroborated by the Director of the DfE's Childcare, Special Needs and Children's Strategy Policy Family. Lloyd's contribution to the *Families in the Foundation Years* policy document is acknowledged in the Minister's personal 19/07/11 letter: "Your advice has been invaluable both in developing policy and in helping us to describe and communicate a vision that will, I hope, resonate with families and with other professionals." Copy available on request.

[g] The input of the early Education Co-Production Group's (chaired by Lloyd) to the 2012 National Audit Office report *Delivering the free entitlement to education for three- and four-year olds*, is acknowledged on p. 10 of that report, available at: <http://bit.ly/19pRdlY>

[h] For reference to [8] in House of Lords debate: *Hansard, House of Lords Deb, 21 June 2012*: <http://bit.ly/1au4eF1> c1873. For House of Commons questions about ICMEC's childcare costs research: *Hansard, HC Deb, 7 February 2013*: <http://bit.ly/1hL4Xbo> c405W. For reference to the research recommendations in a Children and Families Bill Committee meeting: *Hansard, Children and Families Bill Deb, 18 April 2013*: <http://bit.ly/15mw9pO> c628.

[i] For the influence of ICMEC's position in Labour party childcare policy: <http://bit.ly/UzDA6T>

[j] For examples of coverage of ICMEC research in the national press see articles in the *Independent*: <http://ind.pn/UHC4wt>; *Guardian*: <http://bit.ly/19pRQSS>; and *Telegraph*: <http://bit.ly/10rBsDb>