

## Conclusions

Review by Prof. Dr. Ruben Fukkink

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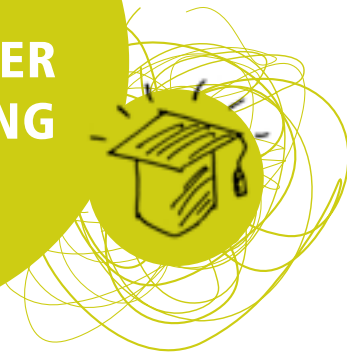
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**KENNISDOSSIER  
KINDEROPVANG  
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# **Creating Opportunities**

## **'How to improve equal opportunities for all children'**

## Context

On the occasion of its 10th anniversary, Bureau Kwaliteit Kindervang (BKK) early November 2018 organized the unique two-day conference 'Creating opportunities' in the city of Berlin.

65 representatives from Dutch stakeholder organisations, ministries, inspectors, entrepreneurs and other experts from the Early Childhood Education and Care profession, together with 20 colleagues from Germany and other European countries gathered at the campus of the German Language School. Free from daily disruptions they enjoyed two days of learning, sharing and reflecting on creating equal opportunities for all children.

During the conference, prominent international researchers discussed with the attendees why investing in young children and their families from before birth should be the first priority of every country. How these investments improve equal opportunities with improved outcomes for all children and as well economic prosperity for society.

Considering that investments in the first three years are leading to the highest return on investment, quality provisions for childcare fulfil a key role in the early years, regardless if it's based on children's rights or economic profit.

**Creating Opportunities**  
**'How to improve equal opportunities for all children'**

# Index

Introduction of the theme 'Creating Opportunities' **3**

1. Keynote Prof. Nicholas Burnet, '*Rights, Growth and Equity*' **5**

2. Keynote Prof. Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, '*Long-term Impacts of Early Childhood Investments*' **9**

3. Keynote Prof. Frank Kalter, '*Growing up in diverse societies*' **11**

4. Comparing systems and approaches **13**

- Interview Serv Vinders, '*Early Childhood Development in Berlin*'
- Interview Eva Lloyd, '*Early Childhood Development in the UK*'

5. Role models of Berlin's practice **19**

- Birgit Habermann, Erika Mann Grundschule
- Ute Römer, INA Kindergarten Neue Steinmetzstraße

6. Expert sessions **23**

- Abstract parallel session RYANNE FRANCOT, '*Parent-preschool partnerships and parent's investment in children*'
- Abstract parallel session EVA LLOYD, '*Creating equal access to quality early childhood provision within the English childcare market*'
- Abstract parallel session MIHAELA IONESCU, '*Is the integration of services an answer to reducing inequality and inequity in early years?*'
- Abstract parallel session STEFANIE DECOCK, LENI VAN DEN BROECK, TOM MONSIEUR, '*Improving access for vulnerable children and their families in the city of Ghent*'

7. Conclusions **27**

- Review by Ruben Fukkink
- Overview of opportunities, barriers and evidence



# 7

## Conclusions

### Review by Prof. Dr. Ruben Fukkink

Childcare is one of the greatest opportunities for future development itself. Childcare can make changes in the life's of young children and their families. The attendants of the conference have learnt from Berlin colleagues during the presentation and field visits, but also indicate strengths of Dutch early childhood education and care (ECEC).

During the conference the concept of progressive universalism was introduced. Progressive universalism offers a step-by-step approach to offering universal childcare that promote social inclusion. It does require a stable policy and continuous movement in the right direction – in the context of changing policies with a different emphasis and different stakeholders with different interests. Seen from this perspective, the Berlin ECEC emphasizes the importance of a clear vision, a negotiated and agreed quality framework, and also room for trust in ECEC professionals.

The keynote speakers at the conference indicated that scientific evidence for extensive ECEC policies is increasing with older and more recent studies from different countries. The speakers with different academic backgrounds (educational policy, developmental psychology, sociology, economics) have shown that early intervention, according to Prof. Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach even before birth, is effective and, if taken into account in the evaluation, also cost-effective. Also, interventions later in life have a direct and positive effect (e.g., professional development of teachers in primary school). For immigrant families, changes may take more time, although impressive change are observed from an intergenerational perspective across 2-3 generations (Prof. F. Kalter CILS4EU)

The highly diverse audience of researchers, practitioners, entrepreneurs, civil society (e.g., NGO's, foundations) and policy makers each emphasized different points of view. The different speakers each addressed different options for childcare, showing a continuum: a targeted policy with early intervention programs for disadvantaged groups; free access to universal care for all families; compulsory ECEC; more extensive use of compulsory ECEC (i.e., increasing number of hours and/or earlier entry). Different stakeholders may each prefer a different "starting point", but many indicated that a policy of incremental steps (i.e., progressive universalism) seems the way to move forward, also for the Dutch context. This progressive universalism should go hand in hand with realistic expectations; appreciating small steps; perhaps guidance by a long-term goal; and satisfaction with many aspects of current Dutch ECEC, acknowledging room for improvement at the same time, as many conference attendees indicated.

The city of Berlin proved an interesting case in point with a robust ECEC policy in the context of a very large population with an increasing diversity (among others due to immigration of newly arrived families). The robust 'Wir schaffen das' policy (Merkel), the practical 'Visions can be realized'-perspective (Haberman), and the different Berlin childcare locations offered a new and often appealing perspective.

## Overview of identified opportunities, barriers and evidence

At the closure of the conference the chairs listed the conclusions of the keynote speakers, the representative of the city of Berlin and the panel discussion with experts Tom Monsieur (city of Gent), Eva Lloyd (UEL), Serv Vinders (CCI), Gjalt Jellesma (BOInK) together with the audience. This chart is a wrap-up of the opportunities, barriers and evidence for quality en equality in early childhood education and care.

	Opportunity for	Opportunity	Barrier	Evidence
Nicholas Burnett	Policy makers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Return on investment</li> <li>Incremental approach</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires investment first &gt; budget in political agenda</li> <li>Diffusion</li> </ol>	Global trends: OECD & other
Diane Schanzenbach	Policy makers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vouchers for low-SES parents (food)</li> <li>Professional development of teachers</li> </ol>	Middle class voters want (more) universal services	Hard evidence & soft evidence
Birgit Habermann	ECEC stakeholders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive vision</li> <li>Multidisciplinary team</li> <li>Theatre and art in selfmade curriculum</li> </ol>	None; 'Visions can be realized'	Outcomes at end of primary school
Frank Kalter	Policy makers Researchers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immigration*</li> <li>Realistic expectations</li> <li>Time</li> <li>Broad view on well-being</li> </ol> } Model 1-4 into policy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immigration*</li> <li>Onset age of youth in socio-logical studies</li> </ol>	Evidence from 4+ countries > How to link it to ECEC? / refugees
Panel	All	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ECEC is the opportunity (itself)</li> <li>Ambition &amp; vision</li> <li>Proportionate / progressive universalism</li> <li>Linking 1000 days + ECEC + ... &gt; open attitude: ECEC, youthcare, education</li> <li>Learn from other countries</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budgetcuts + changes in policy</li> <li>Perceived lack of empirical support for integrated centers</li> <li>Berlin: not place for everyone everywhere</li> <li>Why-question: why (different) services?</li> <li>Divide sectors</li> </ol>	Mixed evidence: personal expertise + city + national

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