

Sustainable growth, social inclusion and family policy -  
innovative ways of coping with old and new challenges.

*Sub-Project*

*The gateway of education and family policy.*

*Intermediate report:*

**„Paradigmatic shift in the political discourses on childcare  
for children under the age of three? A comparative study of  
recent political discourses in England and Germany“**

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# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Questions and methods**

As most post-industrial welfare states, England and Germany increasingly face similar challenges which can be described as a sectoral shift from production to services, an ageing population and a changing household structure (Esping-Andersen 1999; Pierson 2001). These challenges have been caused – among others – by a growing labour participation of women and changing gender roles, which result in an increasing need for the provision of care-services for the elderly and for children. Those services, which were in the past mostly conducted as unpaid caring work by women in the household, will increasingly need to be “externalised” (Esping-Andersen 2006) and consequently taken over by the welfare state or organised through the market.

Both (West-)Germany and England have a traditionally low public involvement in early childhood education and care. In the conservative welfare state of Germany with a strong male-breadwinner model (Lewis/Ostner 1994), care for young children was considered as the responsibility of mothers. In the liberal English welfare state, intervention in the family traditionally was low except in case of child neglect and abuse. However, concerning childcare, both countries have experienced dramatic reforms in the last ten years: The first step was the introduction of public childcare for pre-school children (age 3-6 in Germany and age 3-5 in England) throughout the 1990s (Evers et al. 2004) in both countries. The second step is the expansion of early years education and care for children under the age of three.

In this report this “second step” of the expansion of childcare for children under the age of three will be scrutinized. The shifts that occur with the introduction of childcare for children under three in both countries mark significant discontinuities with the institutional and cultural paths of development, while it is still open whether the change can be classified as first, second or third order change (Hall 1993). My hypothesis is that in both countries we are witnessing a third-order-change, since these changes, among others, mark a transition from a traditional male breadwinner model to a decisive support for the more adult worker model. If this is so, we will see significant changes in the underlying norms on gender relations, the upbringing of children etc. The gender and family models embedded within welfare policy can respectively be understood as policy paradigms (Bacchi 1999). How could these changes be explained?

Interestingly, when analysing these recent reforms in the extension of childcare, the main theories that explain policy development fail. Firstly from an institutional perspective, a stronger path dependency would be expected (vgl. Pierson 2001). The public responsibility for the care of infants and young children constitutes a novelty in both countries which breaks with path dependency of non-state-intervention in this field. Secondly, from a theory of

gender welfare analysis, these changes in policies and institutions also signify at least a partial modification of the underlying family norms and gender ideologies (Daly 2000; Lewis 2004), as well as the cultural understanding of childhood and education in both countries (Pfau-Effinger 2000; Kremer 2005) linked with the gender ideology which would also hint at stability rather than change. Thirdly, the rapid expansion of family policy coincides with the return of social democracy into office in both countries – consequently a theoretical perspective of “parties matter” (Seeleib-Kaiser 2003) could be considered as a theoretical frame of analysis. However, since in both countries the introduction of childcare for children under three happened only in the second (Germany) respectively the third term in office (England), it cannot be considered as one of the top priorities of both of the social democratic parties in charge. Furthermore, the childcare agenda has been adopted by the conservative party in Germany and England as well, and consequently a more sustainable and thorough policy change is expected which outlives changes in government. Furthermore, from theoretical perspective or power structures, the issue of childcare and family policy has never been high on the agenda of trade unions or other social actors of aggregated interests – the expansion of childcare comes long after it had been put onto the political agenda by the women’s movement in the 1970s. In contrast, in both cases the governments in power introduced these reforms not in response of social movements but as an element within their welfare state modernisation, in reaction to changes in society and the economy.

Consequently, the changes could also be understood as some form of policy learning (Hall 1993). The interesting question arising from this is whether international policy developments and policy diffusion can be considered as one factor enabling policy learning. This could be argued, since the agenda of Early childhood education and care (ECEC) as well as the reconciliation of work and family life have been prominently taken on board by multinational organisations such as the OECD or the European Commission (OECD 2001, European Commission 2006b). Alternatively, specific explanations could be found in the national case studies presented in this report.

In contrast to the aforementioned theoretical approaches, we will seek an interpretative explanation of the policy changes. Interpretative approaches mark a culturalist turn in policy analysis, looking at policy discourses and normative frames of policy development (Fischer 2003; Nullmeier et al. 2003). In contrast to „classic“ approaches, the agenda setting and policy formulation process is not considered as guided by rational behaviour of the political actors, but as an interpretative process (Schneider/Janning 2006). These interpretative processes are documented in public debates and can be analysed in policy papers, in political debates or interview texts (Nullmeier et al. 2003). In the analysis of these texts, special attention is paid to the framing and the legitimisation of policies (Ullrich 1999; Fischer 2003). The framing refers to the specific understanding of a particular policy field and the meanings attached to it: In our case – are early years services considered as childcare or as education, are they considered to be policy for the children or for the parents? The legitimisation of the policies

refers to the arguments used for introducing a particular set of policies and the cultural norms and values attached to this.

In family policy, especially in the field of child-rearing, cultural norms and values are of utmost importance (Bacchi 1999; Kremer 2005). Therefore it is assumed that within the political sphere, the cultural norms around education and care need to change in order to enable such a significant shift in policy. It will be analysed whether a shift in the political debates around childcare can be found in both countries. The central hypothesis of this study is that the changes can be found which marks a change in meaning of this policy field and which can also explain why the expansion of childcare could become so prominent in the political agenda of both countries.

This study is using document analysis of central policy documents and parliamentary debates as well as scientific studies commissioned by the two governments. Furthermore expert interviews have been conducted with central actors in the field – with government officials, members of parliament and key scientific advisors. As a consequence, the policy developments and political debates around the introduction of two central pieces of legislation, the Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz (TAG, 2005) in Germany and the Childcare Act (2006) in England have been analysed.

## **1.2 The changing nature of childcare and elements of sustainability**

Within the shift of childcare from a private to a public domain, early years education and care are receiving more public attention in many countries. International organisations as the OECD and, to a lesser extent, the EU have been lobbying for the expansion of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for various reasons. Since 1998, the OCED has taken an integrated effort to monitor and benchmark the development of ECEC in order to enhance the educational attainment of children through the encouragement of early learning. In its 2001 report, “Starting Strong”, the OECD recommends the extension of equitable access of childcare provision for children under the age of three. Furthermore, the OECD supports the vision an integrated framework of childcare and lifelong learning from birth, connecting the education system and social services (OECD 2001: 11). Consequently, the OECD considers childcare as an integral part of the educational system.

In line with this argument, Esping-Andersen (2002) calls for a “child-centred social investment strategy” which takes into account the new social risks of unstable family formation, flexible employment and disadvantaged families with difficulties in the upbringing of their children. According to Esping-Andersen, human capital development is required for a sustainable society in the knowledge-based economy, and the investment in children at the early stages in the life course promises to be the most effective form of intervention: “all available evidence indicates that (early) childhood is the critical point at which people’s life

courses are shaped. Remedial policies once people have reached adulthood are unlikely to be effective unless these adults started out with sufficient cognitive and social skills. A social investment strategy directed at children must be a centrepiece of any policy for social inclusion” (ibid. 30). Investment in early childhood education and care promises to be the most effective and efficient social intervention to ensure social cohesion.

In the Lisbon-Agenda, social policy in the EU has been increasingly been re-framed a “productive factor” that should contribute to economic growth (European Commission 2000). As spending for education and health care for example are considered to be contributions for sustaining human capital of the workforce, and there is a strong overall emphasis on “investment in people”. The aims of increasing social quality and social cohesion are therefore not considered as contradictory to economic growth, but as guarantees for long-term social peace and economic stability (ibid.). In this light, the spending for education and childcare can be considered as a productive factors and as social investments in human capital.

Within the European Union, Mahon (2002) analysed three main paths of development of childcare, which follow different ideals of gender equality as well as child development: The “Third way-model”, the “New Familialism” and the “Egalitarian model”. The “Third-Way-Model” can be found in Britain and the Netherlands. It is based on the normative assumption that inequality in the here and now are acceptable if social mobility is available to all groups over the life cycle, especially those who are excluded from social welfare such as women or immigrants or to “get them off the poverty bus”. As Mahon (ibid: 347) notes: “From a third way perspective, public support for early childhood education is ‘good’ because it helps children ultimately leave the bus – or avoid boarding it altogether. Second, childcare subsidies can be targeted at the working poor as a way of inducing people to accept low-wage employment.” In this model, non-parental childcare is offered in low-paid services jobs with little interest to increase the quality of childcare (ibid.). Furthermore, it is assumed that mothers work mostly part time and that part-time provision of care is therefore sufficient.

The other models are the „New Familialism“ which she identifies in France and Finland with some elements of re-familialization through the introduction of cash-for-care benefits in countries which had previously been supporting mothers as workers through the public provision of childcare. In this context, through a development of cash benefits for carers and reconciliation policies on the other hand, mothers should be enabled to make a “choice” between employment and a home-making role (ibid.). The third and last model is the “Egalitarian Model” found in Sweden and Denmark which does not only rely on an adult worker model, but also on the redistribution of caring work between men and women which is supported through special father quotas in the parental leave schemes (ibid.).

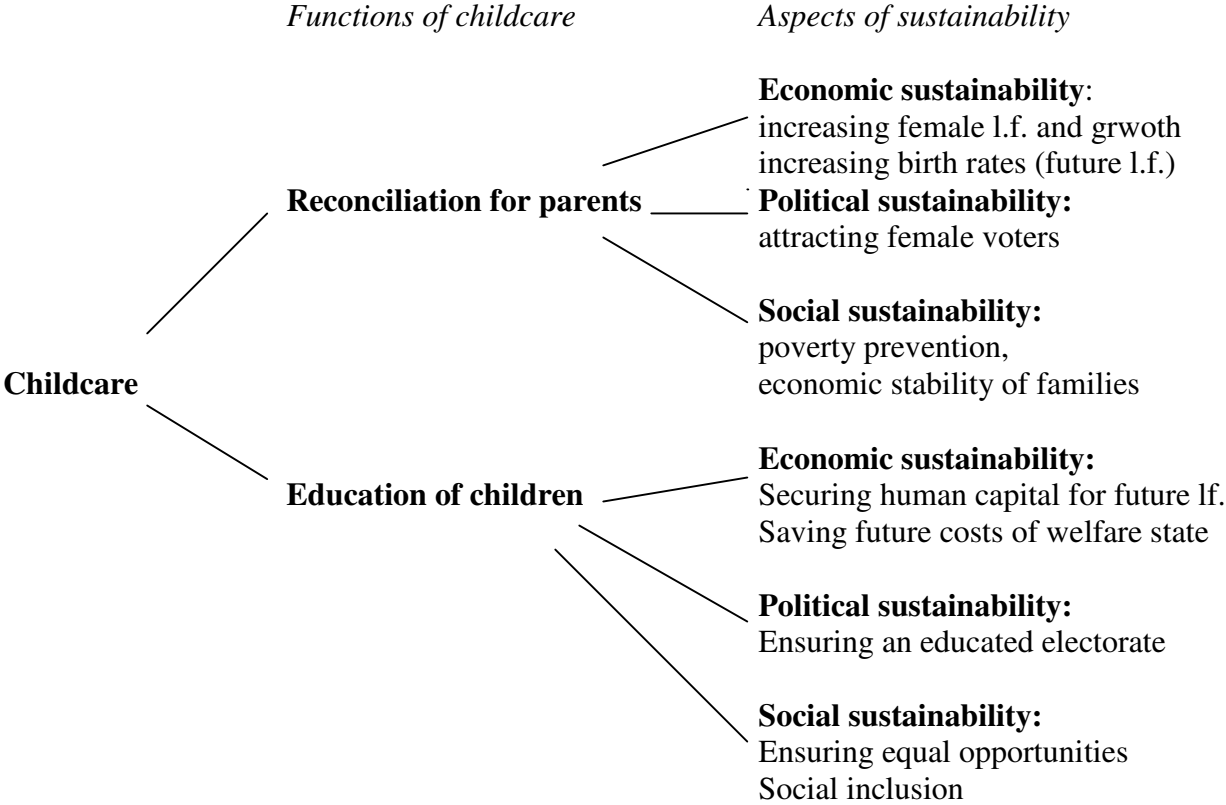
Interestingly, in this line of argument, the focus within the childcare debate, which from the 1970s has been more predominantly on enabling women’s equality through reconciliation

policies, shifts from the mothers to the children. Jenson (2004) argues that within this frame, even in countries in which childcare had been considered to be a private responsibility of parents, the state is not taking on a certain responsibility for child development and upbringing, since childcare is no longer considered as intervention in private matters, but as future human capital development.

The hypothesis followed in this report is that a reframing of childcare from a context of women’s equality discourses to a debate of human capital development, investment in children and economic growth can be observed in Germany and England. In order to analyse this point, it is important to distinguish certain aspects and of childcare and to identify the specific policy drivers in both countries.

Childcare can be framed in different contexts, it can fulfil different functions and it touches the issue of sustainability in two respects (see Figure 1):

Figure 1:



In the first aspect, childcare is considered to help the reconciliation of work and family life in the interest of the parents. This has positive effects on social, political and economic sustainability. The economic sustainability is increased with a rising women’s labour market participation as a consequence of a better childcare provision. A rising labour force enhances economic growth since it helps to overcome shortages in skilled labour supply and it leads to more demand of services and leads to higher tax revenues, higher income and higher spending of private households. Furthermore, a better reconciliation policy can lead to increasing birth

rates and consequently helps to ensure the future work force while safeguarding the reproduction of the population. The social aspects of sustainability that are fostered through a better reconciliation of work and family life are the prevention of poverty in families with dual earners (Adema et al. 2007) as well as the ensuring of the economic stability of families. Furthermore, a better reconciliation of work and family could also be understood as in the light of “political sustainability” as an element of self-interested action of the state to sustain itself (Mätzke 2007). Since reconciliation policies are highly popular among voters, it is also probable that politicians will receive high support for introducing them – especially from the female electorate.

In the second aspect, childcare is considered mainly in its function of the education<sup>1</sup> of children. The educational function serves also two aspects of sustainability: The economic sustainability will be fostered since well-educated children are required as human capital for the knowledge-based economy. Secondly, social sustainability is ensured by social inclusion and equal opportunities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds which can be achieved through a good start and early fostering of children.

These functions of childcare and aspects of sustainability can, but do not necessarily have to be used in the framing of childcare in the specific national policy discourses. In the following chapters it will be analysed in which traditions childcare stands in the two countries (2). Following this, the policy developments 1998-2007 will be outlined, hinting at the main political arguments used to justify the expansion (3). In more depth, the political discourses around the introduction of two central pieces of legislation, the Tagesbetreuungsbausgesetz (TAG) in Germany and the Childcare Act in England are scrutinized (4). As a result of this analysis, the main policy drivers are identified in Germany and in England which helped with the expansion of childcare for children 0-3 (5). Finally, some conclusions are drawn concerning the research questions and policy learning.

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<sup>1</sup> “Education” is understood not in the sense of formal schooling and training, but in a broad sense that takes into account the quality of “care” for the socialisation of children, that enhances their emotional, cognitive and physical development of children.



## ***2. Traditions of childcare and education for the early years in Germany and England until 1998***

### **2.1 Germany**

The (West-)German welfare state has been characterized as the archetype of a conservative welfare state (Esping-Andersen 1990). The German welfare state typically has high wages and high protection for the core male workforce institutionalized in stable collective agreements and social insurances which guarantee status maintenance in case of unemployment, sickness and old-age. Consequently, decommodification exists for workers only, while family members have some derived rights within the social insurance system. Furthermore, in this type of welfare state, the supply of social service which is organised in the welfare triangle of the state, the market and the family, most services are still organized within the family (Esping-Andersen 1999). The growth potential for services is limited, since on the one hand most benefits are paid through social insurances as cash; while the welfare states itself offers only a limited amount of services through the public sector. On the other hand, the level of inequality within the welfare state is moderate and taxation levels are high, leaving little potential for a private demand of services through the market (Hemmerijk 2002). Consequently, a predominant problem for conservative welfare states, and especially West-German welfare state has been high unemployment and low labour market participation of women.

This welfare model presumes a gender division of labour insider the family which is based on a male breadwinner model with a female homemaker and carer. From a feminist perspective, West-Germany has also been characterized as a dual welfare state and a traditional male breadwinner model (Lewis/Ostner 1994). There has been a tradition of high protection for male workers as breadwinners of the family, as well as a support for the male breadwinner model family through family policy and taxation, especially through a tax splitting system for married couples (Berghahn 2004) and through cash payments for care to support mothers who stay at home with their children (Bothfeld 2005). The traditional breadwinner model was institutionalised within the German family policy and other welfare institutions, such as the labour market. Family policy in West-Germany was aimed at supporting the family as an institution; especially compensating for the financial burden of raising children (Familienlastenausgleich), and later on supporting mothers in combing work and family life through the establishment of mother's leave and care payment. However, the reconciliation model was not a simultaneous reconciliation of work and family, but a "three phases model" which considered women's employment appropriate before and after, but not during family formation and the upbringing of children (Letablier/Jönsson 2003). Since the 1960s women's employments rates were rising and the traditional breadwinner model was modernised, allowing however mostly part-time work of mothers (Pfau-Effinger 2000; Klenner 2004).

Apart from this gender division of labour in the household, the cultural norms and values around childhood and childcare are also an important factor. In West-Germany, childcare and social services have generally been considered as obligations of the family, the mother was seen as the primary responsible and the best carer, especially for small children. Mothers who are in gainful employment are considered to be abandoning their children, they were called bad mothers, “Rabenmütter”. This ideal, which dates back to the time of the reformation, has been also culturally enforced by the Nazi government (Vinken 2002). After the war, this norm was continued in the West-German welfare state which supported motherhood and home-based-care through different fiscal and leave policies for mothers of younger children (Ostner 2006). For mothers of schoolchildren, the part-time education system allowed for a part-time employment only, leaving care a private responsibility. In a representative study in the year 1996, 80% of men and 72% of women in West Germany agreed to the statement, that an infant or a young child will suffer if his/her mother is in employment (Statistisches Bundesamt 2007: 522).

Consequently, in congruence with the gender ideals of the female homemaker and carer, the upbringing (Erziehung) of children in West-Germany was considered to be the families’ responsibility. Until recently, a strong institutional division existed between the tasks of education (Bildung), care (Betreuung) and upbringing/socialisation (Erziehung): while education was only the responsibility of the school and the educational system, care and upbringing were considered to be the duty of parents (Deutscher Bundestag 2004: 44). Institutionally, the separation between education and upbringing was established through the separation of the educational system and support for children “Jugendhilfe”, the public care for children in difficult family situations and foster care, as well as the separation of the professions of the teacher and the social worker (Gottschall/Hagemann 2002). This understanding presupposes a self-regulation of the family as an institution of socialization. Education is merely understood in the German context as the responsibility for the cognitive skill development of children, which led to the German system of half-day-schooling, while social skills are to be learned outside of the education system, through education and upbringing in the family (ibid.).

Kindergarten was since the 1960s and 70s seen as supplementing and supporting the functioning of the family in the socialisation process. Care for children between the age of three and six expanded rapidly since the 1970s, the child-place-ratio increased from 39% in 1970 to 77% in 1978; and the attendance of a part-time Kindergarten was almost normal in the 1980s for pre-school-children (Evers/Riedel 2002: 10). The main purpose of Kindergarten was to help the reconciliation of work and family life for parents; questions of quality have only been addressed since the mid-1990s, but were neglected again due to the expansion of kindergarten places for every child in the 1990s (Honig 2002: 227). Care for children under the age of three remained an exception, which was publicly supplied especially for children of single parents and children in need. Consequently, the publicly provided creches had a bad

image until the 1990s, when they started to be increasingly used by dual-career and higher educated parents (Brunnenbauer/Riedel 2007). Apart from this, high quality childcare for young children existed mostly in large urban areas and depended mostly on self-help groups and initiatives of parents. Until recently, childcare for preschool-children was not considered to be part of the West German education system (Deutscher Bundestag 2004).

In East Germany, the socialist government after the Second World War established a contrary gender model and childcare regime which is similar to the Nordic model. Officially, men and women had equal opportunities. For both, full-time employment was considered a duty to society and mothers were supposed to return to full-time employment after one “baby year” (Evers/Riedel 2002: 11), consequently women’s employment rates were similar to men’s. To enable women’s labour market participation, after the 1950s the state established full-time childcare from early age, which was organised through state creches and kindergarten, afternoon care for schoolchildren and field trips during the school holidays. From the normative perspective, collective education was considered a socialist ideal, therefore education and socialisation was also a state responsibility; the family being partly “freed” from the competences of upbringing their children. Nevertheless, also in East Germany in 1996, almost half of women and men agreed to the statement that an infant will suffer if his/her mother is in gainful employment (Statistisches Bundesamt 2007: 522), so traditional beliefs in childcare were never completely abolished.

After re-unification, the West-German welfare model was dominantly established in most areas; although it was never fully accepted in the field of gender relations and childcare. Although there has been some elements of convergence, more mothers in East Germany still work full time than in West Germany (Bothfeld et al. 2006). Men and women still hold significantly more egalitarian attitudes towards mothers’ employment and child development in East Germany than in the West (Statistisches Bundesamt 2006). And the levels of childcare for children under the age of three in 2002 varied from 1% in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg to over 50% in the Eastern states (highest in Brandenburg) (Statistisches Bundesamt 2001).

Only in 1992, in the context of German re-unification, a national law (Reform des Kinder und Jugendhilfegesetzes) was established guaranteeing a childcare half-time place for every child from the age of three. The law came into force only in 1999. Although the gap between the established places and full coverage was not great in the Western states and did not exist in the East, its passage created great political upheaval, since the central government does not hold the competence for education which lies within the legislative authority of the federal states (which are also responsible for schools).<sup>2</sup> The main point of criticism was, that the local

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<sup>2</sup> As a consequence, in the recent reform of federalism in Germany, the supreme court ruled that the federal state can no longer issue legal acts on the federal states or local authorities which are connected with a new financial burdens which are not paid by the national government. This setup of federalism in Germany and the division of

authorities, which have to provide these places, were confronted with a new duty which was not financed through the central government, but at 60% by the municipality and at 20% by the federal states (Evers/Riedel 2002: 15). The local authorities and districts have great discretion on how to implement the national laws, creating large regional differences in the level and the quality of childcare.

Furthermore, the childcare provided at the local level is not necessarily offered by local authorities themselves. Germany has a very strong tradition of local co-operation of municipalities with independent welfare associations. Consequently, childcare at the local level has been largely supplied through different institutions representing a plurality of pedagogical aims: Most prominently, the churches have been the main suppliers of childcare in most federal states, along with other private organisations such as parents initiatives which have been increasing from the 1970s (Evers/Riedel 2002; Rauschenbach 2007: 14). The federal states regulate the pedagogical quality of care, the group size and the staff-child ratio. The fees are highly subsidized at 80-85% on average (Rüling/Kassner 2007: 109), the payments are income-dependent and in most places children with parents on social assistance can take up the Kindergarten place free of charge. In 1998, the rate of provision for children between three and six was 100% in the East and 87% in the West. For children under three, the provision was much lower: at 3% in the Western federal states and 36% in the Eastern federal states (Statistisches Bundesamt 2001).

Since public childcare for children under the age of three as well as afternoon care for school children was very rarely available (1998 provision rate for school-children: 7% in the West, 52% in the East, Statistisches Bundesamt 2001), parents with both partners in full-time employment or working flexible hours had to rely on private forms of childcare, mostly other family members (grandmothers) or paid carers, mostly childminders or private nannies which were not regulated in most federal states before 2005. Childminders are mostly women who take care of children in their private flat and work as self-employed with no or only minimum social security. Childminders usually have no educational training, although some cities offered minimum training courses. These private forms of education are quite costly, especially compared to the highly subsidized public childcare, furthermore parents complained that they are unreliable since e.g. there is no replacement when the childminder is ill.

Furthermore, the costs paid for childcare could only to a very limited extent be deduced from the tax roll; since 2006, a total amount of 4.000 € annually can be deduced from the tax roll. This enables mostly high-earning parents, who can afford these payments to take up informal childcare.

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competences provide a major obstacle for policymaking in the field of education and childcare. However, this issue will not in itself be a subject for analysis.

## 2.2 England

England has been described as a liberal welfare state, which is characterized by low intervention of the state into the market, low levels of de-commodification and low redistribution (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1999). In principle, the welfare state is residual, welfare state benefits are highly targeted and means-tested and granted at a minimal level only. However, England also shows a dual welfare state where some social insurances such as the pension system are targeted at workers only. Also, some welfare services such as health care and education are universal and free of charge. In the welfare triangle between state, market and the family, the market plays a dominant role, since many social services are organised through the market.

As a liberal welfare state, England has a very limited tradition of general family policy as such. Instead, poor were supported through different forms of poverty relief. Due to the lacking support for mothers within the welfare state, until the 1990, England and the UK has been characterized as a strong male breadwinner model (Lewis/Ostner 1994). However, in contrast to the West-German welfare state, there was little support for mothers as homemakers comparable to parental leave or payments for care. A tax splitting system which supported the traditional male breadwinner family was abolished in the 1990s (Dingeldey 2000).

Since childcare was not considered to be part of the education system, and following the minimal welfare state intervention, childcare was considered to be a private responsibility of the family (Letablier/Jönsson 2003). However, it was not necessarily combined with a strong mother ideology as in West-Germany. Consequently, the gender model of distribution of labour is ambivalent: on the one hand, there is no or little active support for familialization and for mothers as homemakers. On the other hand, due to lacking public support for childcare beyond school hours and, women were still presupposed to be available as carers and homemakers.

The cultural norms of raising children assumed childcare for preschool children as a primary task for mothers. The state offered “care” only for children of single parents or at risk of harm or mistreatment, thus connecting the notion of “care” with neglect and social deprivation (Lewis 2003; Vincent/Ball 2006). Care for preschool children was not considered as part of the education system; which can be traced back to divided competences: while childcare (for neglected children) was in the responsibility of the Department of Health, “nursery education” as pre-school reception classes were under the responsibility of the Department of Education.

Despite rising rates of women’s and mothers’ employment since the 1970s, until 1998 the government did not assume responsibility for the reconciliation of work and family life. There was only childcare for children at risk and some pre-school reception classes, however the supply existed for a few hours per week and was very patchy. The idea of supporting children’s socialisation through childcare was not accepted at the level of government, but

remained an idea confined to the middle and upper class (Lewis/Lee 2002: 3f.), who started organising play groups and parent initiatives in the voluntary sector since the 1960s. While day nurseries had existed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and before the Second world war, the government after the war decided to close down municipal nurseries in order to make women return to the home and free jobs for unemployed male workers. Consequently, children were again considered to be best cared for by their mothers (ibid.). However, the publicly funded places expanded since the 1960s. In 1972 there was an attempt by the Thatcher government to provide some nursery education for 3 and 4 years-olds, however this was abandoned in 1980. Childcare expanded mostly through private market institutions such as private day nurseries and childminders, as well as parent initiatives and voluntary sector institutions which led to a large regional variety in the offer of childcare.

In contrast to the West-German case however, childcare places in England were hardly subsidized through local authorities or the national level. In the 1990s some government policies to help to cover childcare costs were introduced. In 1990 a tax relief for employers offering childcare was introduced, in 1994 some childcare costs could be received as income support as an element of the working families tax credit for low-income families. In 1996, the conservative government introduced a voucher scheme, which was abandoned again in 1997, when the Labour government came into power (Lewis/Lee 2002: 5ff.).

Two general institutional differences between the German and the UK welfare state lie within the central decision power of the English government and the models of service delivery. Generally speaking, the national level holds the power to take national decisions on all aspects of the welfare state. Furthermore, the political system of majority voting produces clear political majority governments which do not need to form coalitions and can pursue their political agenda. In Germany, first of all, the national level does not hold all competences of the welfare state but some competences, such as education lies purely at the federal state level, while in other areas, the competences are shared between the national and the federal level which means that the national government have to find compromises with the federal states. Furthermore, the German electoral system leads to a multi-party-system where parties have to form coalitions in governments, so one party can never merely pursue their political agenda. Consequently, there are many political and practical barriers which can stand between the formulation of political programmes and the actual decision making in the legislative process.

Regarding the model of service delivery, in the liberal understanding, the welfare state does not necessarily provide social services itself, but the state intervenes only in case of risk. Exceptions to this rule are the National Health system as well as the education system which offer free universal services to all citizens. The production of other welfare services lie, to a large extent, with the private households and the market. If, however, the national government decides on welfare state regulation, the local authorities have to ensure the service delivery

through the mixed economy of welfare, whose actors are monitored through national agencies; for example OFSTED is the national agency for standards in education. The German system of service delivery, in contrast, is much more complex, since in some cases, as education, the federal states hold the regulatory competences and the national level cannot take decisions. Service delivery is also organised at the local level, but within a complex system of cooperation between the public sector and the welfare associations as well as social insurances.

### **3. Policy developments 1998 – 2006 in childcare and education**

#### **3.1 Germany**

**Timeline:**

- 1998: Red-green government comes into power – first term in office: no activity in childcare
- 2002: Second term in office, coalition treaty with the aims at 20% childcare for children under the age of three
- 2003: Introduction of Agenda 2010, with a repetition of the aim of extension of childcare places; co-financed through labour market reforms (Hartz IV)
- 2004: Passing of the Tagesbetreuungsbaugesetz (TAG) in Parliament
- 2005: TAG comes into force – aim: 20% childcare places for children under 3 in 2010
- 2005: Elections: Great coalition (Conservatives and Social Democrats) comes into power; coalition treaty calls for further expansion of childcare and announces a legal right to a childcare place from 2 years
- 2006: First evaluation report on the expansion of childcare places for children 0-3 years
- 2007: New political aims of expansion agreed in the coalition: 35% places for children 0-3 years in 2013, right to a childcare place from 1 year

In 1998, the coalition of social democrats and the green party came into power in Germany. The government introduced radical reforms in various areas of social policy, especially in the labour market, the pension system and family policy (Gohr/Seeleib-Kaiser 2003; Clasen 2005).

However, in the first term in office the reforms in family policy were moderate – in the Coalition treaty there it is mentioned that enough childcare places should be supplied; in the chapter on education policy there is no reference to childcare. The federal minister for family affairs, old people, women and youth, Christine Bergmann, focused mainly on women's politics and equal opportunities. She had to leave the government after her first term in office due to internal quarrels about equal opportunities legislation (Leitner 2003; Auth 2006). The reforms of the years 1998-2002 consisted in a modification of the parental leave system in 2002 (Bothfeld 2005) and the introduction of a right to part time work for all employees from 2001.

In the second term of the Red-Green coalition Minister Renate Schmidt became Minister of family affairs. By this time, the Social democratic party and the chancellor Gerhard Schröder had changed priorities and increased their focus on family policy. This fact is illustrated by two citations of Schröder: Family policy and gender equality were considered as “women and all this stuff/rubbish” (“Frauen und Gedöhns”) in the first term in office, in the second term the reconciliation of work and family life was made into a “top priority” (“Chefsache”).



In the Federal election of 2002, family policy and the role of women became a major issue in the national campaign. The government promised to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life significantly for working parents – in the coalition treaty a “sufficient childcare coverage rate” of at least 20% for children under three was promised until 2010 (SPD/Bündnis 90/Die Grünen 2002: 29). Furthermore, childcare and reconciliation of work and family life were one major element in the Agenda 2010, the principle encompassing policy document of welfare state reform in 2003. In this document the link was established between labour market reform, which should generate financial means for the increase of childcare places for children under the age of three (Rüling/Kassner 2006). The labour market reform consisted in the cut of unemployment assistance which had been a non-means-tested social insurance at replacement rate and became a means-tested flat-rate payment at social benefit level after one year of unemployment.<sup>3</sup> However, the planned expansion of childcare connected with the labour market reform hardly received any notice in the public debate. It was politically contested however the labour market reforms would actually save money for local authorities that could be invested in the expansion of childcare for children aged 0-3; and for a longer period of time it was also questioned whether the expansion of childcare would actually come into force (Rüling 2003; Leitner 2006).

One reason for the criticism was the disputed financial situation, another was the lacking authority of the national government in the area of education. The system of federalism also leads to controversy and the national financing of childcare places for children under the age of three was highly contested politically. The distribution mechanism between the national level, the federal states and the municipalities was not quite clear: in some cases, the federal states redistributed the money, in other cases the municipalities should retain the financial gains. Furthermore, as many local authorities were under tight financial restrictions at the beginning of the millennium and faced budget closure, they due to budgetary restraints could not make active investments (BT-Protokoll 15. WP, 123. Sitzung).

In 2004 the “Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz” (TAG), a bill which assigns local authorities the duty to supply sufficient childcare for children under three years of age was introduced in parliament and passed. The government stated in the TAG that a sum of yearly 1,5 billion Euros, which are saved at the local and federal state level from the labour market reforms, has to be invested in childcare. The act came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005; the first report on local government compliance was published in 2006. The act also stated that childcare for children under the age of three should be regarded within the triad of education, care and

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<sup>3</sup> There was a great political struggle over the labour market reforms which resulted in several months of social protest especially in the eastern federal states, the benefit of the introduction of childcare remained largely unnoticed. From a gender equality perspective it was also criticised since on the one hand, reconciliation should be improved, on the other hand, the reform introduced means-testing at the household level, resulting in the loss of benefits for many women living together with employed partners. Under this political criticism, the attempt to facilitate the reconciliation for working parents at first remained largely unnoticed by the public debate or was criticised (Rüling 2003; Rüling/Kassner 2005).

socialization, calling for an integrative approach (BMFSFJ 2004: 4). The political debates and legitimations around this piece of legislation will be discussed in the next chapter. In the act, the government estimates that 230.000 new places until 2010 will be sufficient to fulfil the requirement of parents in employment, searching for employment, in education and training and for children with special needs. This estimated number of places corresponds to a child-place-ratio of 20% nationally, with 17% in the Western federal states (including Berlin) and 39% in the Eastern federal states (BMFSFJ 2007a).

According to the act, childcare places should be provided at the local level as a mixture of public daycare centres, voluntary sector institutions and about 30% places at private childminders. Furthermore, the TAG stated that childminders, who had been so far mostly non-regulated, working as self-employed with no or little social security (or even informally), should receive more support and higher regulation, such as health and emergency insurance as well as public subsidies and some quality inspection (BMFSFJ 2004; van Santen 2007). Apart from the offer of institutional places in the non-profit-sector, the places in the market (which consists mostly of self-employed childminders in Germany) should be monitored and coordinated by local authorities.

In the election of 2005, the conservative party won the majority and a coalition of the two large parties – the conservatives and the social democrats – came into power. However in family and education policy and especially the extension of childcare, the new government held similar positions to the Red-Green coalition. The coalition treaty of 2005 promises the extension of whole-day education and care for schoolchildren. Furthermore, in the chapter on family policy the aims of the TAG are emphasised and possible sanctions are introduced: If the pace of childcare expansion is too slow and it shows that more than 10% of local authorities will not match the aims of the expansion, a legal right to a childcare place will be introduced from 2010 for children from two years of age (CDU/CSU/SPD 2005: 97).

Ursula von der Leyen from the conservative party became Minister of family affairs and she surprisingly continued the modernisation of family policy which had been set off by the social democrats. At first, however, the government introduced “Elterngeld”, a new payment for parental leave which is paid at 67% replacement rate for 12 or 14 months (an act which had been planned and prepared still by the former social democratic minister of family affairs) (Dt. Bundestag 2006). This law has the aim to encourage higher qualified women to have children, reducing the opportunity costs of childbirth and giving incentives for a shorter career break than the three years the parental leave scheme offers. Furthermore, two months of entitlement were introduced that have to be taken up by the partner, usually the father, whereby supporting active parenting for fathers. This new legislation came into force at 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007 and was quite popular, with fathers accounting for 10% of the leave requests in the first nine months after the act came into force.

The ministry for family affairs also pushed for a further expansion of childcare. In Spring 2007, the Minister started calling for further childcare places for children under three years of age beyond the TAG (Beck-Gernsheim 2007). In September 2007, the government agreed to legislate a right to a childcare place from 1 year of age; this should be legislated in 2008. This law will be connected with a new aim of supplying childcare places for 35% of children under the age of three in 2013, aiming at 750.000 places – which is triple of today's facilities (Spiegel online 05.09.2007). Of these places, 20% should be created at private childminders. In order to fulfil this duty, the national government will supply additional funding of 2.15 Billions of Euros from 2008 for the local authorities in order to establish the infrastructure and the building of childcare places. From 2009, there will be further national funding of 1.9 Billions available for the running costs (ibid.).

The effective expansion of places which can be measured the last years has been slow but steady. According to national statistics counting only the places in childcare institutions and not at childminders, in 1998 there were 166,927 places for children under the age of three altogether, which corresponds to a child-place-ratio of 7% (although 35% in the Eastern states, 1.9% in the Western rural states and 23% in the city states), in 2002 there were 190,914 places or a child-place-ratio of 8.6% nationally can be decomposed into 4.3% in the Western states and 37% the Eastern states (BMFSFJ 2006: 11ff.). In the first period of the red-green coalition only a very limited expansion of places can be observed. Between 2002 and 2005 a more rapid expansion could be stated: In 2004 the national child-place ratio had an average of 10.8% (7.7 % in the Western states and 37.7% in the Eastern states) (ibid.). These figures show almost a doubling of places for children under three years of age in the Western states. However, in these figures, no effects of the TAG, which came into force only in 2005, can be shown. The expansion of childcare is no longer a matter of political controversy, but of practical realisation.

What follows from this policy development? It can be concluded that within the period analysed, paradigm shifts can be observed in childcare policy. While in 1998, the expansion of childcare for infants was not considered an issue which required political attention by the government, this had changed in 2002 and the legal framework introduced in 2004 for the first time stated a political responsibility to supply sufficient childcare for children of working parents under the age of three. This policy was even taken further after the change of government in 2005 and therefore it can be argued that the policy change will most likely be sustainable. In the coalition treaty of the great coalition a legal right to a childcare place from the age of two years was announced if the local authorities do not expand places fast enough; and in 2007 even the legal right to a childcare place from the age of one year was promised. If this will be enacted in 2008, a paradigm shift from a private responsibility for childcare of small children to a public responsibility for childcare – and consequently a support for the adult worker model – can be ascertained.

## 3.2 England

### Timeline:

- 1997: Labour party comes into office
- 1998: National childcare strategy
- 1998: Begin of “Sure Start” Programme
- 1999: Blair announces aim of elimination of child poverty until 2010
- 2001: Launch of “Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative”
- 2002: Interdepartmental Childcare Review
- 2003: Every child matters
- 2004: Children Act: Changes of local administration for children
- 2004: “Choice for parents- the best start for children. Ten year strategy for childcare”
- 2005: Childcare Act passed in Parliament
- 2006: Childcare Act comes into force: Aim of sufficient childcare for all children of working parents of all age groups; expansion of children’s centres, new integrated curriculum

In England, before the election of the Labour government in 1997, childcare was considered to be the parents’ responsibility, so hardly any public childcare existed for pre-school children. This changed rapidly after Labour came into power. Tony Blair often stated the utmost importance of childcare to the New Labour welfare state reform, he called childcare the “New Frontier of the Welfare state” (Ball/Vincent 2005). The principle followed in the expansion of childcare was that of “progressive universalism”, which means some universal supply of childcare for all, along with targeted programmes for those who need them most. In 1998, Blair introduced the “National Childcare Strategy” (DFES 1998), which aimed at increasing childcare places for pre-school children, however first of all mainly for children between three and four years of age. Until the year 2000 a free childcare place should be offered for every four-year-old, and from 2004 for every three-year-old child. However, these places are not full-time, but at 2,5 hours per day and only during school terms (33 weeks per year). Altogether, between 1998 and 2003, 626.000 new places were created for children of all age groups, primarily in the private sector (Evers et al. 2004). In 2001/2002, the intergovernmental spending review set up new targets of creating 250.000 childcare places by 2006 (although these are for 3-4 year olds) and to “develop a childcare market in which every parent can access affordable, good quality childcare, through targeted assistance to a wider range of providers, financial help for lower and middle income parents, and more effective delivery of services through the creation of children’s centres” – this is the first mention of childcare for children under the age of three. In order to achieve this target, the financial means were doubled in comparison to 2002-03 in order to fund childcare places for 3-4 year olds and increasing children’s centres in the most disadvantaged areas (HM Treasury 2002, Chapter 3).

The reform process was connected to a new emphasis on the integration of “education and care”, sometimes also called “educare” (DFES 2004). The institutional division between

“care” which had formerly been located under the Department of Health and “nursery education” located under the Department of Education was eliminated and all childcare was assumed under the duty of the Department of Education in April 1998 and should follow mainly educational purposes (Lewis 2003: 223). Furthermore, childcare settings were also added to the responsibility of the Office for Standards in Education OFSTED, which inspects and controls educational institutions from age 0 –18. Despite this “integration” of education and care, due to the limited provision of publicly subsidized care, there is still a division between the free hours of childcare for children from age three and the additional hours of “wrap-around care” that the parents have to pay for. Sometimes this additional care is provided through the same institution as the free childcare hours, sometimes children are picked up and transferred into another care setting for the remaining period their parents need to have covered. However, the 2004 10-year-strategy for childcare proposes a vision of integrated education and care, that guarantees one-stop care and education from 8 am to 6 pm over 48 weeks per year (Ball/Vincent 2005: 559).

Concerning the responsibility for childcare provision, the local authorities are responsible for monitoring the need at the local level and guaranteeing the service supply according to national aims. For this purpose, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCP) at the local level were founded to coordinate the childcare supply with different providers. The partnerships should also provide subsidies for the expansion of facilities to private providers (Clarke 2007: 159).

However, beside these free childcare hours for children from three years of age, there was no call for an extension of the supply for younger children in the first term of office on the Labour government, even though places for younger children always existed in a market setting. Childcare is mainly organised through the market, leaving high fees to pay for parents. In 1999 the Labour government introduced the working families tax credit for low-income parents, which meets up to 70% of childcare costs. It refunds the childcare costs with a maximum of 100 pound (134 Euros) for one child and 150 pound for two children. An increase of the childcare element in the working tax credit up to 175 pound per week and a maximum support of 300 pound per week was also announced in the 10-year-strategy for childcare, with a special bonus for parents living in the London area (Ball/Vincent 2005).

Looking at the policy for the expansion of childcare places for children from 0-3 years, there are two strands of development: The first strand is aiming at child development and social exclusion and connected with the expansion of integrated services at the local level; while the second strand looks more at the development of childcare places as such. However, those strands overlap when it comes to integrated projects which encompass childcare, such as children’s centres as well as the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative. Furthermore the policies for children aged 0-3 are sometimes difficult to distinguish since often there is no clear age distinction for childcare places but all pre-school children are considered jointly.

The *first strand of policy* of integrated children's services: These are targeted mainly at children from disadvantaged backgrounds, addressing social exclusion. Parallel to the expansion of childcare for children aged 3-4, the government started a children-centred community programme called "Sure Start" in 1998. Interestingly, Sure Start was initiated by the Treasury as the result of a Comprehensive Spending Review on Childcare effects and costs. The aim of the programme was to address social exclusion of children under the age of four from disadvantaged communities through the integration of services from health, education which was steered at a local level by parents and local initiatives (Interview Norman Glass). It offered funding to create Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs) with buildings and funding for various initiatives, health visitors etc. SSLPs were based on the one hand on the experience with "early excellence centres", which had existed since the 1970s, mostly as community initiatives, on the other hand they relied heavily on the research literature and the US-experiences with the programme "Headstart" (Sylva/Pugh 2005).

The programme Sure Start was incredibly popular and enjoyed high media attention. It was extended in 1999 and in 2004, 500 SSLPs existed throughout the country (Clarke 2007: 161). Although childcare could be one element of the Sure Start Local Programmes, it was originally not the primary aim of the policy to increase childcare places. Due to its popularity, Sure Start eventually also became the umbrella for all programmes concerned with childcare and social exclusion, such as children's centres and the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative. Within this process of expansion, the original aim of the programme, which was initially to support child and community development was changed gradually to supporting childcare places and reconciliation for working parents.

As one element within the Sure Start Programme to increase childcare places, the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative (NNI) was launched in 2001. It was targeted at the 30% most disadvantaged communities in the country where childcare places for children from 0-3 should be provided. The programme aimed at low-income or unemployed parents and should help to improve the take-up rate of the working tax credit by these family. By 2005, 45.000 new childcare places had been created in 1.400 nurseries over the country and the evaluation of the programme was presented in 2007 (Smith et al. 2007). The parental fee in the Neighbourhood nurseries was subsidized and it enabled higher take-up rates for low-income parents. Half of the parents using the places had never used childcare before. Despite its success, the programme was terminated in 2006/07, and there was an option that the Neighbourhood Nurseries might be converted into children's centres (Sylva/Pugh 2005).

In 2006, Sure Start opened a new programme offering children's centres in the most disadvantaged areas, and children's centres should eventually spread to every community. This programme replaced the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative and the SSLPs which had existed previously. Furthermore, this expansion is connected with a change in aims which was criticised by those who had originated the programme (Glass 2005, Interview Glass 2007).

The criticism is that children's centres are mainly aiming at enabling parents' employment and not at child development and tackling social exclusion.

Concerning the social integration strategy, in 2003 the government set up the policy agenda "Every child matters", aiming at improving the well-being of children, tackling social exclusion and child poverty, comprising concrete aims for the improvement of living conditions for children at the local level (Lindsey/McAulife 2006: 405). As a consequence, the "Children Act" was passed in the House of Commons in 2004, which regulates local service delivery as well as the integration of services, and the setting up of the a children's commissioner in every community (House of Commons 2004). The vision of "Every child matters" are one-stop local services for children that integrate education, care and healthcare. Those services should be offered mainly through children's centres (Vincent/Ball 2006: 32f.).

*For the second strand of policy aiming directly at childcare:* Until 2005, there was no comprehensive policy for the expansion of childcare for children under the age of three which was still considered to be a private responsibility of parents. As a consequence, childcare places were offered mostly in private market settings and low-income parents could claim parts of their childcare costs through the working families tax credit. Apart from this financial help, several specially targeted programmes (SSLPs, NNI, children's centres) were introduced in disadvantaged communities addressing childcare and social exclusion, aiming at bringing low-income parents back into employment and tackling child poverty.

In 2004, the Labour government presented the 10-Years strategy "Choice for parents, the best start for children" (DFES 2004), which set up an extensive policy framework for the development of childcare over ten years. The policy targets of the strategy include the reconciliation of family and gainful employment for parents and the enhancement of child development. The programme aims at increasing childcare places and childcare quality over ten years through inspection as well as education and training for the childcare workforce (ibid.). The strategy includes the expansion of universal childcare for 3-4 year old children up to 15 hours per week by 2010 and "20 hours eventually", but there was no concrete aim of expansion of childcare for younger children. However, the strategy promises the extension of paid maternity leave to nine months from 2007 and to 12 months from 2010. Furthermore, children's centres should be increased to 3,500 until 2010, which means "one in every community". Lastly, with the strategy the government increased the childcare element of the tax credits to lower income families up to 175 Pound per week for one child and 300 pound for more children, as well as extended childcare vouchers handed out by employers (Vincent/Ball 2006: 33; DFES 2004).

As one element of the 10-Year strategy for childcare, the Childcare Act was passed in the House of Commons in 2005 and came into force in 2006 (House of Commons 2005). In this document, the government for the first time assumes the legal responsibility for the provision of childcare places for children of all age groups. Furthermore, the Act draws together several

policies on childcare under one framework. First of all, it defines the duty of local authorities to ensure sufficient childcare for children of working parents in their local community. This includes the increase of universal care for the 3-4 year-olds mentioned in the National Childcare Strategy up to 15 hours per week in 2010. Furthermore, also childcare for younger children and school-age children should be provided if the parents are in employment, in training or have special needs – this marks a development from the childcare strategy from 1998, where no childcare places for children under the age of three are mentioned. The local authorities have to assess and monitor the childcare need at the local level and should coordinate the market with the several local providers. However, the municipalities receive no additional funding for this task. Only if there are no private providers the local authorities are allowed to provide childcare facilities themselves. Thirdly, the “Transformation Fund” which subsidizes training of the childcare workforce is introduced as one element in the Childcare Act. Furthermore, the Act establishes a curriculum “Birth to three matters” which is integrated in the Early Years Foundation stage, a national educational curriculum for children from birth to 18 years, which defines the aims of child development and education. Fifth, it sets up a new framework of regulation and inspection of childcare places. Finally, the Act regulates the extension of Sure Start Children’s Centres which should be extended to 3.500 nationwide until 2010, one in every community, starting with the most disadvantaged areas. (Linsey/McAuliffe 2006: 405).

Concerning early years’ services, the novelty in the Childcare Act is that local authorities have the duty to ensure the availability of places even for children below the age of three for parents in employment, training or children with special needs. However it is contested if the local authorities will be able to fulfil this duty without receiving additional funding from the government (see chapter 5 on parliamentary debates). On this issue, there will be regular reports in which the local authorities have to document their efforts. The main gap addressed by many researches however is not the availability of places, but the affordability of childcare (Ball/Vincent 2005) as well as the lacking quality. Furthermore, the Childcare Act finally defines childcare from birth as part of the educational agenda, giving it a strong educational impetus. However, so far there are major shortcomings in the quality and the qualification of the workforce.

To sum up: In the period between 1998 and 2007, there have been significant shifts in the policy around childcare: First of all, childcare for children aged 3-4 was assumed as a national responsibility; which follows from the introduction and gradual extension of some free hours of nursery education for all children. Secondly, in the national childcare strategy and the Childcare act, the government put local authorities under the duty to ensure sustainable childcare provision through the market for children of all age groups. Thirdly, in principle there is a move towards the integration of education and care which can be seen in the administrative shifts in departments responsible for childcare, in inspection as well as in the integrated educational framework for children of all age groups. However, in practice, a



division between the universal “education” from three years of age and the market-based private “care” for children beyond these age groups persists.

### **3.3 Comparison: Policy developments and policy aims 1998-2007**

Both countries, Germany and England, have introduced pieces of legislation in 2004/ 2005 which assume childcare places for children under the age of three as a political duty. This marks a significant discursive shift in both countries, since previously childcare for young children under the age of three had been considered as a private responsibility of parents. In both cases, local authorities are responsible for ensuring the sufficiency of places for parents in employment and training as well as for children with special needs. However, the municipalities do not necessarily supply childcare places themselves: In Germany, the local authorities cooperate with the local networks of providers which consist mainly of non-profit organisations (Evers et al. 2004) as well as childminders, and subsidize the places offered by the various providers. In England, the local authorities monitor demand and supply of the local childcare market and cooperate with existing providers, which are mainly market-based, but offer no general subsidy.

This funding mechanism marks a significant difference between the German and the English system of service delivery: In Germany, the statutory right to a childcare place from 2013 is connected with a sustainable and legally binding duty of local authorities to co-fund of the childcare places. In the first years, this will be supported by the federal ministry for family affairs. Through this new duty, the welfare state increases and guarantees its provision of social services – leading to a real expansion of welfare responsibilities, though not necessarily to higher welfare spending, since positive fiscal effects through less unemployment and higher social security contributions might compensate for the childcare spending in medium-term perspective. However, on the short term basis, the local authorities will be reluctant to meet the childcare targets quickly since they are confronted with rising costs (Deutscher Städtetag 2005). Consequently, the main problem in Germany is still availability of suitable places in most areas.

In England, the places are offered mostly by for-profit-providers and are rarely subsidized, since the principle of welfare provision is that services should be financially sustainable at market prices (Evers et al. 2004). The political programmes for increasing childcare are always of limited duration – they should give some help in the kick-off phase, but on the long run the care provision should be self-sustaining. As a consequence, in England parental fees are much higher than in Germany, and the affordability of childcare remains the largest problem for low- and partly also middle-class parents (Ball/Vincent 2005). For the targeted programmes for deprived communities there are different and ever changing funding programmes. As a consequence this system funding is inherently complex. Apart from the special programmes for childcare in deprived areas there are hardly any general subsidies

except for the childcare element in the working tax credit and childcare vouchers issued by employer.

**Table 1: Childcare and integrated services policy aims in Germany and England**

<b>Policy aims</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>England</b>
Children 0-2	Provision of places for 20% of children in 2010 35% provision in 2013 statutory right to a place from 1 year of the child in 2013	Sufficient places for parents in employment, training and for children with special needs (as far as reasonable) until 2010
Childcare 3-4	Part-time education for all children as a statutory right	Provision 12,5 hours per week free, Aim: 15 free hours in 2010 and covered hours from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. 20 free hours eventually
Children 5-6	Part-time education for all children as a statutory right	Part of the school system; by 2010 schools open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Integrated services	Expansion of Family centres	35.000 children's centres until 2010
Child poverty	No concrete aims Kinderzuschlag Hartz IV Koalitionsvertrag 2005	Half child poverty by 2010 and 70% of lone parents in employment (Basis: 1999); eradicate child poverty by 2020,

**Table 2: Childcare places in Germany and England in 2005**

	<b>Age</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Opening hours</b>	<b>Child-place-ratio</b>
<b>Germany</b>	0-3 years	Creche	Places: 90% full-time, usage is only 21 hours on average	11,7 % (West Germany: 7,7%)
	0-3	childminders	Half or whole day	2%
	3-6	Kindergarten	often half day	89%
<b>England</b>	0-3	Day nurseries	Often half day	35%
	0-4	childminders	According to parents needs	
	3-4	universal childcare coverage	2,5 hours per day, 33 weeks per year	nearly full coverage

Sources: BMFSFJ 2006; Bryson et al 2006, OECD 2006

## ***4. The passing of the TAG and the Childcare Act: political debates and discourses***

The last chapter analysed the policy changes in the last decade in both countries. In this chapter the political debates that are connected with the introduction of legislation are analysed in order to identify the specific framing of the childcare issue. The political debates scrutinized are around the passing of the two central pieces of legislation to increase childcare for children under the age of three. In Germany, the TAG was passed through Parliament in 2004; and in England, the Childcare Act was passed in the House of Commons in 2005. Both acts regulate a public duty to ensure sufficient childcare provision for parents in employment, looking for work, in training or for children with special needs. In both cases, the local authorities are responsible for ensuring the services provision, however the provision itself is regulated differently according to the institutional setting.

### **4.1 Germany**

In Germany, the debate on childcare started with the second government of the red-green coalition in 2002. Within the social democratic party (SPD), the issue of childcare and the re-framing of family policy had been prepared strategically before the 2002 election campaign with Renate Schmidt as the designated minister for family affairs in order to create an acceptance for family policy (Interview Mackroth). The modernisation of the policy campaigns took place before the election in the party meeting in 2001 at the party conference in Nuremberg, where chancellor Schroeder accepted the importance of family policy as a central topic in the election campaign and for the prospective second term in office (Mackroth/Ristau 2002). According to Mackroth and Ristau (2002), family policy had not been a popular issue in the social democratic party previously but rather, “education” was always considered to be more relevant. The topic of family policy was considered to be a “conservative” topic; and childcare was generally not considered as part of the educational system. Consequently, the extension of childcare is still regarded as family policy and not as part of the educational agenda (Interview Mackroth). The acceptance of family policy and especially childcare as a central topic within the Social democratic party was achieved through a strategic coupling and re-framing of family policy with the context of demographic change, the need for qualified workers and family policy as boosting economic growth (Interview Mackroth).

According to national experts (Interview Jurczyk; Gottschall/Hagemann 2002), the cultural and institutional divisions between education and care have a longstanding tradition in Germany and it might take a long time to overcome this division. Despite expert debates that

call for a stronger integration of education and care in a new paradigm (Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen 2002; Deutscher Bundestag 2005; Fthenakis 2005), this change cannot be seen within the political debates until 2007. Still, early childhood education and care is discussed mostly as an issue of family policy within a context of better reconciliation of work and family life.

In the Green party as the coalition party in power during the passing of the TAG, the issue of “child politics” had for a long time been part of the political programme. The idea of early education and care was considered as vital from a perspective of social investment and prevention of social exclusion as well as from a perspective of helping integration for children from migrant backgrounds. The issue of more investment in children had been in the centre of attention as a result from the PISA debate. In 2000/2001 the Green party had accepted guidelines which were the basis for the family and child policy in the second term of the Red-Green coalition. The party tried to push the right to a childcare place below the age of three within the coalition negotiations, but could not realize their original aims. In a perspective of the green party, education and care had always been closely connected in the integrated concept of policy for children and social inclusion (Interview Saumweber).

The issue of childcare was dealt with extensively in the coalition treaty of 2002. In the 1998 coalition treaty of the first red-green government, it was only mentioned generally that sufficient childcare should be provided. In the coalition treaty of 2002, the government promised 20% of childcare for children below the age of three (SPD/Bündnis 90/Die Grünen 2002), while the question of funding was not addressed.

The Agenda 2010, presented in March 2003, established the connection between labour market policy and the funding of childcare places. The funding for childcare consisted in a political compromise, since the national government is not allowed to pay directly for childcare which belongs to the competences of the federal states. The solution found for funding the extension of childcare places is very complex since many actors at different levels of government (national, federal and local) are involved in the process.

The financial argument has been the main issue of the political debate ever since: Politicians from the federal state or the local authority level blame the national government that the money promised to them through the introduction of labour market policy was not accessible at the local level as promised by the national government (vgl. Deutscher Städtetag 2003; 2005). Politicians at the national level blamed the federal states that the money provided was not used according to purpose; although there was some acknowledgement that the money was not distributed according to the requirements at the local level (Interviews Mackroth, Jurczyk). Generally, it can be stated that within this conflict around funding, the national as well as the federal states are trying to shift the blame for the shortcomings of funding onto the other levels of government involved.

Interestingly, according to the national experts, the international debates on ECEC, such as the OECD “Starting Strong”-Initiative or the “Barcelona-target” for the extension of childcare hardly played a role in the national political discourse (Interviews Jurczyk, Mackroth, Saumweber). This had different reasons. Firstly, the Barcelona target was established in 2002, around the same period as the coalition treaty. The policymakers in the ministry for family affairs were well aware of the Barcelona target, however they considered the 20% childcare for children under the age of three as an “interim aim” which was the best they could get under the political conditions. Interestingly, although in the official debate the Barcelona targets did not play a role, international benchmarking studies were central to the strategic policy debate and the reframing process in Germany: Several studies were commissioned by the ministry for family affairs in the active period that argued, through the use of international benchmarking, that better reconciliation policy would help to increase the birth rate and create economic growth. The examples used most frequently in the comparison were primarily the Scandinavian countries and France (see 5.1). In this case, however, policy diffusion did not take place through supranational institutions, but through policy learning by benchmarking studies commissioned by central actors in administration.

The targets of increasing childcare for children aged 0-3 by 20% in the agenda 2010 as well as a vague aim 230.000 new places in the TAG (corresponding with a childcare coverage rate of 17% in Western federal states) to be created until 2010 were developed as a political compromise between the national and the federal level, given the financial means at the time (1.5 Mio. Euro per year at the national level). Looking at the figures, it is clear that the original aims were modified – from 20% coverage rate in each state to 17% coverage rate connected with the much weaker aim of a level of coverage which “sufficient for working parents” (BMFSFJ 2005). These compromises had to be made due to the strong resistance from the federal states as well as local authorities, given the funding situation as well as different cultural understandings of the appropriateness of ECEC below the age of three. One interviewee summarizes that the TAG was already pushing a cultural boundary in the understanding of childcare and upbringing at the time and could not go any further.

The parliamentary debates around the passing of the TAG can be regarded as the result of a paradigmatic shift in the meaning of childcare, in which childcare was re-framed in a demographic and economic context and gained importance. However, in the parliamentary debates only the results of this reframing process are documented, the actual explanation for the shift will be analysed in the following chapter.

In the parliamentary debate, Renate Schmidt, minister of family affairs from the SPD justified the TAG as enabling the reconciliation of work and family and increasing children’s wellbeing. She mentioned that the original aims were more ambitious, but the bill constituted a compromise: “The TAG poses a realistic and affordable solution. The TAG increases quantity and quality of childcare and the national level does not overstep its competencies”

(BT-Protokoll 15. WP, 123. Sitzung, 1195D). She also mentioned that it is the task of the federal states to formulate the educational standards and enhance quality of childcare. Other speakers from the SPD (Christine Humme, Caren Marx) emphasized the importance of ECEC as an element of social inclusion by providing the best educational opportunities to children from the start (ibid.; 11201B). These statements created a clear link between education and care as a strategy of social investment: “..the extension of childcare places as well as investment in education, care and upbringing are of great importance to society” (ibid; 11208 D).

In the debate, the oppositional CDU criticised that care was to be provided for employed parents only and not oriented towards the wellbeing of the child. The speakers emphasized the necessity of “choice” for parents, the need to enhance the parents’ educational competences and the requirement for an increased quality of places. They claimed the quality of childcare would be emphasized in the CDU-led federal states. Marion Böhmer (CDU) also called for more childcare for children under the age of three as well as for more whole-day schooling: “The message is clear: more childcare, more whole-day schooling and more early education” (ibid., 11197B). However, taking into account an ongoing debate around childcare within the CDU, e.g. the fact that the conservative federal states had highly opposed the TAG (and often opposed the introduction of whole-day-schooling), the message of the CDU speakers on the TAG could not be taken as the general position of the conservative party. Generally, the conservative speakers emphasized that parents should be enabled to make choices on how to combine work and family, which include a better financial support and also support for mothers who decide to stay at home with children.

The speaker from the green party (Ekin Delingöz) criticized the hypocrisy of the conservative party which had not extended childcare for children below the age of three when they were in power in the 1980s and 1990s. In their contributions, the green speakers emphasized mostly the notion of equal access to education and of social integration as well as the importance of childcare to foster speech acquisition of children from migrant families.

The speakers from the liberal party emphasized the importance of investment in children and called for national standards for pro-preschool education.

The main point of political controversy was the question of the funding. Especially the fiscal problems of local authorities were mentioned from the opposition and the structural burden placed upon them with further requirements to extend childcare places. Generally speaking however, in the parliamentary debate, all parties argued in favour of the extension of childcare places for children under the age of three. This agreement is surprising since the extension of childcare for children below the age of three was relatively new on the political agenda and definitely not part of the conservative line. The idea that childcare enhances the reconciliation of work and family and could lead to increasing birth rates was often mentioned, also the notion that investment in childcare would be an investment in the future which will foster

economic growth (BT-Protokoll, 15. WP,123. Sitzung). All parties accepted the importance of measures to enhance the reconciliation of work and family life for the economy as well as for the demographic development. Furthermore, the idea of investment in ECEC as pre-emptive social policy was implicitly agreed upon by all parties.

This is surprising insofar, as during the election campaign in 2002, the question of family policy had marked the main division line between social democratic and conservative party. The CDU/CSU had promised a highly paid universal care allowance for all parents with children aged 0-3 and did not mention the extension of childcare or whole-day schooling (Bösch 2002). It can be concluded that the CDU as the main opposition party had changed positions within one year and accepted the new paradigm of the “sustainable family policy” which should enable the reconciliation of work and family life through the extension of childcare and the support of mothers’ employment. Considering the scope of the ideological opposition against childcare and whole-day schooling from a conservative standpoint, this shift in language is quite significant, although there are some different emphases remaining in the wording as well as in the political priorities: The CDU is more prone to call for “enabling choice” of parents rather than “reconciling work and family life”. Furthermore, when calling for an integration of education and care, the conservative party emphasises the importance of the families’ role as educators, which should be supported and enabled by the state (not only through ECEC, but also through educational guidance).

These differences between conservatives and social democrats are marked and persist when looking at the newly developed party manifestos (SPD 2007; CDU 2007): In their general manifesto the SPD calls for a general integration of education and care and for the first time treats education and family policy in one chapter. The aims of introducing free childcare from the age of two in order to create equal life chances for all are very prominently mentioned, similarly the call for an integration of education and care in children’s centres and also through integrated services and early language training (SPD 2007: 61f.). The CDU also calls for the integration of education and care as well as the right to childcare and after-school-care for every child, but is less pronounced in the matter of childcare from the early years. In the CDU manifesto there is more emphasis on the family itself as the most important institution for raising of children (CDU 2007: 21ff.). However, with the introduction in the basic party manifestos the childcare policy achieved further institutionalisation in the political culture within both of the large parties in Germany.

Interestingly however, it was a conservative minister of family affairs who pushed the political and cultural shift of extending childcare for children under the age of three even further. In 2007, two years after the TAG came into force, the target was extended. Under the rule of conservative minister for family affairs, Ursula von der Leyen, the further extension of 750.000 childcare places until 2013 was decided in cabinet, followed by the right to a

childcare place after the age of one from the 2013. This ultimate aim can be considered as the result of the cultural change which took place since 2002 and has reached all parties.

In the discussions on the TAG the issue of quality was hardly mentioned since there is no competence at the federal level. However, one element of this compromise was that the more flexible and home-like form of care at childminders was promoted as one element of the TAG. One third of the new places should be created through the extension of places with childminders. The childminders are cheaper for the municipalities than institutional childcare places since they receive less public funding. However, the situation of childminders was improved as part of the TAG and for the first time, quality issues and social security coverage were addressed for childcare places with childminders. Again, the regulation achieved was a compromise of the experts' original aspirations and the willingness to reform at the local level. For example, the German Youth Institute (DJI) was issued with design of a national curriculum for training of childminders, which was only partly included in the final act. Furthermore, new regulations concerning the recruitment of childminders at the local level were introduced. For example, the local authorities should select "suitably qualified" persons and issue them with "some training", although no details are specified. Nevertheless, for the first time, qualification required for childminders and their social security support through local authorities are mentioned, despite the lack of specification (Interview Jurczyk). Furthermore, the issue of quality standards and inspection would fall into the competence of the federal states, which have so far been reluctant to address childcare for children under the age of three in a systematic manner.

However, looking at the political debates, it is clear that the main aim for extending childcare places is to enable a better reconciliation of work and family life, namely the first function of childcare. There is so far hardly any debate on the educational function of childcare and the possible outcomes for children through the improvement of the educational quality of care, e.g. in childminder settings. This is on the one hand due to the fiscal restrictions and the higher funding that would be required to introduce higher quality and more places at the same time. The second issue is the division of competences between the national and the federal state level, in which the federal states are responsible for educational standards and inspection. The interviewed experts mentioned that they consider the general extension of places as a first step which needs to be followed by an initiative on quality in a second step. Some first elements to improve quality can be seen in a recent speech of the minister for family affairs from October 2007 (BMFSFJ 2007), where she calls a coordinated effort in order to promote higher quality for childminder care places as well as a need for better training for childcare staff not experienced in handling children below the age of three. However, the question of quality and the sharing of competences from the federal and state level constitute a major gap in the German debate on childcare. This gap, however, can be explained as one element of continuity of the institutional welfare state layout in which the



federal states hold the competencies for education which cannot be overcome easily through national debates.

## 4.2 England

In the political debates during the passing of the Childcare Act in England, various topics were discussed, especially the questions of the quality of childcare, the outcomes for children and whether parental care or external childcare would be better for child development. Generally speaking, all parties involved were in favour of extending childcare, however with different priorities. In comparison of the two countries the specific topics of debate stand out and can be identified.

The analysis of the Labour party priorities shows: In the 1997 election, education was the number one priority, although childcare was not mentioned in this context. Generally, there was no explicit reference to childcare for children below the age of three, except for pilots of early excellence centres. The focus, however, in this first term in office was on the welfare-to-work agenda, especially bringing unemployed households and lone parents back into employment (Labour party 1997). In the manifesto for 2001, the Labour party promised to extend universal childcare for children aged 3-4 years, and to extend early excellence centres in the 500 new Sure-Start centres for children 0-5. There is a general aim that childcare places should be extended, but no mention of the quality of childcare places (Labour party 2001).

Generally speaking, it is not as clear as it is in Germany in which points the inner-party alliances and the obstacles lay within the labour party and the labour government. In the UK one party can centrally determine the line of government, inner-governmental quarrels are less discussed in the media than in Germany. As a government official stated in the interview, members of government and the parties would normally stand 100% behind the current policy. The interviews with several labour members of parliament did not reverse this picture, although the members of parliament might individually follow specific political priorities. From the external perspective, it can be stated that there has been an ongoing expansion of the childcare issue and that there is no sign of reversal or a break in the continuity of the support of childcare.

However, it can also be shown that the priorities of the Blair government in the childcare issue shifted during the three terms in office: In the first years, the question of maternal employment, especially for lone parents, was considered of paramount importance in order to combat child poverty. After some time, however, the issue of the quality of childcare came up on the political agenda. This might be due to results of research which has shown that childcare below the age of three is only beneficial for the emotional and cognitive development of the child if care is provided at high quality (Melhuish 2004; Smith et al. 2007). So firstly, the first function of childcare – helping reconciliation of work and life – was

discussed, and some years later the issue of the educational value of childcare was also debated.

There are different possible explanations for why the quality of childcare has been a political issue in England, but not in Germany: Firstly, it is possible that given the lower qualification level (about 30% of childcare workers had no specific qualification in 2005; OECD 2006) in most childcare settings and the lacking sustainability of childcare places in England (Evers et al. 2005; Smith et al. 2007), there was a higher need to focus on the issue of quality than in Germany, where the quality is overall average or good (most childcare workers in institutions have a two-to three-year vocational training, although childminders are mostly not qualified). An alternative explanation would be that because childcare from an early age is already frequently used in England since there is a high employment rate for mothers of small children, the issue of quality comes up only after the first problem of the general expansion of places had been solved. This “logical” order of problematising first the overall expansion and quality as second issue has been mentioned by various experts in Germany.

Furthermore, a second shift in family policy can be noted during the Blair government: Given the higher employment rates of mothers with young children in England and a wish of many parents who would like to stay at home longer but cannot afford it, the government extended parental leave entitlements and benefits – parallel to the extension of childcare. This can be seen as a certain counter-movement from a simple welfare-to-work-strategy. In this respect, childcare policy should be considered in context of a general extension of family policy, which also includes giving parents more time with their children, and also more guidance for parenting with a generally a higher public attention on the relationships inside the family (Clarke 2007). Interestingly, also the wording in government papers and speeches changes: Instead of talking about “welfare to work”, the politicians talk about “enable parents to make choices about their work-life-balance” (Kelly, House of Commons, 2<sup>nd</sup> reading of childcare bill, Column 28), through the extension of leave entitlements and flexible working employment.

Thirdly, and most importantly, since the turn of the millennium, childcare and especially integrated services gained a central importance when looking at social exclusion of children from disadvantaged areas. This argument is very prominent in the political justification of the Childcare Bill: According to the Labour speakers, Childcare will be provided in the form of children’s centres and they will receive subsidies in disadvantaged areas in order to close “the gaps between the development of wealthy and disadvantaged children”. The idea is that through access to education, it would be possible to “break the link between people’s incomes and their opportunities” (Kelly). This expression is typical for a third-way perspective which aims at reducing inequality in a life-course perspective (Mahon 2002). Instead of giving social benefits to parents in order to lift children out of poverty immediately (which, as it is known from comparative studies, might prove to be ineffective or very expensive), the idea is to

create equal opportunities for the future generation. In this report investment in children is a very long-term social intervention.

To prove this point, several speakers in the House of Commons made reference to scientific studies and evaluations of the impact of ECEC on the child's cognitive development: Helen Goodman stated: "By the age of three, children of professional families already have vocabularies that are greater than those of adults in the poorest families." (Column 61) In order to combat this inequality of life chances, childcare is considered beneficial for the child's development, if it is at high quality. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds should be given the "best possible start in life" (Interview Bennet). The argument backing the ECEC is that every month of high quality pre-school education increases school-readiness of children from the age of one. In this light however, the question of quality of childcare is an essential point. In order to increase the quality of childcare, in the Childcare Act, the government sets up a special fund ("transformation fund") as subsidy for education and training of the childcare workforce.

The higher concern with the quality of childcare had already been taken up by all parties in the parliamentary debates on the childcare bill in 2005 by speakers from all parties. However, conservative speakers stressed the fact that parents work not because they want to but out of economic necessity; and home-centred care might be better for children. "Young children are much better off in the care of their mother, father or members of the close family in the early years from birth to three", said Rob Wilson (Conservative, Column 64). This position was backed by the speaker with scientific arguments from attachment theory, claiming that in the first years children need a stable relationships (Interview Loughton). In this light, especially the lacking sustainability of childcare places with high staff turnover rates is considered to be problematic for child development. This calls for a higher quality of care settings.

It is striking that in research as well as in the political debates, in England the idea that children belong to their parents is still quite present, as well as the results of attachment theory in pedagogy, while the factual situation and everyday reconciliation practice is much more work-centred than in Germany where the argument is rarely used in political debates. There are two possible explanations for this: one would be that the higher employment rate for mothers with small children (60% in England versus around 30% in Germany) is partly involuntary and parents would like to spend some more time with their children. The second explanation is that the quality of childcare is so poor that parents might indeed fear that their child might be harmed due to the difficult conditions. Furthermore, it could be assumed there is a cultural struggle dealing with the culture of upbringing in which opposite pedagogic notions are confronted – private and sheltered upbringing versus a public and institutional childhood – including all the impositions and pressures of a meritocratic educational system on a one- to two year old child.

The controversy over the curriculum “Birth to Three Matters” in the parliamentary sessions and especially in the Select Committee on the Childcare Bill hint at this latter point. In the debates, there were contradictory positions on how children below the age of three ought to be “learning”. The curriculum was criticised for being too prescriptive and not appropriate for small children. Some speakers argued that instead of tightly regulated, education in the early years should rather be considered as structured play. In the government papers, on the other hand, it is mentioned that there education and care should be integrated, since from the point of view of the child, the two functions cannot be separated. Nevertheless the critics argued that the curriculum could be “misunderstood” by low qualified staff and used in order to test children in their cognitive performance. This “schoolification” of childcare was highly contested, and some of the politicians feared that education might become too formal and there would be no scope left for play. This links in with a general criticism of the educational system claiming that “we have the most tested children in the world, but increasing the pressure will not make them perform any better” (Interview Goodmann). The debate is ultimately about questions of pedagogics. Some experts also stated that the curriculum is quite detailed since it was constructed in order to overcome qualification shortages of staff working with young children, and the impetus was to educate the staff through the practitioner documents of the curriculum (Interviews Lavalley, Goodmann). In this respect, it can be seen how the curriculum could be misinterpreted.

Especially members from the conservative and liberal parties questioned the intention of the Childcare Act to create good learning experiences and a positive environment for child development, given the current childcare system with its lack of substantial funding. Due to the lack of sustainable funding levels for high quality childcare, the gap between the current system and the requirement for a well-qualified childcare workforce seems to be unbridgeable (Interviews Brooke, Goodmann). The issue of the gaps concerning the required qualification of the workforce and potentially higher pay levels for higher qualified staff were left out in the parliamentary debates. The question of pay and affordability of childcare remains a huge issue, especially since it is already a big problem for many low to middle income families and the government is not planning to create subsidies (Interview Lavalley, Ball/Vincent 2005), however this topic has not been addressed in the political and parliamentary debates.

Members from the conservative party say that parents as educators should receive more recognition (Mrs. May, House of Commons, Column 33f.) (a very similar argument exists in the German conservative party) and grandparents should play a greater role in childcare and receive benefits (Interview Loughton). The conservative speakers furthermore criticise the lack of “choice” when it comes to the question of childcare institutions – they fear a crowding-out of private and voluntary sector providers through the establishment of children’s centres. However, so far private sector providers constitute the greatest share of care facilities in England, a fact which is stressed by the social democratic speakers. The

mixed economy of welfare, which is the basis of service delivery in England, should not be changed through the childcare act.

What is considered as a vital point by all speakers is the legal requirement of local authorities to ensure the sustainable provision of childcare places “as far as reasonably practicable”. This weak formulation in the Act was criticised. The local authorities received the new duty to report the required childcare places in their area and coordinate the market in order to ensure the provision and also set up targets in order to reduce inequality for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Although these new duties remain very vague and that there are no sanctions imposed in case of non-compliance, it was also criticised that the local authorities are faced with new duties without receiving additional funding. In the light of tight budgets, some speakers said, these tasks would be difficult to fulfil. However, since the Childcare Act only came into force very recently, it cannot be concluded at this point whether or not local authorities are able to fulfil these new duties sufficiently.

Generally speaking, the analysis of the debates around the Childcare Act as from other policy documents on childcare shows that they present a “one fits all” strategy which should help to solve different problems at the same time: Enhance work-family-reconciliation, extend childcare places, combat child poverty and social exclusion, increase the quality of care and the qualification of the workforce and help to tackle questions of affordability. When looking at the restricted funding, it becomes obvious that some general trade-offs are glossed over within the political debate. Especially the trade-off between quantity, quality and affordability of childcare is mentioned in the interviews. Furthermore it becomes quite clear that despite the efforts to increase the quality of childcare, there is still a huge quality gap in comparison to other European welfare states such as the Nordic countries which spend more money on childcare and often organise ECEC in a public sector setting. However, the idea of service provision in the mixed economy of welfare remains unquestioned in England, despite evaluation results showing that the public sector settings offer the highest quality childcare in England (Smith et al. 2007). In this matter as well as concerning the childcare subsidies, the debate on the extension of childcare remains within the frame of a liberal welfare state which will be reluctant to provide services through the public sector and create sustainable funding for high-quality childcare.

### 4.3 Comparison

**Table 3: Main issues in the political debate**

	<b>Germany</b>	<b>England</b>
Framing of childcare 0-3	Childcare is enabling reconciliation of work and family life, will help increase fertility, will be a positive contribution to growth	Childcare will help to combat child poverty through parent’s employment and help reduce the inequality gaps for children.

		High emphasis on educational outcome/value for children
Main points of debate	Funding basis is of TAG and distribution is contested.  Is childcare in the interest of the child? Conservatives claim to be concerned about quality of childcare which should have priority over quantity	Is childcare in the interest of children? Lacking quality of care and requirements for a higher skilled workforce  Curriculum “Birth to three matters” and the notion of “teaching” is contested
Obstacles in achieving policy aims	Lacking availability in Western states, Complicated system of management through the lack of national competences for regulating childcare.	Problems of affordability of childcare for low and middle income parents.  Lacking qualification of workforce and levels of funding to the transformation fund.
Break and continuity with the welfare state tradition	Break: new gender model and public responsibility for childcare  Continuity: childcare mainly used to improve reconciliation  mainly public provision of services, recently opening up to private providers	Break: public responsibility for the monitoring the sufficiency of childcare  Childcare as part of educational system  Continuity: Very little public funding “targeted universalism” – paying for childcare remains responsibility of parents
Main paradigm to be shifted	Gender model of the family: “Should mothers of young children be employed?”	Ideas on childhood: “Should children 0-3 be taught?”

The comparison of the political debates on the TAG and the Childcare Act shows, that the passing of these two pieces of legislation constitute a significant shift in each of the two countries, but these shifts occur also within certain limitations within the specific welfare regime. Furthermore, as one result of the analysis, the integration of education and care has been followed to a different extent in both countries. While in Germany the educational aspects of childcare are only mentioned, it is striking that the justification for the extension of childcare is based on an economic argument of helping mothers to take up employment. In that case only the first function of childcare – better reconciliation – is taken into account. The issue of quality of childcare is not discussed due to the lacking national competence in this field, but also since there is a consideration of a certain trade-off between extending the quantity of places and enhancing the quality of the setting. As a compromise, the extension is partly based on the extension of childminders, although this informal care setting is formalized to a larger extent after the passing of the TAG. However, the main issue of debate is not on the quality of education for children, but rather on the changing gender model of the family – this topic was also prominent in the 2007 new aim for establishing the right to a childcare place.

In contrast, in the English context the issue of quality has a paramount importance in order to justify the extension of childcare places. This is due to the fact that a merely economically driven welfare-to-work agenda was criticised and also research has shown that low-quality childcare could be potentially harmful to children. Since the approach of evidence-based policy making is committed to a “what counts is what works”-paradigm, within the political aim of tackling child poverty, there is a need to increase the quality of care in order to improve the educational outcomes of ECEC for the children. Especially under the idea of “breaking the cycle of low income and low life chances”, the government is committed to a long-term-strategy of tackling social exclusion. However, the policies for increasing the quality of childcare settings remain half-hearted. Instead of asking “what works in other countries”, which have the best educational outcomes for children, such as the Nordic countries, there is a focus to improve the workforce qualification within the current system with limited training subsidies and tighter inspection. In this respect, the dealing with childcare remains within a liberal welfare state frame. However, there is a strong cultural debate on the question of how children should be brought up and which role education should play for their early years’ development.

When asking the question whether the discursive shift analysed in the two countries marks a paradigmatic, namely second or third order change, it can be argued that the two countries follow distinctive paths of break and continuity within their specific welfare model. In Germany, the introduction of a public responsibility for childcare is a distinctive shift with both the traditional understanding of the state supporting the male breadwinner model and female homemaker and mother, for the first time the state takes up responsibility for providing – and subsidizing childcare for infants. This constitutes not only a paradigmatic change in the gender model of the family, but also in the traditional understanding of education and care, which was strictly divided between the public and the private sphere. Explicitly, the upbringing of children was not considered to be part of the educational system, but only the parents’ decision. With the introduction of “the right to a childcare place” from the age of one, Germany is giving up the traditional understanding that “children belong to their mother” in the early years. The model of financing adopted is consistent with childcare for children from the age of three; namely a high public subsidy for childcare which makes care affordable to everyone. The provision of care is, however, accomplished through a mixed economy of welfare with some public sector provision, some third sector provision and some private market provision, mostly private childminders. In this respect, Germany moves away from the conservative welfare state, integrating elements of egalitarian model of Scandinavian welfare states, with a high provision of childcare, enabling mothers to take up gainful employment.

In England, the changes in the childcare regime can be explained as a modernisation within the frame of the liberal welfare state and the “Third Way” paradigm. While the English welfare state previously did not provide childcare, there was hardly any active support for

private care of children at home, either. With the introduction of the childcare strategy and the idea of “progressive universalism”, some hours of care for pre-school-preparation is publicly provided for children from the age of three. The greatest part of childcare however, for children below the age of three and the “wrap-around-care” is still offered by mostly for-profit providers through the childcare market. Child care is generally not subsidized except for children from disadvantaged families through special programmes (such as the NNI), or through the tax credits which are only accessible to low-income-families. The state role remains limited with the control of the market, setting quality standards and guaranteeing inspection, but not to provide funding for the majority of parents. Regarding the issues of funding and the provision of childcare, while a certain responsibility is taken on by the state to “regulate the market” and “ensure provision”, the Childcare Act remains within the frame of a liberal welfare state. In this respect, the introduction of childcare in England cannot be considered to be a paradigmatic shift, but only a change within the existing welfare model.



## **5. Drivers of policy and political discourses between “education” and “care”**

The actual shifts in the policy and the political debates around the introduction of the TAG and the Childcare Act have been described and compared. As a result it can be stated that there are different foci in the provision of childcare for the early years in both countries: while Germany aims at a sustainable, public-sector-like provision at highly subsidized rates for all parents in order to increase the birth rate and foster economic growth, in England childcare subsidies for the early years services are specially targeted at the lower income groups and public childcare aims mainly at combating child poverty and social exclusion through integrated services. As discussed previously, the changes constitute significant shifts in both countries since care for children under three became a public matter, however these changes constitute a continuity to a different degree. Those changes have been sustainable and expanding over some years and will most likely be continued in the future.

The question arising from this development is: How could these changes be explained and which were the main drivers for the expansion of childcare in both countries? Coming from different welfare state regime traditions, it could be assumed that both countries are following different paths which suit their specific welfare model in legitimizing the expansion of childcare for the early years as well as concerning the question of integration of education and care. On the other hand, the two countries face similar “new social risks” of child poverty, welfare dependency of single parents and low educational attainment of children (OECD 2001) which might impose similar solutions. The actual policy discourses and legitimations for the policy changes are analysed in this chapter.

Furthermore, it will be asked which of the discourses in both countries are aiming at different functions of childcare – reconciliation and education and how this could be explained. The question that was partly addressed in the previous chapter will be dealt with in more depth in the following section: Which aims are dominant in the policy framing? Should the extension of childcare serve the need of parents – especially mothers – in reconciling work and family life, or should rather be oriented towards the needs of the children and their development, which asks for a higher quality of childcare (Joos 2002)? How are the different understandings in Germany and England rooted in the welfare state tradition and can they be explained with the institutional structure?

Furthermore, as there is often limited funding available for the expansion of childcare, certain trade-offs between the aim of providing as many places as possible with the aspects of quality can be expected. This could be seen for example from the expansion of childcare places for children aged 3-6 in Germany in the 1990s (ibid.; Interview Jurczyk). Consequently, the analysis of programmes needs to pay attention to the kind of policy aims which are prioritized. The presumed “interests” of parents and children are not necessarily identical, but might even be contradicting each other. Furthermore, there are competing pedagogical

theories concerning the development of children below school age – whether the cognitive development in a sense of “human capital building” should be the primary aim of ECEC, or whether children are considered to learn through discovery and the autonomous emotional development should be supported (Joos 2002). It will be analysed which trade-offs are addressed in the policy debates and which gaps persist in the debate.

## **5.1 Germany: Demographic changes and economic growth**

The reform of family policy in Germany, with the introduction of “Elterngeld” as well as the increasing expansion of care for children under the age of three marks a paradigm shift away from the formerly dominant traditional or modernised male breadwinner model towards childcare from early on as a public or shared responsibility (BMFSFJ 2006). It needs to be explained how these changes were politically feasible and justified. In the German context, a successful re-framing of family policy and childcare from as a „soft“ policy for gender equality to a “hard policy” fostering economic growth can be observed during the second term of office of the red-green government. As some researchers argue, the main policy driver for family policy reform in Germany has been the demographic change (Auth 2007; Leitner 2007).

The increasing attention on demographic issues has been fuelled by a dominant public debate on low birth rates, a fear of the “dying nation”, as well as the economic costs involved in the demographic changes, especially through the rising costs for the pension insurance (Berger/Kahlert 2006; Auth 2007). Butterwegge (2006) even constitutes a “demographisation of social problems” in Germany, which means that issue of social distributions of wealth is obscured through a discourse on a “generational conflict” and a polarisation between families and childless citizens. This polarization is reflected in a public debate on “egoistic” career women on one side, who, for the sake of their career, refrain from having children, and mothers on the other side, who pay the price for reproduction of society through career breaks and income loss. Some authors in the debate blame the declining birthrate as one late effect on women’s liberation, indirectly mourning after a traditional division of gender roles (Bolz 2006, Schirmacher 2006). This discourse was mostly prominent in the public debate between 2004 – 2006 and not so much in policy-making. This conservative and backward oriented argument, however, shows the utmost importance of the demographic debate as a driver in the German discourse on family policy.

In the political sphere, there has been a growing a re-thematisation of pro-natalist policy in the context of family policy since 2002. The issue of pro-natalist policy had been a taboo in post-war family policy due to the racial pro- and anti-natalist policies during the Nazi period and the second world war that the democratic West-Germany wanted to distance itself from (Willenbacher 2007). Since Renate Schmidt became minister for family affairs in 2002, the

demographic issue was put on the agenda as new aim of family policy in the social democratic party (Interview Mackroth).

It has been used as an argument for reform, that the “old” family policy supporting the male breadwinner model was based on out-dated gender roles. This was seen to make women refrain from having children, since they have to take a decision between career and family due to lacking reconciliation policies. Consequently, the modernisation of family policy should enable the reconciliation of work and family life according to the life choices of couples and families (Sachverständigenkommission 2005). Reform is considered as necessary, since, as the expert commission on the family notes, the low birth rate can be traced back to the fact that “family policy on the national, Laender- and local level has much too long ignored the fundamental changes of economic, social and cultural patterns in Germany” (Bertram 2006: 8; *Translation A.R.*).

The foremost aim is raising the birthrate up to the level of “desired children”, which lies around 1.7 per woman (Bomsdorf 2005) and has risen to 2.2 in recent surveys. Through the use of the demographic argument, a re-framing of family policy from a “soft” issue on equal opportunities and enabling women’s labour market participation to a “hard” issue can be observed between the years 2002 and 2005. This was used as an explicit political strategy in order to increase the political weight of family policy (Ristau 2005; Interview Mackroth). Instead of “just” enabling mothers’ employment, family policy and childcare specifically is regarded as fostering economic growth, stabilizing the social security systems and thus making the welfare state “sustainable” (Sachverständigenkommission 2005). The recent reforms stand in the context of a new political and normative framework called “sustainable family policy”.

Sustainability in this context means first of all the “effectiveness” of policy through strategic setup and consequent scientific monitoring and policy evaluation. Secondly, it means that the society should be able to sustain itself. Generally speaking, the commission on the seventh family report maps out the objectives as such: “The aim of sustainable family policy is to create a social, economic and political framework which enables the future generation to invest in the development and education of children, to practise generational solidarity and to interpret care for others as part of their own life perspective.” (Sachverständigenkommission 2005: 427; *Translation A.R.*). This issue is linked with the economic and social aspects of sustainability – safeguarding human capital and social integration. In this document, the idea of human capital investment is also taken up. The sustainable family policy is measured according to the following indicators (Sachverständigenkommission 2005; Ristau-Winker 2005): a birth rate of at least 1.7 children per women in the medium-term perspective, better reconciliation of work and family, lower poverty rates of children through enabling both parent’s employment, higher levels of education, especially through the improvement of early childhood education and care as well as strengthening competence of parents in upbringing of

their children in order to insure a good child development. These aims constitute a clear break with a conservative breadwinner model where the women is mainly responsible for childcare and might be working part time. However, there are some contradictory elements remaining at the policy level which support the male breadwinner family – such as the tax splitting system which subsidizes traditional role models.

The main drivers of this process of re-framing was the Ministry for Family affairs with the unit on family policy, which followed this re-framing as an explicit political campaign using scientific studies to back up the political arguments (Interview Mackroth). During these years, several scientific studies were commissioned by the ministry in order to prove the economic effectiveness of family policy measures in order to enhance the reconciliation of work and family life of men and women and especially the macro-economic efficiency of sustainable family policy and a better reconciliation of work and family life (Rürup/Gruescu 2003; Vester 2004; BMFSFJ 2005; Bomsdorf 2005; Prognos 2005; Bertelsmann 2007, IDW 2007).

Rürup/Gruescu (2003) argue that in order to achieve a sustainable economic development, the state had to ensure higher birth rates as well as higher labour market participation of women. Many of the studies work with international comparisons to other European Countries that show a better economic performance coupled with a higher birthrate and labour market participation of mothers – especially the Nordic countries and France are popular examples. Another study shows through international comparison that other European countries with a good reconciliation policies and a high women's employment rate have also higher birth rates (Bertram et al. 2005). Even though the Barcelona target did not play a role in expanding childcare places for children under the age of three in Germany, the international comparison and policy learning played an important part in the re-framing process. The message is: “good reconciliation policies ‘work’ elsewhere”. Further studies used econometric modelling to show the short-term impact public of investment in childcare in the economy and at the local level. They argued that childcare would create high rates of return and “save” welfare state expenditure in other areas, since it would create new employment opportunities, leading to higher revenue from taxes and social security contributions (Spiess et al. 2002; BMFSFJ 2005).

Consequently, extending childcare is first of all regarded as a strategy for economic growth and secondly as a social investment strategy beneficial for child development. The argument that spending in family policy should not be regarded as costs but indeed as investments which will pay off in the future, was also taken on in several studies which prove the “effectiveness” of family friendly policies for the whole economy as well as on the firm level (Prognos 2005; IDW 2007). For the “business case” of reconciliation policy, there is also an argument that the human capital of highly qualified women is “lost” through long family leaves, which leads to a future and already prevailing shortage of highly skilled workers. In this case, the economic aspects of sustainability are highly stressed.

The general argument is that family policy should enable reconciliation of work and family in order to stabilize human capital: on the one hand, highly qualified women should be retained in the labour market at the same time. On the other hand, especially the highly qualified women have less children – through good reconciliation policy they should be encouraged to have children *and* stay in the labour force. The issue of the safeguarding of human capital is therefore twofold: in the present, highly qualified women are required as workers, and for the future, the children of highly qualified parents are required as human capital. Interestingly in contrast to the English debate, the fertility or the educational achievement of lower educated women is hardly mentioned in the debate.

This hints at an underlying assumption, that “investment in children’s education” is still very much considered as a responsibility of parents in the early years. In the German education system, educated parents “invest” more in their children, which achieve significantly better educational outcomes than parents from lower educated children (Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen 2002; OECD 2003, 2006). If especially highly qualified women remain childless, there might be a fear that “human capital” will be missing in the future even more. Instead of addressing the shortcomings of the educational system, however, the question of significantly increasing the “Frühförderung” (early fostering) of children from all social backgrounds in order to improve social inclusion, is hardly an issue in the German debate on childcare for children under the age of three (Interview Jurczyk). Consequently, the second – educational – function of childcare was still not dominant until 2007, along with the social and economic aspects of sustainability which follow from it.

In Germany, the pedagogical debate calling for a better integration of education and care as well as the expansion of early childcare places started after 2000, after the so-called “Pisa-Shock”, when the low performance of German pupils in the international comparison of the OECD led to a debate about the necessity to abandon the half-day schooling system, which is however highly contested politically (Gottschall/Hageman 2002; BMFSFJ 2005b). Furthermore, the federal states which are responsible for education in the German system of federalism, started to develop specific curricula which integrated for the first time education of children age 3-6, and to understand Kindergarten more as an institution preparing for school and increasing school-readiness – however there is a lack of significant research in Germany due to a different pedagogical understanding of childhood which had been predominant since the 1970s (Joos 2002). Early childhood is regarded mostly as a play-oriented phase in life, and there is a reluctance to conceptualize an “instrumental” view on childhood based on human capital or social investment approaches. Within the debate on the PISA-studies for example, few connections were made to the issue of ECEC for children under the age of three and social exclusion (Interview Jurczyk). In contrast to an educational understanding of the early years, many parents prefer the care for their children to take place in a more family-like environment which they consider to be more protective. Consequently, the increase of childminders or family day-care has been pushed as one element within the

TAG (Jurczyk 2005), since it provides a more protected and private atmosphere. Also, this was a cheaper solution than opening so many new crèches.

However, there is a parallel debate on the necessity for increasing the quality of care through childminders and family day-care as well (Fthenakis 2004). The TAG legislates that private childminders will receive minimum social security as well as some basic training (BMFSFJ 2004). The concepts developed for an educational curriculum for childminders developed by the German Youth Institute (DJI) are far more extensive than the minimum training requirements implemented in the Act (Fthenakis 2004). However for the first time, this formerly mostly unregulated form of childcare receives some regulation. Parallel to the pedagogic debate, there is an opening up of public funding to private market providers. In the case of the TAG this applies to childminders, in recent debates on the extension of childcare this also applies to private crèches.

There are some documents addressing the question of quality in early childhood education and a more integrated approach of education and care from birth. One is edited by Fthenakis (2003a, b) for the federal ministry for family affairs “Auf den Anfang kommt es an” (The beginning matters). This book argues that in order to secure future human capital development and to enable children to cope with the uncertainties of the knowledge society, childcare before school age, especially before the age of three, should focus more on education. In the current situation in Germany, mostly children from highly educated backgrounds receive the good support in their development, while for many other children the years with the possibilities of fostering child development are undervalued. Fthenakis (2003b) criticises the lack of curricula and educational standards – which is due in Germany to the high responsibility of the qualified childcare worker in the childcare institution – as well as the long reluctance of pedagogues to regulate this field. Consequently, he calls for higher standards and the development of curricula for education below school age.

In the scientific pedagogical debate is a recognition that raising children today requires a more integrated framework of education and care. The twelfth report on children and youth states, that the socialisation of children today requires a joint effort of families as well as public educational institutions due to changing conditions of raising children (e.g. changing family structures). It calls for a closer co-operation and for a new-formation of the triad of education, care and socialisation of children, and a higher public responsibility for all three areas. According to this report, all children from the age of two should receive the right to a public care place from 2008, and according to the report from 2010 all children from birth should have a legal right to a childcare place (BMFSFJ 2005b: 349).

Despite this expert discourse on the necessary integration of education and care, the debate remains largely on the issue of the quantity of places. The specialist discourse on raising the quality of the provision and enhancing educational outcomes for children has hardly been taken up in the public and political debate until 2007. There are merely some statements from

time to time of the necessity of increasing the quality of education for the early years' provision. The political problem underlying this separation of the quantity and the quality issue is that the quality is regulated in the federal states and not at the national level. As mentioned, the federal states have, since 2003, introduced federal educational plans, however these mostly cover education from the age of three only.

To sum up the discursive shift which has taken place in Germany mainly since 2000: It could be observed that childcare for small children was re-framed from a context of women's equal opportunities and turned into a "hard" issue. Childcare is now considered to be supporting economic growth and human capital through two factors: Firstly, a better reconciliation of work and family should help to increase the birth rate of women, especially highly educated women and retain them in the labour market as well. Secondly, with the expansion of childcare places women's labour market participation will increase through the creation of new service sector jobs, which leads to less unemployment, more revenue for the state through higher taxes and higher contributions to the social insurances. These issues have been established through scientific evidence – commissioned by the family ministry. The studies work mostly with international comparisons in order to prove the positive effect of good reconciliation policies on the birthrate and economic growth. This tendency has been criticised as the "economisation of family policy" by some researchers (Auth 2007), while others see it as a strategic manoeuvre in order to realize political aims (Leitner 2007a). Anyhow, it can be stated that in the discourse, the economic aspects of sustainability which will be increased through the extension of childcare are stressed over the social aspects of poverty prevention and social inclusion.

The question of the educational value of early childhood education and care is rarely mentioned in this context, although there are specialist debates on early years pedagogy, but these cannot be considered to be a policy driver so far. There have been certain steps towards a better integration of education and care for children from three years of age through the establishment of Länderbildungspläne, federal curricula for education from the age of three during this period as well as through the introduction of minimal training for private childminders. However, education for children below the age of three is still not an issue in the general debate and there is hardly any research on it. This might be the next step as some recent studies on the educational value of ECEC show (Bertelsmann 2008).

## **5.2 England: Tackling child poverty and social investment**

In England the main and first driver for the expansion of childcare was the aim to fight child poverty and enable parents and mothers to return to employment (Ball/Vincent 2005; Sylva/Pugh 2005; Smith 2007). This driver can be seen as a certain continuity of liberal welfare state ideology, since poverty prevention and targeted policies have always been a

justification for state intervention in the liberal model (Esping-Andersen 2000; Clasen 2005). In this context, the target of eradicating child poverty is the main driver of the early years services. The political strategy against child poverty works in two dimensions: Firstly, there has been a strong attempt of getting unemployed parents back into work and increasing the female employment rate. As employment has been found to be the most effective poverty prevention (OECD 2005; European Commission 2006), parents' employment is regarded as the first step towards the eradication of child poverty. Secondly, through social inclusive programmes targeted at disadvantaged children, the poverty and welfare-dependence cycle should be broken over the lifecourse of children.

The expansion of childcare is one element of a welfare-to-work-policy targeting especially low-income parents and getting lone mothers back into employment. The idea to support self-sufficiency of parents instead of welfare-dependency; which presumes the notion of "dependency as evil" and a failure of the individual in the first place (Bacchi 1999). This idea is deeply rooted in the liberal welfare state idea. The target set by the Labour government are ambitious: halving child poverty (on the basis of 1999) and bringing 70% of single parents in employment by 2010. This aim links in with the active labour market policy programme "New Deal for Lone Parents" introduced in 1998. Consequently, the childcare subsidies introduced are targeted mainly at low-income parents (respectively at parents from disadvantaged communities in order to avoid social stigmatization), who are absent from the labour market. One reason for this programme is that the availability and costs for childcare constitute a real barrier to employment.

Public subsidies for childcare for children aged 0-3 are granted in the form of the working tax credit for low-income parents and the establishment of subsidized childcare facilities in the most disadvantaged communities (NNI; children's centres). The subsidies are targeted at children from disadvantaged backgrounds only. This approach is called "progressive universalism" (DFES 2004): while the government is providing some universal provision – for children from 3-5 only – the public support is aiming at those who need it most. This targeting goes along with a policy tradition of a liberal welfare state which provides support for the poor in the first place, while parents with middle and upper incomes are not considered to be needy. Nevertheless gaps in the affordability of childcare remain for low-income parents since working tax credits only cover one part of the childcare costs. A Study on middle-class parents in London argues that the question of affordability persists an issue even for parents with higher income (Ball/Vincent 2005; Bryson et al. 2007).

The second aspect of the expansion of childcare for the under-threes is the aim of "giving children the best possible start in life" (DFES 2004). In the context of the English policy paradigm considering social inclusion, the connection between education and care is much more relevant than in Germany. By targeting children from disadvantaged backgrounds and the aim of "giving children the best possible start in life", there is a need to legitimate the



public policy development through its effectiveness for child development and its outcome for social inclusion over the life course. Consequently, the research studies which are cited in the public and scientific debate show that children from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from ECEC, especially the access to good quality care before the age of three (Feinstein 2003; Sylva et al. 2005). However, and this is also a difference to the German policy discourse, they also show some disagreement and display a greater variety of research results.

As it was argued earlier, the idea follows the logic of childcare policy as social investment in children and especially of children “in need”. The naming of the programmes, e.g. “Sure start” or “Every child matters” is telling; it evokes the image that the state has to rescue children from socially deprived backgrounds and the risk of neglect or abuse. The policy is “pre-emptive” insofar, as the idea is to help parents in difficult life circumstances as well as to invest early in today’s children in order to prevent low labour market attainment, crime and antisocial behaviour in the future. One influential summary report on the effectiveness of early years intervention for disadvantaged children concludes: “The evidence on childcare in the first three years for disadvantaged children indicates that high quality childcare can produce benefits for cognitive, language and social development. Low quality childcare produces either no benefit or negative effects. (...) Studies into adulthood indicate that this educational success is followed by increased success in employment, social integration and sometimes reduced criminality” (Melhuish 2004: 4f.). Consequently, economic and social sustainability through human capital development and long-term lower welfare state expenditures are the focus of attention.

With this evidence on the long-term effectiveness of the policy, the welfare state intervention is justified in a liberal paradigm. The political aims of the programmes are directly linked to social inclusion outcomes; for example in the Children Act 2004 and in the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities have to work towards closing the gap between children from various backgrounds (House of Commons 2004; 2005). The programmes are aiming at better outcomes for children as well as for their parents (La Valle et al. 2007). Generally speaking, not only in childcare, policy making in England was generally guided by ideas of “new public management” and of “evidence based policy making”, which establishes the idea that political decisions are based on scientific evidence on “what works” (Glass 2001). The idea is to test the effectiveness and efficiency of policies before its wide implementation. Therefore, when extending childcare with the aim of improving social inclusion, the question is which policies are most effective in tackling social exclusion and fostering child development.

Interestingly, in England no studies that use a European comparison are used; but studies learning from other liberal welfare states, especially the United States and Australia. Policy learning was institutionalised through copying programmes such as Sure Start, which was modelled after the U.S. programme “Headstart” which showed to have very positive effects (Interview Glass). This can be understood in the context of a liberal welfare state which is

opposed to public support of social services for the wide population as it is the case in the Scandinavian welfare states. Or, to put it the other way around there is a fear that the people would want “Swedish childcare places and British taxes” (Glass 2005) – two things that do not go together. In the frame of a liberal welfare state, the need public intervention as such requires legitimation.

In order to justify public intervention in the area of childcare, the effectiveness of this policy for the development of children and for combating social exclusion needs to be proved. The political and scientific debate relied heavily on a variety of scientific studies which investigated the effect of ECEC on the development of children from disadvantaged backgrounds: Firstly, studies on brain development were prominent, secondly, studies which looked at the long-term effect of ECEC on the readiness for school, educational attainment of children and its effect in later life were used (Melhuish 2004; Sylva/Pugh 2005). Especially research results were popular which showed the long-term-effect such as lower unemployment, lower crime rates etc. (Sylva/Pugh 2005: 13). Before this background, the longitudinal EPPE study was commissioned which followed children with and without ECEC until their first school years was issued, which is the most extensive study on the effects of early education throughout the life course in the EU (Smith 2007).

The longitudinal studies (EPPE) showed a positive effect of ECEC from one year of age on the development of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, however, only if the quality of childcare was good. Studies from the National Education Institute in London showed that performance differences could be detected as early as at 22 months of age (Feinstein 2003). Consequently, the concern on the quality of education received high consideration in the English debate. There is a high concern that low quality childcare has no or a negative effect on child’s development. For example, when the evaluation of the NNI was presented in April 2007; the result taken up by the media was the fact that children with long hours in day care showed higher rates of aggressive behaviour (Interview La Valle; Smith et al. 2007). This marks a shift from a debate which had primarily focused on mothers’ employment and enabling reconciliation of work and family life in the first years to a debate on the quality of education which is required in order to achieve the estimated outcomes. However, it is still argued, that instead of producing “negative” effects on children through day care, children should rather stay longer with their mothers. This argument is used to criticise the “economic pressure” which forces English mothers into employment when their children are still young. Consequently, in the later documents, as the “Ten-Year Strategy for Childcare” (DFES 2004), the government emphasises that the policy should enable “choice” of parents. As a consequence, alongside with the expansion of daycare, the rights to parental leave and the payments are gradually extended.

However, there is a tension remaining on the question who should benefit primarily from childcare – parents, because they have better conditions for reconciling work and family, or

children, since they receive higher quality support? In the policy documents (DfES 2004) and in the government officials declarations (Interview Bennet), the two policy aims are considered not to be contradictory, but as reinforcing each other. However, there is a great concern that childcare might not be beneficial for children, which hints at an implicit gender logic that the mother's care is after all best for the child, while external care can only be "second best". However, this logic is never explicitly outspoken, but it is dealt with in the scientific discourse on the effects of care on the social, cognitive and emotional development of children, with a focus of public intervention for children "at risk". For children from middle or higher educated parents, the emphasis remains on "choice" – which effectively does not exist for most parents due to the economic pressure to be in the labour market.

The quality issue, however, is also framed in a skewed manner: As Sylva/Pugh (2005) as well as Smith et al. (2007) note from the long-term evaluation of different childcare programmes, the highest quality of education can be found in public sector settings, while private and voluntary sector providers have lower qualified staff and sometimes poor conditions of provision. One consequence could be, if the major concern was indeed to raise the quality of childcare, to provide more funding for public-sector-based high quality day care. However, in the liberal understanding the public sector can only provide services itself if there is no provision through the market or voluntary sector; and this is legislated also in the Childcare Act (House of Commons 2006). The provision of childcare is to be guaranteed by a "mixed economy of welfare", which consists mostly of market based day care centres. Consequently, increasing the quality of childcare through increasing public service sector provision is not an option within the liberal framework, because the public is not willing to pay higher tax-rates required for this kind of expansion (Interview Lavalley; Glass 2005).

As a consequence, the government tries to raise quality within the market logic by two means: Subsidy for training as well as a tighter prescription for the care itself. The training for the workforce will be subsidized through the "Transformation Fund", which is again, a small and limited programme and its effectiveness remains to be proved (House of Commons 2005). The second measure for increasing the quality standards is the "Birth to Three Matters" curriculum which includes detailed guidance for practitioners and has been made quite detailed in order to overcome lacking qualification within the workforce. Especially the Birth to three matters curriculum for the early years has been heavily contested due to different views on child development and early years pedagogy (Interview Blackmann-Woods; Interview Loughton; see also chapter 4).

Generally speaking, the policy driver in England has been mostly tackling child poverty and social inclusion. There is a stronger emphasis on the educational value of childcare, especially the outcomes for disadvantaged children at which the subsidized programmes are targeted. There have been extensive scientific studies on early years child development and the effects

of political programmes as one element of “evidence based policy making” by the Labour government.

### 5.3 Comparison of policy drivers and political discourses

**Table 4: Summary of the policy drivers for childcare**

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>England</b>
Drivers and construction of argument	<p>Childcare was turned into a “hard topic”</p> <p>Low fertility rates</p> <p>Helping reconciliation for high qualified women that restrain from having children</p> <p>Economic growth policy</p> <p>Partly: social inclusion</p>	<p>Combating child poverty and social inclusion</p> <p>Economic policy: welfare to work</p> <p>Social investment strategy for disadvantaged children</p> <p>Educational outcomes</p>
Links with other welfare reforms	<p>Links between labour market policy and childcare were established but not enacted.</p> <p>Childcare for 0-3 is still not regarded as part of the educational system by most federal states</p>	<p>Strong link with welfare-to-work-policy (financing through Tax credit) and social inclusion policy (Sure Start)</p> <p>Strong educational impetus (Birth to three matters curriculum)</p>
Role of research	<p>Instrumental use of research, commissioning of special studies to support the government’s arguments in the reframing process</p>	<p>Emphasis on “evidence based policy making” – use of evaluation studies in order to test the effectiveness and efficiency of policy. More independent research results which may contradict the policy aims.</p>

In both countries, childcare for the early years has been expanded and this has been justified through a process of reframing of childcare. In both countries, childcare was considered to be merely a “women’s issue” and not as important for the sustainability of the welfare state until the late 1990s. Since the turn of the millennium, childcare has increasingly been considered as a vital element of welfare state reform in both countries which is considered as a solution to a variety of problems. The first line of argument for the extension of childcare in both countries is the better reconciliation of work and family life and the assumption that mothers will increase their employment participation. This is considered to lead to higher economic growth, lower welfare dependency, higher tax revenue and social security contributions. The new framing considers childcare as a productive factor in social policy, a “one fits-all”-strategy which is to solve all kinds of problems in the welfare state.

The difference between the two countries lies in the main target group of the expansion as well as the central aims of the strategies. In Germany, mostly higher qualified women have been targeted, since they are missing as “human capital” in the labour market if they have children and they are also the ones that should increase their fertility rate. Furthermore, the expansion of childcare should lead to an increasing economic growth through a higher labour market participation of mothers and the creation of new jobs in childcare. These will be created highly subsidized mostly in the public sector and opened up to private crèches as well, but also with private childminders, and also benefit lower educated women. In England, the fertility is not so much of an issue – probably due to a effectively higher fertility rate of 1.7 children per women. The primary aim in England is to increase mothers’ employment rates in order to eradicate child poverty. Consequently, the childcare policy is mainly targeted at parents from disadvantaged communities. In both cases however, the primary aim of the expansion of childcare is to improve the reconciliation of work and family life, and to promote mothers’ employment which is increasingly considered to be an economic necessity for the economy as a whole and/or for the economic sustainability of the individual households.

The underlying assumption in both countries concerning the “reconciliation” aspect is that if there is enough affordable childcare available, mothers will take it up and increase their employment participation. In both countries it is argued, that there are still gaps of flexibility and appropriateness of the childcare offered. Present studies in Germany, where only about 30% of mothers work when the children are under the age of three (Bothfeld et al. 2006), show that indeed a larger percentage of mothers with young children would like to join the labour force if suitable childcare was available (Beckmann 2002; Stöbe-Blossey 2006). In England, however, the picture is much more complex: Considering that the factual employment of mothers with children under the age of three is much higher – around 60% - some mothers would like to increase their hours, while some would like to reduce their working time.

Considering the second aim of the educational aspect of childcare we can see a different framing in the two countries: While the quality of childcare for children under three is less an issue in Germany, it is of high importance in the English policy discourse. The reason is that educational outcomes for disadvantaged children are a high political priority under the liberal paradigm. The discourse is concentrated on social investment in children, especially for those at risk. Results of longitudinal studies show that the quality of childcare is essential for a positive outcome for this group. Consequently, we can see a stronger link between education and family policy in the English childcare debate. One reason why this issue has not been debated prominently in Germany are different pedagogical concepts which claim that children should discover their own world and a reluctance of an “instrumental” educational approach which led to a lacking tradition of research in early child development. Another reason could be that in contrast to the English case, since a large proportion of the childcare is offered

through the public sector and the staff is generally qualified, there is a large trust in the competence and discretion of the skilled child care worker. However, there is also a debate in Germany that up-skilling of the childcare workforce (more university degrees) is required. In contrast to this, in the English case the high emphasis on the lack of quality and the requirements for a national curriculum hint at the fact that there is a huge gap between the required quality of provision and the reality, which has been characterized by low skill of the workforce, high turnover rates in staff as well as a low sustainability of provider.

In both countries we can see, however, that the re-framing has been based on a set of scientific studies whose results are used for the political argument. In Germany there is a high emphasis on the increasing fertility and economic growth, in England the scientific studies “prove” the effectiveness of investment through higher employment rates of lone parents and long-term educational benefits for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Furthermore, in both countries, the “effectiveness” of family policy has been stressed within the two paradigms of “sustainable family policy” as well as “evidence based policy making” which was a general commitment in English policymaking since the Blair government. The increasing role of research hints at the requirement of “hard facts” to back up the reframing of policy issues and the paradigm change involved. In both countries, the emphasis is that the policy shift is not a matter of family values, but of economic and educational “necessity”. In this respect the connected changes of gender models are somehow obscured, which might, if discussed openly, lead to more political upheaval in both countries than it could be observed so far.

## **6. Conclusion**

At first sight, there are parallel developments in Germany and England: in both countries, childcare for children was extended firstly for children between 3-6 in the 1990s and since 2000 especially, a rapid and ongoing extension for children under the age of three can be observed. This development marks significant shifts in both countries, since the two welfare states previously did not take on responsibility for childcare which was understood as a private matter of parents, respectively of mothers. This paradigm was based on an underlying family model of the male breadwinner and female homemaker. Linked with this gender model was an understanding of the upbringing of children as a family responsibility and not as part of the educational system. Education in both countries is a universal provision financed through the tax system.

Consequently, the current changes mark significant shift in the two countries which has been analysed in this report, however to different extents. In Germany, the provision of childcare constitutes a paradigmatic shift due to a break with the conservative welfare model and a move towards a Social democratic model since the state actively engages in provision and financing of childcare. In England, the changes can be explained within the frames of the liberal welfare model, since the state's role remains limited as regulating the market, not engaging in extensive provision of childcare as public services and targeting subsidies to low-income families only.

However, in both countries, a re-framing of childcare from a context of women's equality to a "hard", economic issue could be observed. In both countries, childcare services have been supported in order to enable a better reconciliation of work and family life for mothers will be beneficial for the overall development of society and economy. However, these discursive shifts and the new meanings attached to childcare vary significantly according to the national traditions and welfare regimes.

In this process, policy diffusion through supranational institutions such as the EU or the OECD did not play a significant role. However, international benchmarking studies in the German case and policy learning from other liberal welfare states in the English case are important factors as sources of ideas on which instruments proved to be successful elsewhere. However, the selection of countries with potential policy templates is selective and leads to specific paths of policy learning that are also determined from by welfare traditions.

Furthermore, some elements of continuity can be observed: In Germany, the main target group are middle class and more highly qualified women which receive the most support. This element still "fits" to a conservative approach. However, there is a strong policy shift away from the conservative family model which directly supported motherhood through payments for care (although other conservative countries such as France and Belgium also have high levels of childcare provision). There is now a move towards a dual provision of

childcare, with the establishment of childcare as a legal right for children from the age of one. The provision of childcare constitutes a “mixture” between a “third way” or liberal market approach and an egalitarian approach as Mahon (2002) describes it; childcare can be provided partly through the public sector and partly through private provision of childminders in the provision.

However, in the German case, no strong link established so far between family and education policy so far. Despite experts’ debates, childcare for children under the age of three is not considered as part of the educational system. The federal educational curricula mostly include only childcare from the age of three. On the one hand, there is still a strong trust in the “qualification” and the discretion of the childcare worker who is employed in public sector institutions, consequently the “quality” of provision is considered less of an issue. On the other hand, childminders provide care in a more family-like setting, for those parents who consider the educational aspects less of an issue – although some the childminders should indeed receive some training. This division is still deeply rooted in the German culture – apparently, the separation between education and care is difficult to overcome. On the other hand, it is also backed by the institutional division of divided competences between the federal states and the national level which cannot set educational standards. Consequently the question of “quality of childcare” remains a gap in the German political discourse on childcare.

In England, the main target group for the publicly supported childcare are mothers and children from disadvantaged areas. This targeting also “fits” a liberal paradigm which is mostly concerned with poverty relief. One of the primary aims of the expansion of childcare is namely the eradication of child poverty and the public funding is tightly targeted at this aim. In contrast to Germany, the child development of the targeted children as such is also a political aim which has been followed up in scientific evaluations. Here, the “investment in children”-paradigm is linked with a “Third Way”-model to welfare provision. However, large gaps remain in the matter of quality of childcare, which is supposed to be “cured” not via better services provision through the public sector, but through tighter regulation and inspection of the “mixed economy of welfare” as well as through limited public investments for training of the childcare workforce. In the English context, a political claim to expand childcare through public sector services remains unthinkable.

There has been a “rapprochement” of education and family policy in both countries, however, much more marked in England than in Germany. The publicly subsidized childcare services are targeted mainly at children from disadvantaged backgrounds, there is a national educational curriculum for childcare below the age of three and the “outcomes” for children are constantly evaluated. This can be read as part of the liberal tradition which fits with better with an “investment in children”-approach. But finally, there is a contradiction or a dilemma for the future: in England as well as in Germany, education is considered to be a universal



public good. If childcare for children under the age of three was to become part of the education system, the provision should be provided free or with highly subsidized fees. This also remains a gap especially in the English system of service provision.

## 7. Literature

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