

# Bildung, Erziehung [education] and care in German early childhood settings – spotlights on current discourses

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**Abstract:** In German there is a long tradition of institutionalized daycare center-based early education. These institutions are concerned with *Bildung, Erziehung und Betreuung* – the education and care of children up to six years of age. Education and childrearing as well as care are all important but separate processes in German early childhood settings. Looking back, this theoretical division has a very long tradition. However, the energized public, political and professional discussions about the PISA results at the beginning of the 21st century led to *Bildung* and ECEC settings becoming increasingly important. Taking into account this complex and difficult historical development it is interesting to have a critical look at the dominant programmatic frames that characterize the German ECEC system nowadays: *Bildung* and quality of early education. The former double motif of education (*Bildung und Erziehung*) on the one hand and care (*Betreuung*) on the other hand remains an important aspect of German ECEC practices. Nevertheless, in the political arena and professional discourses *Erziehung* and *Betreuung* have been pushed into the background, to remain in symbolic form. *Bildung* and quality of early education seem to be in the spotlight. We will show how those programmatic frames have taken shape and are manifested in early childhood programs and projects.

**Keywords:** *Bildung, Erziehung, Betreuung*, education, care, German ECEC settings, childrearing, quality, institutional change.

## Introduction

In Germany there is a long tradition of institutionalized daycare within which elementary early years pedagogy is practised. This tradition is shaped by a specific understanding of education and care and the function of public daycare and education. The institutionalized daycare system is broadly changing, with the idea of *Bildung* acquiring a new relevance. Daycare facilities in Germany are “the biggest and continually growing area of child and youth services” (Betz & Neumann, 2013, p. 143; authors’ translation) and follow the traditional German triad of *Bildung, Erziehung und Betreuung* [education and care] for children from birth to age six. The following article analyzes these changes and explores the hypothesis that there is a new relation between *Bildung*, education (*Erziehung*) and care (*Betreuung*).

## ***Bildung, Erziehung and Betreuung* – The German Understanding of Education and Care**

The distinction made in German between *Bildung, Erziehung* and *Betreuung* [education and care] is linked to the notion that daycare facilities traditionally had a double function, providing on the one hand *Bildung* and *Erziehung* [education] and on the other hand *Betreuung* [care] (Reyer, 2006). This philosophical distinction between *Bildung* (in the Humboldtian and Piagetian sense of self-formation, self-organization and self-development) and *Erziehung* (the cultural conditions of education and the adult’s work to educate and raise a child) forms the basis of how education has traditionally been understood in Germany. In Anglo-American contexts the term education combines the meanings of cultivating and educating oneself and being raised and educated by parents and teachers. In Germany *Bildung, Erziehung* [education] and care [*Betreuung*] are traditionally theorized separately, whilst their interdependency is reinforced. To understand the recent changes in German early educational and care settings, it is necessary to reconstruct the emergence and significance of this differentiation.

Once can trace the way in which the terms *Bildung und Erziehung* [education] are understood in Germany back to the Enlightenment. The transition away from the corporative social system of the Middle Ages was associated with far-reaching changes and the emergence of traditional role models and positions. It focused on a better future for society instead of the afterlife, and enhanced progressive thinking on social investment. Religion and Christian values were gradually replaced through the emphasis on human rationality and the notion that all humans are autonomous. “It gave rise to the idea

of the future optimization of society by following a path along which people underwent (mass) optimization through *Bildung und Erziehung* [education]" (Knoll, 2013, p. 22; authors' translation). This marked the point at which *Bildung und Erziehung*, became associated with different aims, conceptually shifting towards the paradox of social utility and individual development.

Philanthropy influenced the German contextualization of early childhood, childcare and education. The educational reforms between 1770 and 1800 laid the foundations for responsibility for *Bildung*, education and care lying with the mother (Bühler-Niederberger, 2013). The efforts of the aspiring artisans and craftsmen movement were correspondingly acknowledged (Schmid, 2014). In the mid-19th century when social questions were raised about the inferior conditions under which the working class were working, living and raising their children, daycare centers became socially relevant as emergency relief facilities [*Nothilfeeinrichtung*] for working class families. With the expansion of the workforce, both parents being in employment, the rural emigration and associated social problems in the cities, these institutions served to prevent the moral decline of future working class generations. They conformed to a very specific idea of *Bildung und Erziehung* [education] and care requirements. It is important to emphasize the coherence between *Bildung* and *Erziehung* in this context. The education of the working class meant adequately preparing children for later employment in the capitalist labour market. It was intended to produce a workforce in a controlled way and to prevent child neglect among working-class families. Morality, discipline and the ability to work were the main goals of the concepts of *Bildung und Erziehung*. The welfare aspects were introduced through the youth and welfare law from the beginning of the 1920s, which located responsibility for the institutions of early child education and care in the administrative sphere of the youth welfare system (social pedagogy). After the Second World War, Germany was divided in two. The German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) became two separate countries with their own systems of education and social security. In this article the focus is on developments in the FRG, because after the German reunification in 1990 it became the reference point for all the political and administrative reforms. In the 1970s, political attention focused on early years *Bildung und Erziehung*. It was portrayed as the right of every child, regardless of social class. This was connected with discussions by the Education Council about recognizing that ECEC should be the first level of the German educational system. However, during the political consolidation of the 1980s this requirement was postponed and children's daycare centers in Germany remained administratively assigned to the youth welfare system. This was

encouraged by the PISA results at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when fractious discussions triggered a broad public and political debate about the relevance of *Bildung* and the conditions of public ECEC settings. There were also political, juridical, and scientific discussions, and the value of “*Bildung* from the very beginning” was considered in the social and education sciences as well as in professional settings and political arenas, where *Bildung* was often linked with improving efficiencies and methods of quality development.

Acknowledging this historical pathway provides an interesting insight into the programmatic frames that characterized the German ECEC system nowadays: *Bildung* and quality. Although the double focus on education (*Bildung und Erziehung*) on the one hand and care (*Betreuung*) on the other remains an important aspect of German ECEC everyday practices, but the public discourse on it has changed radically. In political and professional discourses *Erziehung* and care are pushed to the background, where they are now symbolic, while *Bildung* and quality now occupy center-stage. In the next part of our analysis we show how those programmatic frames are implemented and manifested in specific early childhood programs and projects. First, we want to point out the characteristics of German ECEC. Secondly, we reconstruct the programmatic frames of *Bildung* and quality. This programmatic change is clearly important in the legitimation of different national ECEC programs and projects.

## Field characteristics of German ECEC

To understand the shift in the German ECEC system, it is important to look back at the historical conditions of its formation and the origins of institutionalized daycare. Above all, early years pedagogy is characterized first, by an emphasis on the importance of the early years for child development, second, by an acknowledgment of the need for reflexive *Erziehung und Bildung* from birth, and third, the professions position between social work and pedagogy.

(1) With the emergence of developmental psychology and the general scientification of pedagogics, the early years (0-6) came to be seen as quite special, a sensitive and receptive age. The assumption that there is an enormous learning capacity in the early years points to the peculiarity of this stage (Gopnik, Kuhl & Meltzoff, 2000). Since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century neurobiological studies have corroborated and strengthened these theoretical roots (Gopnik & Kuhl & Meltzoff, 2000). At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> cen-

tury, especially in the context of “reform pedagogy” (*Reformpädagogik*), the self-activity of the child and the associated ability for self-formation began to occupy more and more of the pedagogical discourse. Later, Gerd Schäfer, an influential German education scientist, again emphasized that the early years were the most “sensitive stage” of the processes of self-formation and self-education (*Selbstbildung*), thus a distinctive early years pedagogy differing from general pedagogy and teaching methods came to be seen as indispensable (Schäfer, 2011).

Once school became compulsory for all children regardless of social background the early years were conceived of as being particularly important to preparing children for school and thus, public early years schooling with specific methods could be legitimized (Mierendorff, 2013).<sup>1</sup> The main arguments for a distinctive elementary pedagogy and the introduction of public ECEC outside existing schooling were based on the notion that babies, toddlers and very young children developed in a special and unique way that required appropriate education methods and a suitable education environment (Liegler, 2006). According to Liegler (2006), the historical development of a specific German early years pedagogy strictly separate from schooling was legitimized on the basis of the above argument. This pedagogical discourse and feature is seen as deeply rooted in German culture (Liegler, 2013; Reyer, 2006; Francke-Meyer, 2011).

(2) In close connection with the first point, the need for a conscious reflexive *Bildung und Erziehung* [education] is a further characteristic of the German ECEC sphere. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the importance of a reflexive education from birth was reinforced in the writing of Comenius (1633/1987), for example, particularly his “Informatorium der Mutterschul” [Informatorium on Nursery Schools]. These nursery schools are the first stage of a four-part learning system that was conceived of as teaching and educational guidance. Later, Friedrich Fröbel, the founder of the German kindergarten, was another pioneer of early and reflexive educational practices

<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, early education and care was seen as the duty and role of the family. Public daycare centers were established for working class families that did not meet the standards of middle class education and public care. Although because *Bildung und Erziehung* had been closely linked since the initial thinking emerged on elementary pedagogy concepts in the German Confederation from 1815 onwards and in the German Reich from 1871, education aimed at working class children was provided in the first daycare centres. Childcare facilities, known as *Kinderbewahranstalten* and evangelical schools for small children were regarded as “emergency aid” and were intended to maintain social order through the provision of a strict disciplinary education. Thus, in these contexts the terms *Bildung und Erziehung* were linked to a particular social.

and had world wide influence. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Fröbel's ideas were the corollary of the working class daycare centers based around disciplinary pedagogics and a class-based education. The innate ability to learn was to be encouraged through play and cradlesong, *Mutter- und Koselieder*, published in 1844. Mothers were to stimulate the senses of the young child from the very beginning. The kindergarten was designed to resemble a family dwelling, in which support and guidance would be offered to mothers as part of their responsibility for the child's education and upbringing (Fröbel, 1844/1984). In discussions about the need for very early reflexive *Bildung und Erziehung* the question of who was responsible was political. In the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, this task was seen as the supreme duty of the mother. The rise of the German middle class was closely linked to the normative ideal of the modern nuclear family with a strict role model – the male breadwinner model. The father was seen as belonging to the public sphere and as the breadwinner, while the mother belonged to the private sphere and was responsible for the children, care and the household. Thus, the working and reproduction spheres were quite distinct (Schmid, 2014). With the emergence of public organized, non-family center-based daycare this was also the responsibility of working women – female professional teachers. If the mother could not perform her most natural responsibility, owing to being in gainful employment, then trained female staff were to take up this role.

(3) The previous explanations are based on the third characteristic of the German ECEC field, the location between social work and the education system. These are also sociocultural and historical in character. On the one hand, there had always been public interest in a moral *Erziehung*. Different economic, political and social crises in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century caused social grievances and made the state aware of the need for certain regulatory innovations. Investing in the early years was considered beneficial to preventing future deviations right from the beginning, and in this sense a class oriented welfare motive was always dominant. On the other hand, scientific discoveries in developmental psychology and neurobiology emphasized the sensitivity of the early years and conceived of childhood as a particularly sensitive stage in *Bildung* and learning. The difficult relation between these two motivations carried through into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although early years pedagogy is nominally discussed as the first stage of the educational system, it is the responsibility of the child and youth welfare sector and thus is a sub-area of social work. ECEC today is provided by the child and youth welfare system as a supplementary aspect of the work of the family and to assist parents in educating and raising their children. So it supplements the

work of the family in raising the child, and it supports the ability of parents to be in paid employment

The above shows that there have always been difficult and complex relations between the different logics of *Bildung*, *Erziehung* and *Betreuung* in German ECEC.

## New Programmatic Frames: *Bildung* and Quality

Following on from the previous analysis of the characteristics of German ECEC, the next section analyzes the changing programmatic frames. Beginning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century a new logic was introduced into the ECEC discourse – it assumed and discussed a relationship between *Bildung* and social inequality on the one hand and quality as the optimization of children's learning and development on the other. In the last 15 years one can note a shift in the way the ECEC system is understood. The term *Bildung* is now used without *Erziehung* and *Betreuung*. This is a radical break.

### **Ambiguity of the term education**

The postulated right of the child to „*Bildung* from the outset” – “*Bildung von Anfang an*” (BMFSFJ, 2006, p. 28) can be described as the most comprehensive concept currently being affected by the German ECEC field. In the German child and youth law introduced in 1991, *Bildung* and *Erziehung* and *Betreuung* are regarded as important elements to be promoted in young children in daycare centers. However, at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the debate about the PISA results fed into a broad public discussion about the education system and, above all, the need to transform public daycare into *Bildungseinrichtungen* (not care, but educational institutions for schooling). The results of the international comparative assessment of student competencies were interpreted as indicating that Germany's education system was insufficient and ineffective. The idea that there was a link between social background and educational achievement was particularly criticized (Baumert et al., 2001). *Bildung* was thus referred to in the educational policy discussion “as a product, which is produced more badly in Germany than in other OECD countries” (BMFSFJ, 2006, p. 81; authors' translation). The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Health stated that “modern *Bildung* and training/teaching in daycare facilities should be promoted by the development of educational standards and delivered through education programs and plans” (BMFSFJ, 2003, p. 80; authors' translation). As a result, the “Joint Framework of the Federal States for Early ‘*Bildung*’ in Children's Daycare Facilities” (JMK / KMK 2004) was ad-

opted in 2004 by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs. Subsequently each German federal state drew up an ECEC education program or plan for daycare centers. These were amended in some federal states after an initial review and have been used since 2004 as guidelines for specialists.

These innovations had a pronounced impact on the concept of *Bildung und Erziehung* and its importance in early childhood. After the debate about the PISA results, early years *Bildung* was seen as a panacea for the ills of contemporary society that balanced out social inequalities and recognized and met children's needs at an early stage, as well as enabling interaction with the family in preparing children for school. This social investment in early *Bildung* was accompanied by considerations of human capital and the future labor force (Klinkhammer, 2014). Early intervention measures in various Western countries seek to optimize early childhood, and are not infrequently connected to the possibility of better results being achieved in school and work (Kašćák & Pupala, 2013). Thus, *Bildung* is sometimes reduced to efficiency and has been instrumentalized in terms of social policy.

In parallel discussions about human capital, economic exploitation and investment in Germany as a strong business location, further ideas or concepts of early *Bildung* can still be found in the German elementary education field that provide a theoretical and ideal basis for educational programs in the federal states. Thus, Gerd Schäfer, contrasts his theory of self-education, which “represents a plea [...] for a different way of thinking and approach to the educational problem” (Schäfer, 2011, p.15; authors' translation) with the idea that *Bildung* is a simple process of mediation. He portrays *Bildung* as a form of self-activity, in which phenomena are individually attributed with meaning, and a series of subjective experiences are formed (Schäfer, 2011). Wassilios Fthenakis, on the other hand, conceives of *Bildung* as a co-constructive process. Hence *Bildung* takes place only within a social environment (Fthenakis, 2004). Laewen, another German pedagogue who is involved in the political arena, also had an influence on the concept of *Bildung* in the early-childhood sphere, seeing that the education process is always realized through the acquirement of the world and the stimulation of all senses. This requires the involvement of both adults and children and in relation to each other. To better understand these dimensions, he differentiates between *Bildung* and *Erziehung* so as to depict the education process as a whole.



We therefore propose to understand Humboldt's *Bildung* as a self-activity of the child for the acquirement of the world and "Erziehung" [education] as the adult's activity with the aim of stimulating all the powers of the child. (Laewen & Andres, 2002, p.41; authors' translation)

In the education plans and programs of the German federal states *Bildung* is conceived of differently. It is striking, however, that the concept of *Bildung* has become interwoven in the ECEC field since the 2000s, in a way that is quite unlike before, and so must be operationalized in a variety of ways. In other words, the contemporary elementary educational field is shaped by *Bildungs*- goals and *Bildungs*- areas. Children in modern contexts are always regarded as competent and self-active and are given the direct right to "*Bildung* from the beginning" (BMFSFJ, 2006, p. 28). However, there is a tendency to instrumentalize childhood and children's processes of *Bildung* (Liegler, 2006). This is because *Bildung* is often only discussed in the context of institutions characterized by *Bildung* (BMFSFJ, 2006, p. 81) and the optimization of these.

What is interesting is that the reforms led to the hitherto inseparable German phrase *Bildung und Erziehung* being freed from the terms *Erziehung* and care [*Betreuung*], which are in a normative way often are linked with negative connotations, like for example, "custodianship".

### ***Quality as the main issue***

The concept of quality is closely linked to the above-mentioned optimization and the term *Bildung*. The literature shows how the concept of quality has been adopted in the German education and welfare system without there being an explicit definition of what quality means in this context. Rather, one is confronted with a theoretical deficit, "either because it seems obvious what is meant by it, or [...] the associated procedures and activities are so complex that they cannot be seen to provide subscribe to a coherent definition" (Klieme & Tippelt, 2008, p. 8; authors' translation).

The concept of quality originally represented a core element in corporate philosophies of economy and industry, and concerned the principles of the free market. Surprisingly, however, the term has become increasingly important in the educational and social sector since the 1990s and a universal term for describing the „benefits“ and „effects“ of educational institutions (see Helmke, Hornstein & Terhart, 2000, p. 7). In the context of *Bildung*,

it stands above all for the optimization of performance levels. In addition, it serves as formal proof of the efficiency and effectiveness of the *Bildung* provided. Furthermore in the 1990s with the modernization debate regarding the reorganization of the welfare state, there was increasing pressure to justify welfare state arrangements. In this context, the quality debate is “representative of a change in the expectations of the achievements of the educational and social system” (Köpp & Neumann, 2002, p. 2; authors’ translation). The scientific discourse is thus embedded within “a broad, passionate and frequently ideologically shortened debate on the reform of the welfare state and its institutional system” (ibid.; authors’ translation). The literature on quality often deals with questions concerning the implementation or application and evaluation of quality development procedures. However, this often ignores the fact that the concept remains undefined theoretically. It is quite astonishing that it nevertheless seems to be a construct which unite the “disparate expectations of the educational and social system in a unified conceptual corpus, in a common semantic way” (ibid.; authors’ translation).

Against the backdrop of the German PISA shock, early *Bildung* became a political issue and the responsibility of educational institutions in the public’s eyes, as already pointed out (Grochla 2008, p. 17 ff.). The question of whether there should be investment in children’s human capital gained relevance in social policy, and thus the concept of quality also entered the ECEC sector. The nursery landscape is currently characterized by certification procedures indicating the quality of different institutions based on quality criteria and also checks on the effectiveness of certain services in preparing children for school.

With German ECEC becoming increasingly important in educational terms (*Bildungsfunktion*), the demand for continuous quality improvements grew. Already in 1999, there had been a fundamental change in the child and youth welfare law. Paragraph 78 made clear that for certain types of establishments (at that time inpatient services specifically) performance fee/payment agreements were linked to quality improvements. In 1999 the National Quality Initiative (NQI) was launched for the system of children’s daycare facilities, initiated by the German Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSJF). A broad multi-disciplinary and content development research group was set up to engage in several subprojects (Stöbe-Blossey, 2015, p. 97). These mainly concerned the development and testing of good teaching practices, quality development procedures and internal and external evaluation procedures. From 2004 onwards, the re-

sults were consolidated nationwide through a second phase, which included education plans for the federal states as well as the quality management systems of sponsors (Roux & Tietze, 2007, p. 270). Thus, the implementation of the education plans is seen as part of quality development. In 2001, Forum Bildung emphasized the early promotion of children's daycare facilities. Quality sends an important signal: "The positive influence of kindergartens on the development, *Bildung* and schooling readiness of the children depends crucially on the quality of the institution" (Forum Bildung, 2001, p. 10; authors' translation) or "For the redefinition of the *Bildungsauftrag* and the increase of the quality of the facilities, external support structures are necessary for the professional guidance, counseling and advanced training of the educational staff" (ibid.: 11; authors' translation).

It is important to note that quality and *Bildung* are closely linked, because with an *Bildungsauftrag* of the ECEC area for society, these institutions have a much greater responsibility as well as an increasing influence on the later educational biography of the children, and quality must be ensured accordingly.

These changes to the programmatic frames will now be illustrated through examples, specific thematic spotlights. The following programs and projects can be seen as attempts to improve ECEC in Germany. These examples show how the programmatic frames are reflected in practice. The new relationship between *Bildung* and quality can be seen in efforts to reform child-rearing and education partnerships (a) in discussions about children's welfare (b) and projects on diversity (c). It is not possible at this point to provide a comprehensive description of all the initiatives and projects in German ECEC. Instead "spotlights" will highlight the dominant and linked programmatic frames.

## Spotlights on Reform Efforts

In the following section we wish to shed light on how the programmatic frames of *Bildung* and quality are manifested in projects, programs and laws. After the PISA debate, as we have explained, German ECEC was given a boost. Germany was seen as the educational loser in European institutionalized ECEC settings and this was not something that could be ignored. This led to an increase in empirical research on German education. It seemed that political, economic and social investments led to better education processes in daycare centers and above all, to high quality and legitimate good practices.

It was also necessary because daycare centers have shifted from being emergency relief facilities to becoming contemporary elementary services and education institutions. In 2006 253,884 children under three years of age attended public institutions across Germany, and by 2016 this had risen to 614,600. For children aged from three to six years there was an increase from 1,940,407 to 1,979,186 occurred in the same period (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017). The figures relating to very early childhood (from birth to 3 years) doubled.

### ***Education partnership<sup>2</sup>***

In public organized daycare „the parental duty to provide *Bildung, Erziehung und Betreuung* is transferred to the institutional provider” (Roth, 2010, p. 48; authors’ translation) and thus to pedagogical experts. In addition to reinforcing the pedagogical goal “to encourage the development of the child to a self-responsible personality” (§§ 22 para. 2 SGB VIII; authors’ translation) in the youth law, explicit mention was made of the need for public education to support “*Bildung and education in the family*” (ibid.; authors’ translation). Furthermore, there is an express requirement for the provider to ensure cooperation between professionals and parents. This pedagogical concept of an “education partnership” was added to the child and youth law when the new “Day Care Extension Act” (TAG 2005) was implemented. The act includes provisions relating to cooperation with families and other private institutions for the benefit of the child.

In addition, the reference to working with parents as a firmly professional and pedagogical activity was also included in the paper, „Common Framework of the Federal States for Early Education in Children’s Day Care Facilities“ in 2004 (KMK & JMK, 2004, p. 6). Emphasis is on shared responsibility for *Bildung* and childrearing. A study conducted by the German “Union for Science and Education” was widely recognized. The authors revealed that the implementation of the education plans and programs in the federal states had led to cooperation with parents and it became the informal guidelines for ECEC (GEW, 2007). Contrary to the traditional model of “authoritarian care” (Neumann, 1987, p. 145), which had dominated for

<sup>2</sup> The German term for education partnership includes both *Bildung* and *Erziehung*. In policy documents and most research studies the term education partnership strongly emphasizes the shared responsibility of the family and the daycare centers. However, we want to point out that there is a significant care factor in the work parents and professionals do together too. This is not generally mentioned in public discussions (Frindte, 2016).

many decades during the pre-primary reforms in the FRG in the 1960s and 1970s, this partner-like relationship has increasingly featured in public discussions. Demands for cooperation between parents and professionals had “professions-related, [...] educational, social and integration policy motives” (Betz, 2015, p. 20; authors’ translation). In this context, the umbrella term “working with parents” was developed to describe “all forms of organized communication and cooperation between educational institutions and the parents” (Stange, 2012, p. 13; authors’ translation). Non-hierarchical cooperation on the same level (*ibid.*, p. 13) has been the symbolic standard of good cooperation since the 2000s. This implies that professionals adopt a strategic “new attitude” (Cloos & Karner, 2010, p. 17; authors’ translation) toward the family and especially the parents. It is assumed that parents and professionals alike share a common interest in the child. But this almost seems like a further education responsibility for the parents and it is a professional task to accomplish this (Betz, 2015; Frindte, 2016).

„The ambition of an education partnership exists according to that in the common support of the child through the activation of the existing competencies of the family“ (Friederich, 2011, p. 20; authors’ translation). This implies the idea of non-hierarchical interaction, in which the former authoritarian between professional and parents is no longer viewed as legitimate or a guiding factor in the formation of the relationship between the two groups (see Stange, 2012, p. 15). This includes, for example, the coordination of activities, the exchange of experience of children’s education, the common designing of education goals within the pedagogical institution, assistance relating to education questions, an expansion of participation possibilities of parents, improved relations between parents and institutions and inter-institutional networking. These aspects signify an education partnership.

Since 2005, children’s daycare centers have been certified as family centers and parent-child centers in an increasing number of federal states (see Diller, 2010, p. 141). This includes „needs-oriented, integrated offerings that promote the education and development of children and support parents“ (Diller, 2006, p. 141). In 2006, this idea was first adopted in North Rhine-Westphalia when 9000 children’s daycare facilities were transformed into family centers. This process has been accompanied by a scientific research project. The goals were to work more closely with families, establish partner-like relationships and set up networking in the neighborhood of these centers. The „Familienzentrum NRW“ seal of approval, awarded to centers that meet specific quality standards, was used to promote public

visibility<sup>3</sup>. This step makes the annual funding dependent on the fulfillment of certain performance criteria. Since 2012, the Federal Association Family Center represents certain interests and seeks to support and promote the expansion of these facilities. Various funding programs are available in the federal states for centers that are recognized as family or parent-child centers (Stöbe-Blossey, 2015). In this context, Tietze pointed out in the late 1990's that a pedagogically appropriate family setting has a stronger influence on child development than the quality of education in children's day nurseries (ibid, 1998). These findings have increasingly shown that the pedagogical quality of children's daycare facilities can only be improved in discussion and collaboration with the family (cf. Tietze, 1998, p. 356).

In this context, one can note that children's daycare facilities have played an increasing role since the 2000s. This is legitimized above all by the close interlinking of the two lines of argument, *Bildung* and quality. Therefore, education partnerships are necessary in order to promote early education directly, and at the same time are a quality feature of German ECEC institutions. Frindte (2016) points out that there is a high level of standardization in this process, which ignores the peculiarities of the private and the family sphere. Before *Bildung* can take place within the parent-educator relationship a multidimensional care arrangement has to be renegotiated almost every day. One cannot therefore deny the existence of this asymmetrical relationship<sup>4</sup>, which would be to skip this fundamental aspect especially in light of the historical development of German ECEC as described above.

### ***Child's welfare***

The child's welfare and wellbeing within the daycare centers is crucial in the development of early warning systems. It is true that families are responsible for their children, which is described as their „natural right and their first and foremost obligation” (§ 1 para 2 SGB VIII; authors' translation). However, the state has a duty to provide guardianship by law (Article 6 (2) Basic Law, § 1 (2) SGB VIII). Children's daycare centers thus have a family supplementing function, providing relief and support where required. With the extension of the protection clause 8a, SGB VIII in 2012, specialists in child and youth welfare assistance are required by law to inform child protective services if there are suspected cases of child abuse. This means

<sup>3</sup> For more details see Steinert, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> The asymmetric aspect can be referred to the different roles which parents and educators play in children's life. So educators be experts qualified through a special apprenticeship or study. While parents are the experts for their children qua "nature". So you can't assume that these different groups are always be equal of each other.

that professionals operate within a constant balancing act between provision, help and control.

As early as 2002, a model project on social early warning systems was launched in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia to raise awareness of „signals of risky developments at an early stage“ (Stöbe-Blossey, 2015, p. 132; authors' translation). The underlying intention is not to act only when a child's wellbeing is under threat, but to adopt a precautionary manner, and to obviate serious consequences for the child and family or to „improve the chances of positive development for all children“ (Stöbe-Blossey, 2015, p. 133; authors' translation). Thus, positive development is oriented towards certain norms and is closely linked to *Bildung* which has to begin at an early stage (BMFSFJ, 2003; 2006) so children can later lead successful lives within Germany's *Wissensgesellschaft* (knowledge society). It is best to provide „early help“ as soon as birth and to support parents in their daily lives. For this reason, the National Center for Early Support (NFZH) was established in 2007 under the “Early Aid for Parents and Child Social Warning Systems” program of the Ministry for Youth and Family. Other sponsors are the Federal Center for Health Education (BZgA) and the German Youth Institute (DJI) (Stöbe-Blossey, 2015). These developments are leading to the development of certain child protection procedures, which are in turn a feature of quality and ensure *Bildung* can be provided in children's daycare centers without disruption and whilst protecting the children's wellbeing.

To this end, an „assessment scale on child welfare risk“ (KiWo scale) was developed on behalf of the County Youth Office of Baden-Wuerttemberg in 2011 in order to provide guidance for specialists in children's daycare centers. „The specific of the KiWo scale is its fullness of examples (just under 100), so-called ‘points of reference’, which are intended to make decision-making easier as to whether there are actually reliable suspicious moments of a child's well-being risk“ (Bensel & Haug-Schnabel, 2014, p. 33; authors' translation). The scale has largely been received positively, although there has been criticism of its standardization and concerns that the dangers of risk being calculable. Thus, even whether there is a single indicator, there may be still a high risk situation. In addition, it also could imply that skilled professionals always rely on such scales and make no longer own judgments or deal with a situation critically and reflexively (ibid.).

According to the child's welfare nowadays daycare centers should be organized as elements in „prevention and promotion chains“ (Riedel & Sann, 2014, p. 40). This is necessary, it is argued, because:

beginning positive effects of the interventions will fade with time when no further family support takes place. Daycare centers can be understood as support for children and parents as part of an individual aid package. (Riedel & Sann, 2014, p. 40; authors' translation).

Although the aspect of child welfare is a rather caring one, there are different trends debating its necessity in according to *Bildung* and quality. This means that it is of course in the public interest that children should be safe and protected if in disadvantaged circumstances because then in a normative way they are able to educate themselves in a much easier way. The prevailing logic of quality in ECEC settings is closely related to this too. Investment in the early years and *Bildungsprogramme* for young children has to be put to good use. A quality seal or special advanced training for staff at German ECEC institutions are special indicators of good practice and produce children without trouble at home, who can be educated. For example, there is a BMBF (2017) program for professionals to obtain a "specialist in child protection" certificate. The brochure portrays *Bildung* and quality as the wider context of the BMBF program, thus corroborating our point.

### ***Diversity – language and migration***

As shown the results of the PISA 2000 study point to a remarkable connection between social background and educational success. Children from socially weak areas, poor families and migrant backgrounds had much weaker outcomes than children from better off families (BMFSFJ, 2006). Even today this problem still continues, in 2015 14.7% of all children live and grow up in relative poverty, an increase of 0.4 percentage points on 2011 (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016). In 2014 families with children from migrant backgrounds constituted a third (30%) of all families with children in Germany (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2016).

In addition, since 2014 the increase in refugees is expected to increase the number of families from migrant backgrounds.

In the meantime, there are also long-term studies that map inequality in elementary and primary schooling (Diehm, Kuhn, Machold & Mai, 2013). In early education programs language is seen as one of the most important cornerstones in child development. Specialists agree that language development must begin as early as possible (Stöbe-Blossey, 2015).

Children from immigrant backgrounds should receive support for learn-



ing German as a possible second or third language as should children who speak German as their first language. Since the 2000's there has been a great move to develop language proficiency tests and language support programs. The focus is on the relationship between first and second language as well as multilingualism in daycare centers, cooperation with parents and structured or everyday language support programs. The federal states have responded to this need and have introduced different tools for assessing linguistic proficiency. However, children's daycare centers are the focus of such programs. In 2011, a federal program titled „Focus-daycare centers: language & integration“ was launched, which „develop nationwide about 4000 children's daycare centers to such focus-daycare centers“ (Stöbe-Blossey, 2015, p. 129; authors' translation). In this context, part-time positions are often created for specialists whose task it is to focus on developing language skills in early education. This program is undergoing evaluation and the results are still pending. In the end, however, this standardization and verification process will once again result in a certain seal, which can then advertise with certain quality standards.

In this context, language is, an important milestone in a child's development, but is above all a key aspect of successful early *Bildung*. Acquiring a certain level of language is immensely important especially when preparing to start school. Funding programs are indispensable to integration particularly for those from migrant backgrounds, and in view of the PISA results. In terms of language and migration, *Bildung* and quality also function as an orientation framework and, in this case, clearly contains risks of unification of diversity.

## Conclusion

In summary, it can be said that a change or turning point has occurred within German ECEC, especially since the 2000s. The traditional three-part vision of *Bildung*, *Erziehung* and *Betreuung* has been programmatically broken down, creating balance. This is mainly because *Bildung* has come to be seen as the ultimate form of progress in ECEC. The investment in early *Bildung* should have a positive influence on later educational profiles, and thus create human capital. Through the family background, resulting social inequality as soon as possible should be balanced and it should be responded to the “natural” individual competencies of the child adequately.

In these education concepts adults are conceived of as helpers, instructors and lawyers, who support the child in some way. It is important to point

out that *Erziehung* or education and care, of course, remains an aspect of ECEC in everyday practice; although it has become marginalized in public, political and scientific discussion. The new adjustment that has been taking place since the turn of the millennium, and the changing self-understanding, are the subject of this article. The aim was to explore the specific regional characteristics of the German ECEC system and thus to understand the recent re-programming of ECEC by analyzing its contextual classification.

The „education partnership“, „child welfare“ and „diversity language and migration“ programs were selected to illustrate the programmatic frames of *Bildung* and quality. They are spotlights on the micro level. It is interesting that the “pre-provision” of *Bildung* or *Bildung* as a legitimation background seems to be closely interwoven with the concept of quality. When early *Bildung* is propagated in children’s daycare centers, this must also be made demonstrable or reproducible in some way. This is exactly what happens when quality is accepted as a concept. *Bildung* can be presented to the public as a category of quality and quality facilitates *Bildung* in ECEC institutions. As the analysis in this article is not discourse analysis, but looks at spotlights in practice which flag up the described logics, the complex process of ECEC can be made visible for a moment.

The historical difference between children’s daycare centers and school is clearly shrinking. *Bildung* becoming more relevant before school begins and norms are inevitably being created. Which skills and competencies should children have at their disposal? The child’s wellbeing and language skills are emphasized as being prerequisite to the provision of optimal support and education processes and through the postulated necessary education partnership between professionals and parents, the parents themselves develop to an recipient of *Bildung*. And in spite of all the changing processes, the concept of *Bildung* is frequently shorthand and serves as a justification for the constant reproduction of the workforce.

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