

Comparative Study Using the 2003 Grandir en Qualité Study: Strength and Limits in Clarifying Policy Decisions

Presented by: **Nathalie Bigras**, UQAM

Summary by: **Véronique Russell**, Master's student, UQAM

What questions does the study pose in terms of public policy?

The author is seeking to assess the quality of Quebec's registered educational childcare services and to reassess the 2003 Grandir en Qualité study based on new data (2006-2008 JEM VIE). The study addresses changes that may have been made to childcare services since the study's publication in 2004. More specifically, the study seeks to consider how different childcare environments effect children's development.

What social statistics were used to study this issue?

JEM VIE, the study in question, uses data from observations similar to the 2003 Grandir en Qualité study. However, it draws on a smaller sample. JEM VIE involved 150 children from different areas of Montreal and the Montérégie, 50 of whom were living at the Centre de la Petite Enfance, 50 others in family settings and the remainder in families. A voluntary questionnaire was used to gather data on quality indicators. The study was also longitudinal, with the children being monitored on several occasions. In this particular case, the quality of the childcare services was assessed when the children were 18, 24 and 36 months old (from 2005 to 2009).

Although the data were longitudinal and permitted better analysis, the smaller sample size weakened the model. We can conclude that the data employed were not representative because they pertained solely to the Montreal and Montérégie regions. Some bias may also be present in selecting the observations used. For example, the questionnaires were voluntary and certain similarities may have been present among those childcare services that agreed to participate in the study. Such similarities could have skewed results (for example, only the "better" childcare services may have participated). Unfortunately, the authors were unable to compare their results to those of the Grandir en Qualité study for the regions in question.

What were the study's principle findings with respect to public policy?

The main results of the JEM VIE study showed that the childcare service quality was less than that obtained by the Grandir en Qualité study, particularly for children from birth to 24 months of age. For example, the JEM VIE's global score was 2.93 rather than 3.05 based on the following scale of results (the same as the one used for the Grandir en Qualité study):

Interpretation Table for the Average Quality Scores of the Grandir en Qualité Study		
Average score	Educational Quality	Correspondence with the principles of the Educational program
3.50 to 4.00 3.00 to 3.49 2.50 to 2.99	Excellent Good Above average	Satisfactory
2.00 to 2.49 1.50 to 1.99 1.00 to 1.49	Average Below average Poor	Unsatisfactory

Source: *Grandir en qualité 2003*, Enquête québécoise sur la qualité des services de garde éducatifs, Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Famille du Québec (MFACF), 2004, http://www.grandirenqualite.gouv.qc.ca/tab_resultats.htm, last updated November 2004, Last consulted May 18, 2009.

Based on these results, the author provided the different levels of government with certain recommendations about the different types of childcare services. Better training regulations would help improve these results. Some officials never received any specific training and others could benefit from a refresher course. It also appears that the ratio of children to teacher is quite high. A lower ratio could greatly improve service quality.

Another issue that could undermine the quality of childcare services is the fact that contract status of daycare teachers is still awaiting clarification. Some even doubt that government truly wants to change the manner in which childcare services are managed. For this reason, it would be useful to calculate the cost of changing the existing management of daycare services. Public and private associations understand the improvements to be made in terms of childcare and both are willing to improve the quality of care services.

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