

An investigation into the OECD's International Early Learning and Child Well-Being Study (IELS)

Ayesha Lohar, Liverpool Hope University

Abstract

The plan to introduce the International Early Learning and child well-being Study (IELS) was discovered by the Early Childhood community after the OECD published an invitation for tenders to plan, develop and execute a study to establish data on the development of early childhood learning traits and behaviours. The OECD justify the need for such assessments to allow for the development of high quality early childhood provision that will enable children to become successful contributors to the knowledge economy. However, the direction of travel from progressive education to instrumental education points to a narrowing of the curriculum to the extent that subject areas that develop employable traits alone are fostered.

This report argues that the OECD's plan to universalise and streamline the Early Years curriculum is a pre-cursor to creating model children to develop and feed into the economy as opposed to allowing education to nurture the unique qualities of a child and bring about their development on a holistic level. This report also focusses on the scale of this study and its implications by analysing the contribution of the Global South to this study.

Keywords

Early childhood development, Pre-school PISA, IELS, OECD, policy transfer, The Global South, The World Bank, globalisation, diversity, Starting Strong, Bold Beginnings, Te Whariki, the unique child, the model child, child well-being, migrant communities

Introduction

The International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study (hereafter IELS) was launched as a four year study in 2016 to assess the key factors that lead to or inhibit the development of early learning skills and attributes in pre-school children (OECD, 2017a). The purpose of this study is to provide countries that are part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (hereafter OECD) with a common framework for developing early education further by contributing to the findings from studies such as the Millennium Cohort Study (2012), Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (hereafter EPPE) study and the Study of Early Education and Development (hereafter SEED).

The Department for Education (hereafter DfE) have enrolled England and Wales to participate in this study and the National Foundation for Education Research (hereafter NFER) has been contracted to develop and deliver a pilot study on behalf of the DfE and the OECD that will assess the four criteria of learning development namely; emerging literacy skills, emerging numeracy skills, self-regulation and both social and emotional skills (OECD, 2016; NFER, 2017). This will be conducted using interactive devices for children to respond to scenarios with, and questionnaires for parents, practitioners and children to respond to as well. The pilot study, from development through to the final report will take four years and will include studies incorporating both the Global North and the Global South (OECD, 2016).

The final report will be used by the OECD in its capacity as a policy engine (Bednarzik and Sorrentino, 2012) for assisting the prosperity of its member economies and improving the skills of the future workforce that will drive these economies to greater success (Grek, 2010). In addition, the OECD's request for tenders highlights its six over-riding objectives, five of which relate to sustainable economic development across a range of countries at varying levels of development and highlights briefly how this data could be used to define domestic and international policies that will aid economic development. (OECD, 2016). In their brochure 'Early Learning Matters' (2017b) the OECD state that the purpose of such a study is to provide robust empirical data that will support national policy development of participating countries that will assist in improved Programme for International Student Assessment (hereafter PISA) scores.

The results from the IELS trials hope to inform the OECD of the types of activities that lead to quality ECEC provision by analysing the responses provided by the children, their carers and practitioners. These results will allow for the OECD to make recommendations on how to better equip children for the future PISA and associated exam scores and the challenges of the work force as part of the knowledge economy (Field, 2000; OECD, 2013; World Bank; 2018). Using PISA scores as a comparative measure, member states have the ability to highlight their lack of progress and curriculum deficiencies (OECD, 2016), and therefore by introducing measures recommended by the OECD, nations can develop Early Years programmes to ensure they are given the same advantage as more successful nations; successful in terms of PISA results.

To develop a standard of Early Years Provision across its member states has implications for the unique pedagogy that has its roots in the socio-cultural make-up of each nation. In addition, it side-lines the unique issues that affect childhood that can aid or hinder early childhood development. With this in mind, it is important to investigate the OECD's objectives for young children.

The UK's decision to join the pilot study is of interest because there is the population diversity that will make for an interesting set of results, in terms of how a universal policy can address such diversity and the potential globalisation of the standards of early year's provision that would also have an effect on domestic policy.

This report will examine the implications of the UK government defining domestic policy based on the recommendations of the OECD IELS, and how effective this transference of policy will be for the UK. Secondly, an examination of whether the OECD's Preschool PISA project will result in the creation of the model child at the expense of the unique child (Eberhart et al, 2017; Tate, 2012, cited in Marshall, 2014) will also be undertaken.

This article hopes to shed on light the importance of allowing children to develop and thrive naturally as opposed to graphing their development in terms of how closer they are to becoming assets to the economy. This is of particular importance as education and in particular the curriculum is developed with employment skills in mind (Robinson, 2009).

Methodology

In order to understand the issues surrounding the implications of a worldwide study and the utilisation of its results in reference to the OECD's objectives, a systematic review will be conducted. A systematic review will allow for a detailed understanding of the context of the OECD's objectives and how these continue to direct the social, economic and education narrative of today. This development of understanding can only be achieved through the context of prior knowledge; of what has occurred before (Xiao and Watson, 2017).

This research will focus on the impact the OECD's Preschool PISA will have once rolled out. To understand the potential impact, the fields of comparative education with particular reference to past experiences of policy borrowing and transference will develop knowledge that will bring into perspective whether the UK can benefit from such policy sharing initiatives.

Given that childhood is not studied as an isolated phenomenon, systematic reviews will allow for an objective view of whether the purpose of childhood is indeed undergoing another change of direction. Kitchenham and Charters (2007 cited in Xiao and Watson, 2017) posit that the collection of literature for the purpose of conducting a systematic review is an unbiased mode of research as long as all arguments for and against a particular notion are investigated and that each perspective is taken on its merit to develop a balanced argument exploring the facts.

However, the risk of bias is ever present when data is selected. The potential for bias was minimised because the purpose of the data search was to develop knowledge of this area that has come to light due to the OECD's call for tenders (OECD, 2016).

Journal articles were also sought using Google and Google Scholar. Norris, Oppenheim and Rowland (2008 cited in Xiao and Watson, 2017) as these sites were able to return a greater number of results. The year 1961 has been chosen as the starting point of data identification and extraction so that a path of development and change in the OECD's objectives as well as the attitudes of the early childhood community can be charted.

To develop the foundations for this report, in particular the setting of the questions that needed to be answered and the objectives that needed to be met, a preliminary search

of journals was conducted to understand the contention between the Early Childhood Community and the OECD. It was noted that the EC community and the OECD were at opposing ends of the spectrum in terms of their views of how children develop, and what each body deemed during a child's and in particular the testing children in school. This is highlighted in the changing language noted in the Starting Strong Reports (2003), and the Bold Beginnings Report (OFSTED, 2017).

The research questions seek to bring together the impact of a universal policy. To develop an understanding of the theory and indeed the history of policy transference and borrowing, published texts were sought that contained chapters relating to transnational policy borrowing and sharing, with particular reference to the education context. These texts are listed in the reference section.

In addition, journal articles were also sought to provide details of transnational policy sharing and transfer as case studies, as this would inform the methods and processes of transfer, and thereby highlighting evidence of the advantages and disadvantages of such practices. The search criteria and terms have been decided upon to ensure an objective view is put forward and to ensure the search terms do not return biased results (Bolland, Cherry and Dickson, 2014). To distinguish the relevance of the journals and books gathered, including the reports available from the OECD and the World Bank, the abstracts were read to ensure that they relate to the objective the research is undertaken for. Each of the texts needed to answer the research question in some way, be it through a variety of perspectives or just one. This allows for the development of the arguments that are put forward to bring light to the contentions (Sandelowski et al, 2006; cited in Xiao and Watson, 2017) within the field of Early Childhood as part of the global context (Woodhead in Penn, 2000).

The volume of data that has emerged not only from the OECD and The World Bank but the Early Childhood Community too will create difficulties in accommodating all viewpoints that will have relevance to the research aims, and this report by no means will provide the final word on the subject of the IELS. However, of greater relevance is the fact that the IEL pilot study was currently in progress (OECD, 2017a) at the time of conducting this investigation.

As noted by Moss et al (2017) awareness of the IELS have come about due to the request for tenders (OECD, 2017a). However, since education has been an important

consideration for the OECD since 1992, it was hoped the archives would be accessible that would shed light on the journey to conduct and implement the IELTS.

This report will now examine why the DfE has enrolled England and Wales to participate in the IELTS.

Why does the UK need to participate in the IELTS?

According to the OECD Skills Outlook (2013) there is evidence of the shrinking talent pool between school leavers and those of the age bracket of fifty- five to sixty-five. To elaborate, as at 2013, the UK education system has not been improving the employment opportunities of school leavers due to underdeveloped skills that are required in the work force such as literacy and numeracy skills. These would advance the economy giving it a competitive edge in the developing knowledge economy (OECD, 2014). With the aging population having to now work longer and an underdeveloped cohort of students, the UK government is keen to discover how they can improve the learning processes of the younger generation so that they can perform better than their older counterparts.

The UK, in light of the results published by the OECD with regards to its skills for the future (2013; 2014), feel justified in looking for strategies that can reverse this trend and develop children through education to bolster their own opportunities and power the economy. In addition, the economy is as seen the natural route to greater social cohesion (OECD, 1996).

The side-lining of early childhood scholars

The absence of Early Childhood professionals and scholars from policy development on a national and international level has allowed for the OECD to focus on a single agenda (Urban and Swadener, 2017). This in turn has enabled the OECD and by extension the present UK government to intensify the needs and outcomes of early years education (Soler and Miller,2003; Bennett, 2003; OFSTED, 2017). This will be analysed below.

The issues noted by Early Childhood academics range from the loss of social skills as per a child's age of development (Soler and Miller, 2003), to the far-reaching effects of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression (Rousseau, 1762/1979; Zins

et al, 2004). The OECD have attracted a response against the imposition of IELTS from numerous scholars (see Moss, 2017). The mantra of 'lifelong learning' (Hinchliffe, 2006, in Giardello, 2014; OFSTED; 2017) to define Early Years strategy and apply downward pressures on reception classes from Key Stages One and Two has alarmed scholars (Alexander et al, 2016) because the report's analysis issued by the OECD have minimalised to the point of non-acknowledgement the importance of social skills and the gradual development of cognitive skills within the context of social and cultural development of the child.

As the following will show however, this is not the beginning of a new trend. The side-lining of scholars and teaching professionals in the UK dates back to the infiltration of the 'secret garden' at the time of the Ruskin College Speech which resulted from criticism against the child-centred approach espoused by the Plowden Report of 1967.

Academics and scholars have been side-lined because they do not share the same goals for early education as the UK government and the OECD (Bennett, 2003; PIAAC, 2013; OFSTED, 2017). As Bruner reflects, the issues of educating the public have on many occasions run into struggles over power (2006). When the Conservative government of 1992 attempted to formulate a curriculum for the under-fives, an Early Years Curriculum group was set up to analyse and evaluate the structure and format (Ball, 1993). They responded by telling the government that there was no need to instrumentalise the curriculum.

However, with criticisms that highlighted the absence of a coherent strategy for developing children in the early years (Edwards and Knight 1994, cited in Soler and Miller, 2003), it was deemed necessary to create a document that would help Early Years practitioners prepare their pupils for formal schooling through the introductions of the 'Desired Outcomes for Children's Learning on Entering Compulsory Education (1996) and the 'Early Learning Goals' document (1999).

As the needs of education are paired with the economy, an understanding of children's social development has gradually become a casualty of developing economic competitiveness. This is evidenced in the Bold Beginnings Report (OFSTED, 2017), where social skills are mentioned but not highlighted as an important aspect of child development. In addition, Alexander (2012) cites the abandonment of oracy and communication skills for skills that create a productive workforce. This is further

embedded by the 2002 PISA Report (OECD, 2002) that emphasises the importance of discipline in creating an efficient and productive environment where children will absorb all that is taught.

A recent report from the World Bank charts the percentage of 'effective' learning that is taking place while at school (2018). The spread of international organisations such as the World Bank and their studies of the Global South, and in particular its focus on the developing economy as the guarantor of success for those in developing countries again ignore the work and contextualised research from scholars such as Freire (Soler and Miller, 2003).

Policy transfer and the Global South

The following section will look at the impact of the OECD's comparison culture and the effects of strategy borrowing and policy transference from nations that have differing national cultures that filter through all aspects of their lives.

In addition, this section will focus on how studying the Global South (Breidlid, 2013) can also assist in developing a curriculum that assists all nations due to the multicultural and diverse make up of schools that have arisen through migration.

The purpose of the IELTS is to develop a universal measure of best practice (OECD, 2017a). While the OECD are administering the pilot study in three countries of the global North, the World Bank Group are conducting the same in the Global South.

The practice of transferring policy (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996) as a lesson drawing exercise from one nation to another was seen as a method of using what works best in one nation to help solve problems in another. The development of transnational organisations for the peace and prosperity of their member nations was the start of the sharing of ideas and best practice to aid the rebuilding process after major conflicts. However, in terms of educational improvement for the purpose of developing human capital, the blanket approach has been criticised as narrowly focussed, and negating not only the diversity of culture but the diversity of needs.

Trompenmaars and Hampden-Turner posit that the highest degree of cultural diversity is evidenced in Europe (1998, cited in Marshall, 2014). This creates opportunities and problems for policy transfer. For example, the development and implementation of

bespoke solutions for one particular nation could be generalised to show what makes each nation alike, but disguising or missing completely hidden issues such as marginalised groups.

The globalisation process through the transference of policy is located within a long history of the promotion of Western ideas of knowledge as superior to the ones that have developed throughout a nation's own culture (Hall, 1991 in Slater, 1995; Briedlid, 2013; Urban and Swadener, 2016). However, the creation of the OECD to develop the Global North, and the work of the World Bank Group to bring about development in the Global South have had very different mandates to fulfil. The World Bank Group, based in the United States has helped to transfer Western notions of education to developing nations (Chambers, 1994; Siqueira, 2012) prompting scholars to ask whether globalisation has signified the end of cultural diversity as many of the transnational organisations are ignoring the independent research communities that specialise in the issues affecting nations that are part of the Global South. For example, issues of population movement be it between nations in the pursuit of a better life or moving from a rural area to urban areas, deciding how they should spend their scarce resources or promoting female education. Such issues create a change in dynamics of how families live in relation to new social norms (Trivedi et al, 2008).

To ignore the needs of a country to pursue one's own goals demonstrates the coercive nature of policy transfer that in the long run entrenches further the problems communities and nations face while other narrow objectives are pursued. While the World Bank is in a position of power due to its funding of war-torn and developing nations, the OECD as a policy engine that provides statistics to inform Global North countries has allowed itself to adopt the role of advisor to nations based on the data it has collected (Rinne et al, 2004).

Implications for the UK

This paper will now address the issues affecting the Global South in relation to creating Universal ECEC provision and how this would impact the UK as the results will be compared by policy advisors to see where the similarities and differences lie, and what can be done to improve the Early Years strategy in the UK.

At first glance, this appears to be a promising opportunity to gather data that can be used by governments in the Global North to develop strategies and policies that affect their diverse populations (Racial Disparity Audit, 2017). This would prove useful considering migration has contributed to a 45% population growth in the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2013). In this regard the OECD cannot provide accurate measures of student progress without accounting for population movement.

Furthermore, none of the reports make special mention of the assistance or lack of assistance in place when accounting for the education of newly arrived migrants, as well as the progress in attainment they make when entering a new education culture. Trivedi et al (2008) note the mental cost alone in moving from a rural community to urbanized areas within a single nation as the cultural dynamics shift. To move from one nation to another brings a host of challenges including social isolation that cannot be fixed by gaining employment. In, addition, it is also important to understand the social and cultural aspects that affect education attainment because the cultural diversity of the Global North and Global South, particularly when examining the prevailing attitudes towards education and the strategies used to bring about progress, are not given prominence and therefore the differences are not only ignored but compounded (Melhuish, 2016).

The numerous reports in the OECD and World Bank Group archives show the level of influence these organisations are able to exert in helping governments work through their challenges because they have access to data gained from nations that are part of their group (Ball, 2012). But how does this link to the IELTS?

The Model Child Versus the Unique Child

The collaboration between the World Bank Group and the OECD to find the common indicators of early childhood learning characteristics, does not look at the broader cultural and social issues. While the OECD nor the NFER have been vague in terms of how this data will demonstrate their findings for the UK IELTS, they have not demonstrated nor explained what connections they are hoping to find.

Promoting a rigid model of Early Childhood education to develop a 'model child' sends out the message to a child's family and community that their knowledge, culture and

traditions are not an important part of a child's development and by extension an obstacle to a child's success.

When early education does not have a link with the child's cultural identity there is no point of reference for that child and therefore some aspects of education lack relevance to them (Action for Children, p12, p42). This can be seen from studies such as those documenting the Te Whariki approach where the curriculum is culturally embedded and relevant to each cohort (Ministry of Education, New Zealand).

The Te Whariki approach demonstrates how both centralised and decentralised facets of policy as government initiative and culture sensitive independent research can result in positive outcomes for children (Smith and May, 2014).

Te Whariki refers to the curriculum developed by New Zealand to incorporate the heritage and culture of the indigenous Maori tribes and the culture of the European settlers. The purpose of the curriculum is to ensure that the Maori heritage is the foundation of learning in keeping with the cultural backdrop of the nation and using that as a basis for progress. Duhn (2008) highlights how, through the differences in language between the European and the indigenous tribes the true ethos of Te Whariki may be lost if the dominant culture does not refer to the indigenous basis of the document. Te Whariki translates into 'the woven mat' where the different strands of culture, identity and early childhood perspectives are woven together to create a pattern demonstrating how the past and the present can be woven together to create a society that respects its diversity.

While this may not result in maximum human capital development (Levitt,nd, cited in Marshall, 2014) it demonstrates that the 'one size fits all' curriculum (Tate, 2012, cited in Marshall, 2014) is not the policy objective of all nations. There are many nations that are rebuilding communities after the devastation of war; indeed education plays a part in that but understanding, acceptance and embracing difference is a more important and worthwhile goal (Magaluzzi, 1996, cited in Giardello, 2014).

In addition, the further depletion of the social and cultural influence on a child's education and academic development sends a message to those with vested interests that their children must go through education alone (Manning-Morton, 2019).This is further emphasised through new ways of learning and new ideas that are perhaps

'alien' to the child's familial circle thereby creating further divisions between their cultural roots and their journey through education (Bruner, 1996).

The absence of documented voices from the Early Years perspective in the literature of the IELTS, highlights the OECD's neglect of consideration about children's well-being while pursuing a universal model of Early Years Provision.

Though there is no precise definition of children's well-being (The Children's Society), it can be defined through sociological and ecological dimensions (Bradshaw, 2016) as the development of a child or children through positive family and community relations, where children are noted as individuals working towards becoming active members of society with their own unique contributions to make. It refers to the level of consideration that a child receives in order to feel that they belong, that their voices matter and they are an important part of the future. It refers to building children's self-worth, resilience and self-esteem so that they are confident in meeting challenges and have opportunities to take ownership of their own successes.

To understand the urgency and importance of this issue, in 1997 a report commissioned by the OECD placed UK children in position twenty-one out of the twenty-five European Union countries in its first ever comparative well-being index and at the bottom of the table of 21 countries in its OECD member nations index (Bradshaw, 2016).

It would appear that a child's well-being has not been considered at all particularly at policy development levels as the implementation of policy has not brought about a positive change in the lives of children, and this is why the IELTS are a cause for concern: the importance of well-being is being placed at the bottom of an ever-increasing list of targets and policies that are designed to improve the competitiveness of the UK.

Early childhood scholars have noted that the UK's pursuit of higher standards has neglected perhaps the most important factor of national prosperity (Moss, 2017; Pence, 2016; Alexander, 2004). Indeed, both are integral as a positive sense of self boosts an individual's motivation to learn and creates a positive sense of well-being, thereby creating a proactive workforce and a society that has a positive measure of well-being. It is already documented that mental health issues impact economic growth

negatively (Trivedi et al 2008) and will likely affect young children on a greater scale (Bellis et al, 2013). So, developing a fixed Early Years curriculum for the future economy is short-sighted and will have a negative effect at a much earlier age, particularly for members of minority ethnic groups and those that have a lower socio-economic status.

In addition, and particularly in the case of Europe, the push for maximum human capital development is a goal that appears to ignore the gulf of underlying issues that have been identified by early childhood scholars and have been mentioned in this report. However, by collaborating with the World Bank Group, the potential to identify trends and attitudes affecting particularly migrant communities should be seen as an opportunity to identify and develop strategies to solve these (Eberhart et al, 2017).

Moreover, the prevalent trend of creating performance tables for educational progress will only create an environment of developing strategies that do not address the underlying issues such as family literacy, values placed on education, socio-economic status and the ability to invest in a child's education, and so the studies into the Global South will not be used to their best effect.

The PISA assessments at any stage will not and do not account for the culture and attitudes of those participating (Petitclerc, et al., 2017). It is not enough, it would appear for nations to enrich their own cultures to ensure a connectedness between the development of these cultural underpinnings, but to sever them for the purpose of competing on an international level. The neo liberal approach in this instance is stripping away the dimensions of what it means to learn and to become educated to a narrow objective – how well individuals bolster the economy (Urban and Swadener, 2017).

By seeking the knowledge of scholars and professionals the World Bank Group should aim to rebuild, restore and have meaningful dialogue about the rich cultures and traditions that have been destroyed. Their mandate through the lending of funds should allow communities to rebuild rather than transform their communities completely.

Although the overriding objective of the World Bank Group is to focus on the redevelopment of the Global South, Urban and Swadener discuss the privileging of particular sets of beliefs that favour western or Eurocentric traditions and values (2017). This is evidenced in a number of reports where the promotion of western education models as the way to improve educational outcomes for countries that are in debt to them, and these nations are through their financial indebtedness powerless to resist such coercion even on the basis of conflicting evidence (Evans, 2017).

The notion that by providing financial assistance to improve a nations situation points to an imbalance of power that the World Bank Group are able to exert. The financial aid after all is for the purpose of redevelopment – on their own terms (Klees et al, 2012). What is evidenced here is the mirroring of the relationship between the OECD and its member nations except, the member nations contribute financially that has allowed it to develop into a policy engine for education development. Breidlid (2013), speaks of the domination of western epistemology and the ‘othering’ (Taylor, 2009, cited in Taylor, et al., 2009) of all other knowledges that have resulted in the marginalisation of anything that is not characteristic of neoliberalism.

A community that has collectivism as its guiding principle is not recognised as a positive aspect of the vision that is espoused by both the World Bank Group and the OECD. When investigating the language used to highlight the work of other organisations such as UNESCO, The World Bank and the OECD research findings contradict the ideology they are promoting. For example, in its opening paragraph UNESCO states;

“...culture, in all its dimensions...is a powerful contributor to economic development” (UNESCO, 2010).

Whereas the OECD does not link economic development to the lives of those they seek to influence (OECD, 2016).

Conclusion

To conclude, this paper sought to answer two enquiries. Firstly, the implications of the UK government defining domestic policy based on the recommendations of the OECD IELS, and how effective could this transference of policy be for the UK. And secondly,

whether the OECD's Preschool PISA project aims to create the model child at the expense of the unique child (Eberhart et al, 2017; Tate, 2012, cited in Marshall, 2014).

The absence of literature on the reasons for and development of the IELTS is curious, yet when analysing in as much as a chronological order as possible the literature available from the World Bank Group and the OECD, the gradual removal of early childhood development perspectives is obvious. Such changes in direction can be evidenced in the OECD documentation relating to changes that needed to occur mentioned in the Ruskin College speech (Callaghan, 1976), the Starting Strong Reports commissioned in the 1990's, the changing vocabulary of the UK's National Curriculum and the current recommendations of the Bold Beginnings Report (OFSTED, 2017).

The importance of economic advantage has been gaining importance for some time as the climate has changed from industrial development to technical prowess through knowledge application (OECD, 2016; World Bank Group; 2016).

The UK ECEC policies and practices have undergone and continue to undergo transformations whether this is to incorporate new research into the holistic development of very young children or to create a fairer society where maternal opportunities or lack of these affect early childhood outcomes (OECD, 1996, 2003).

From the transferring of best practice from one nation to another to the examination of the effects of such 'borrowing' (Bereday, 1964, cited in Marshall, 2014) on society and culture, greater scrutiny has been placed particularly by scholars on analysing the effects of simply lifting the strategies of one country and especially learning culture and imposing these as a statutory framework on another without seeking to understand how domestic policy affects the different strands of culture and society within its own nation state. (Bereday, in Marshall, 2014).

The social literacies of one nation cannot be taken as an isolated phenomenon to bring about improvement through a curriculum focussed on employable traits alone. Furthermore, implementation of such a curriculum cannot be rolled out across nations that are made up of unique societies; that have cultures and belief systems and different ideals to that of the OECD and the World Bank. It could be seen as an abuse of power if nations are made to abandon ones native culture for goals that are alien to

them. Yet this is an important consideration for the UK as its cultural diversity and the challenges this poses for the development of services is documented in the UK Racial Disparity Audit (2017) and figures from the DfE (2017).

The importance of early childhood development within the social context is not given much consideration in the literature from the OECD after the Starting Strong Report publications prior to 2003. The merging of the vision for a universal standard of education is unrealistic in that it creates divisions between a child's home, their community and their place of education. Childhood development theories that stress the importance of holistic development particularly in the early years (Malaguzzi, 1996 cited in Giardello, 2014; Bronfenbrenner, 1979 cited in Singer, 1998) have been abandoned (Moss et al, 2016).

Looking at the PISA and TIMSS results currently available shows that children do not follow a strict linear pattern of development, therefore a 'one size fits all' curriculum would not be appropriate and at worst may prove to be detrimental (Tate, 2012 in Marshall, 2014). However, the documentation from the World Bank Group could have assisted in understanding issues of minority groups if there was a broader focus on the needs as well as traditions and cultures of these groups. With the focus of greater productivity across all nations, the development of human capital as an economic resource is the measure of a country's education policy success.

Recommendations

At the time of writing, the pilot tests in England and Wales have been undertaken, and the analysis of these results along with their findings will be published in 2020. It will be interesting to note how the participating governments will respond to the findings, and what conclusions the OECD and the World Bank will draw from the studies. In the meantime, new national assessments are being proposed for children in reception classes demonstrating how children are viewed as potential units of output as opposed to the greater contributions humans make to their communities and country as a whole. As an extension to the research undertaken in this report, an assessment of the psychological impact on children due to developing a restricted curriculum would create a valuable assessment of the impact IELTS could have.

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