

Early Childhood Kindergarten Programs in China: Issues of Access and Funding

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Abstract

China has a complex system of multiple types of preschool provision, different funding models, a rural-urban divide and a diverse population in relation to place of origin, language dialects and socio economic status. In this paper we explore the complex situation of preschool provision and implications for policy makers in China. As the provision of preschool education is increasingly privatized there is a concern that children from low income families may not have access to quality early care and education services. Affordability and access to education in the early years has become a major concern of governments concerned about equity and the development of human capital. Case studies have been carried out in Beijing, as a developed urban centre and in Yinchuan, as a rural centre in the west of China. The data presented examines the relationship between types of service, fees charged and the income of families who access these services.

Keywords: China, early childhood policy, kindergarten, access, equity

Early Childhood Kindergarten Programs in China: Issues of Access and Funding

This paper is concerned with the provision of public, subsidized kindergarten programs in China. Historically they developed four main types of kindergarten provisions: public kindergartens, franchised branches of these public kindergartens,

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transformed kindergartens (previously run by State Owned Enterprises but now private) and private kindergartens. As the supply of preschool education is increasingly privatized the role of government changes and there is concern that children from low-income families may not have access to early care and education services in a profit driven market.

These issues raise questions for policy makers. Should public kindergartens be means tested? If children from poorer families are targeted, to have special subsidies in order to access public facilities, will this impact the quality of service in public kindergartens? What is the case for universal provision? These are questions explored in the international literature (eg. *Starting Strong I & II*, OECD, 2001, 2006). In this paper we examine data collected in Beijing and a city in the rural west of China, Yinchuan. Policy makers often make decisions about re-sourcing and supplying services by using the economic concepts of technical and allocative efficiency (Zhuang, 2008; Li, 2007). Choices governments make about the distribution of services, like childcare and preschool, will be based on criterion that takes into account measured benefits for the greatest number, or the neediest, of the population. This research describes types of kindergartens in the two cities, the household income of the children attending the selected services, and the type of kindergarten compared to level of income. Access to early childhood education is acknowledged as a measure of well-being and heightened life chances and research indicates the quality of the early childhood experience is significant. Access to services and then access to quality services are therefore important issues to examine.

The issue of access is one that has been explored from a number of views. Increasingly the perspective of educators and psychologists is enhanced by other disciplines. For policy makers an important voice is that of the economists. Often decisions have to be made with only limited resources being available and therefore questions of targeting particular populations and distribution become crucial (Barnett, Brown & Shore, 2004). The public sector is concerned with allocative efficiency and in the early childhood area this has become a complex picture of public and private provision with myriad ways of financing these services (Schuler-Harms, 2009). A dominant question that relates directly to the economics of early childhood services in

the last decade has been the question of targeted versus universal provision (Belfield, 2005, 2006). Increasingly there is a call for early education and care services which are “universal, affordable, accessible and of high quality” (Canadian Pediatric Society, 2009, p.34). This debate provides a framework to analyze the role of the public sector. Should the public sector provide targeted services to disadvantaged groups? How will quality and standards be maintained if there is a two tier system, one for the poor and one for the better off? Generally speaking, it is more efficient for the government to provide basic public services for more people than to provide high quality services for a targeted group. However, when the budget is limited, or governments have an ideological bias towards the market, decisions about access and government subsidies become contentious.

This paper provides a brief description of the research project and of some of the differing types of preschool provision that make up the early childhood sector in China. We introduce Chinese and international literature on the significance of preschool education, impediments to access, fee and funding structures, the impact on consumer identity in relation to promoting equity and quality provision. The literature review includes a discussion on the debate about universal versus targeted funding (Barnett, Brown & Shore, 2004; Belfield, 2005; OECD, 2001, 2006). Findings from the data are presented and implications for policy development have been identified.

Literature Review

It is widely accepted that early childhood education is important for individual development and well-being (Children in Europe, 2008; Schulman & Barnett, 2005; Schweinhart, 2000) and is increasingly seen as part of the human capital of a society (Rolnick & Grunewald, 2003; Dickens & Brown, 2006; Sawell & Tebbs, 2006; Moss, 2007). Given this the roles of governments and policy makers have become increasingly complex. Questions to be addressed by policy makers include the services themselves, quality and regulation (Friendly, Doherty, & Beach, 2006) issues of access (Jin, Liu, Yand, & Li, 2005), affordability, funding models (Zeng, 2008; Belfield, 2005; Doherty, Friendly, & Forer, 2002), pedagogical approaches (Bennet, 2004; China Ministry of education, 2002; Carr & May, 2000), and a coherent policy

environment (Children in Europe, 2008; Zeng, 2008).

China, like other countries, has a mix of funding models (Zeng, 2008; Zhu & Zhang, 2008; Beach & Friendly, 2007) for preschool provision. Funding, as a measure of quality, has become a focus of research in recent years as the importance of early childhood has been strongly promoted and the corporate sector has become a major provider of early childhood services. Much public money is now made available to the private sector through various types of subsidies and researchers have compared public and private provision in relation to structural quality (eg. Weaven & Grace, 2007; Rush & Downs, 2006) which refers to measurable characteristics like group size, teacher qualifications, space allowances, building regulations, space, as well as health and hygiene requirements (Doherty-Derkowski, 1997). The impact of privatization on families, through increased fees, has also been examined (Cleveland, Forer, Hyatt, Japel, & Krashinsky, 2008; Zhai & Gao, 2008). In Australia, where corporate activities in the early childhood care and education market have become infamous, the cost of care and education rose way above the consumer price index once childcare companies publicly floated on the stock exchange (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). In the United Kingdom (UK), where the market is seen by government as “more efficient and more flexible than publicly provided services” (Penn, 2009:121) local authorities have become the ‘providers of last resort’ for three-year-old children (Cited in Penn, 2009, p.121).

For policy makers there are many dilemmas. Developmental psychologists (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) point out how important the early years are and that high quality programs are essential if children are to achieve their potential. The neuroscientists have added their voice to this claim (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2001; Mustard, 2007). The economists have called for high quality interventions in a child’s life in the very early years to get the greatest return on investment (Heckman, 2006). Much of the research is contradictory. Whilst the economists argue for educational opportunities at an early age they argue for interventions for the poor and marginalized. At the same time there is a growing acknowledgment that targeted approaches may not be the best or fairest (Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009; Barnett, Brown, & Shore, 2004). In an article on choosing targeted or universal strategies for developing coun-

tries Mkandwire (2005) has stated; “ideologies play an important part in the choice of instruments used to address problems of poverty, inequality and insecurity” (p.2). Targeting has long been a policy of the World Bank and it has been widely applied to poverty alleviation projects (World Bank, 2009).

For China there are important questions here. When Chinese scholars and policy makers address the efficiency issue in the public sector, they usually focus on equity. Li Qun Fang (2007) argued that government investment in education is inadequate in China and the allocation of education resources is not only inadequate but also inequitable. He called for more education resources across regions also across the different education stages, therefore suggesting that the non-compulsory early childhood years should also receive more government support. Zhuang (2008) analyzed the difference between public investment in early childhood services between urban and rural areas, and pointed out that misallocation of resources threatened the quality, affordability and accessibility of services and therefore the future of children and families in some regions. Other researchers have examined the differences between preschool provision for children in rural and urban China and reported children in rural areas receive less early childhood education and of a poorer quality (Luo et al, 2009). There has been commentary on the policy environment as being disorganized and incoherent. In a paper on funding models Zeng (2008) critiqued the Shenzhen municipal government and the reform of the early childhood education funding system in that municipality. She labeled the reform strategies impetuous and urged the need for “systemized institutional planning” (p.19). On another note Hsueh, Tobin & Karasawa (2004) argues that China’s early childhood education is going through a period of change and development that is rapid and unbalanced. The metaphor they use is that the Chinese preschool is in its adolescence.

In the Chinese context there is a need to examine present practice and policy to support the idea of early childhood education being a means to a more equitable society and to improve investment in human capital, a significant issue for China given the population patterns caused by restricted birth policies. Moss (2009) has described the social constructions and understandings that the early childhood model is based upon and presented another model for early childhood education and care

services using the work of the Brazilian social theorist Unger. He has called this model “democratic experimentalism” (p.31). He says models are “local in origin and political in nature” (p.63), never as simple as they look on paper, and there is a need to define different policy directions to explore the potentials that may exist.

The Research

The early childhood research literature has established a case for using source of funding for early childhood services as an indicator of quality (eg. Doherty, Friendly, & Forer, 2002; Beach & Friendly, 2008; Weaven & Grace, 2008). The research question and the data used for this paper are designed to be explored within this framework. This research uses data from 492 surveys of parents in two locations (Beijing, 246 and Yinchuan, 252) and analyses of the data using descriptive statistics, including scatterplot analyses, to gain visual information about relationships between the items the type of preschool the families accessed, the preschool fee and the household income per year. The context for the discussion of findings is a framework of economic imperatives, human capital theory and a sociological view of human development.

The research question was dictated by a concern that, given the importance of preschool for a child’s well-being and development there is a pattern of unequal access across rural and urban areas (Brown, 2006) and for children from different income groups (OECD, 2006). As education is “a key determinant of future income and occupational attainment” (Brown, 2006) and educational experience in the preschool years is an important determinant of school success (Children in Europe, 2008) then the issue of unequal access is an important one for individuals, families, social groups and is also related to economic growth and future competitiveness of a country (Dickens, Sawhill, & Tebbs, 2006; Rolnick & Grunewald, 2003). As we were concerned about patterns of disadvantage the research question explored in this focused on what type of service children from low income families were most likely to access. A focus of the discussion, drawn from the literature review, is the policy suggestion that the state should target low income groups and provide subsidized preschool as an equity measure.

- What kind of kindergarten provides ECEC service for children from low-income groups?

Surveys and interviews were conducted in 2007~2009 and were designed to identify different patterns of preschool access amongst families in Beijing and Yinchuan. The surveys asked about family characteristics; including age and gender of child, parent information; including education level, employment and income and early childhood education arrangements; including information on ownership and funding, quality, teacher ratios and qualifications and resources available. Another section of the questionnaire explored issues of access, such as, fees, distance from the home, hukou requirements (a registration system usually dependent on place of birth), whilst the last asked parents about their perception of the quality of the centre, their level of satisfaction and their own ideas about the significance of early education. Participant preschools were sourced by requesting local councils to nominate appropriate services and these were then approached. Participation was voluntary.

Using funding source as a way of categorizing preschools there are at least four kinds of kindergartens in this study. How services are financed can regulate supply in terms of both quantity and quality. Demand can also be influenced (Schuler-Harms, 2009). For early childhood services governments often provide a regulatory environment but then develop complex systems where some services are funded directly, or they may choose a voucher system so funding goes to the family and is a way of introducing a more market oriented approach to provision. The private sector is a major provider in many countries and this takes many forms from stand-alone services to large corporations. For this study four types of preschool provision were identified though, in Beijing, we were not able to collect data from a branch of a public kindergarten. All kindergartens surveyed were considered to be of above average quality. This assessment was based on their social reputation as reported by parents and local officials. The four types of kindergartens:

- Public kindergartens
- Branches of public kindergartens

- Transformed kindergartens
- Private kindergartens

Public Kindergartens

Government affiliated preschools are funded according to staffing levels and the qualifications of the staff. This is a “fiscal input system” that supports state specified standards and these kindergartens are listed as public institutions (Zeng, 2006, p.10). In this paper two public preschools in Beijing and one in Yinchuan have been surveyed.

Branches of Public Kindergartens (franchises that operate for a profit)

Branches of public preschools are run like private enterprises but are under the sponsorship of a public kindergarten. The centres are profit based but also receive the support of a trained early childhood educator to oversee the program and curriculum documents are available. In Yinchuan one branch of a public preschool participated, but none in Beijing.

Transformed Kindergartens (these were attached to State Owned Enterprises in the past)

These preschools were previously part of the social service function of a State Owned Enterprise (SOE) but economic reforms have seen these services turn to the market. Changes to SOEs and their ability to deliver social services have meant these preschools have suffered a loss of funding. As a result of this preschools, previously funded by an SOE, have become economic entities serving the enterprise with some being contracted, or leased, by an individual (Zeng, 2008). One kindergarten in Yinchuan and three in Beijing are discussed here.

Private Kindergartens

Like other countries China has a large private sector in the provision of early childhood services. Usually there will be no direct government funding for these enterprises that are operated for profit. They may be a small, stand-alone family business or a large corporation that owns and manages a number of large centres, or even operates a franchise system. One private preschool from Beijing and one from

Yinchuan has been sampled for this paper.

Table 1. *Distribution of Sample Kindergartens in Beijing and Yinchuan*

Kinds of kindergartens	Beijing		Yinchua	
	sample	Valid sample	sample	Valid sample
Public kindergarten	158	130	79	70
Branch of public kindergarten	-	-	78	71
Transformed kindergarten	109	71	67	56
Private kindergarten	59	45	70	55

In the surveys the variable household income was missed in some cases, so the valid cases are less than the number of parents surveyed. There was also a selective bias, especially in Beijing, where there are more public preschools. We have analyzed the data within each kind of preschool. Using descriptive statistics and scatterplot analysis we present information about the kind of preschool children from low-income groups had access to and we discuss the possible implications for policy development.

Findings

The results presented useful data from parent surveys from the four kinds of kindergartens in Beijing and Yinchuan.

Table 2 provides details of household income per year for families of children in each type of kindergarten for Beijing and Yinchuan. From this Table 2 we can see that the household income per year of families of children in public kindergartens is lower than in the transformed kindergartens on percentile 25, median and percentile 75. However, in Yinchuan, the household income of families per year using the transformed preschools is the lowest on percentile 25, median and percentile 75. At the same the household income per year of families using private preschools is, on the whole, higher than in the other kinds of kindergarten. This pattern is slightly different for the branch kindergarten in Yinchuan.

Table 2. *Household Income per year of Families with Children in Each Kind of Kindergarten*

Kinds of kindergarten	Household income per year					
	Beijing			Yinchuan		
	p25	p50	p75	p25	p50	p75
Public kindergarten	30,000	50,000	80,000	40,000	50,000	72,000
Transformed kindergarten	40,000	70,000	120,000	30,000	42,500	60,000
Branch of public kindergarten	-	-	-	48,000	60,000	80,000
Private kindergarten	72,000	100,000	180,000	40,000	60,000	100,000

To arrive at the composition of household income per year of families with children in each kind of kindergarten we divided the household income per year into four groups according to percentile values (Table 3). From this we can then see the percentages for each group for the different kinds of kindergarten in Beijing and Yinchuan.

Table 3. *Percentile Values of Household Income per Year in Beijing and Yinchuan*

City	Household income per year		
	p25	p50	p75
Beijing	40,000	60,000	100,000
Yinchuan	40,000	50,000	80,000

In this case, for Beijing, 25% of families had an income per year less than 40,000 RMB, 50% of families had an income under 60,000 RMB, while 75% of families had an income under 100,000 RMB. The figures for Yinchuan were 40,000, 50,000 and 80,000 RMB respectively.

Table 4. *Composition of Household Income per Year of Families with Children in Each Kind of Kindergarten in Beijing*

Household income per year	Public kindergarten		Transformed kindergarten		Private kindergarten	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
> 40,000	49	37.69	22	30.99	3	6.67
40,000 ~ 60,000	38	29.23	9	12.68	6	13.33
60,000 ~ 100,000	31	23.85	21	29.58	21	46.67
100,000 <	12	9.23	19	26.76	15	33.33

According to Table 4, 65% of the group whose household income was less than 60,000 RMB (the median level of household income per year), have children attending a public kindergarten. For this group child attendance at a transformed kindergarten was over 43%. 20% of this income group used a private kindergarten. Generally, the situation in Yinchuan was similar to Beijing (Table 5) with the main differences being in the percentage of household-income-under-400,000 and that the percentage of children attending a transformed kindergarten (66.07%) which was greater than that of the public kindergarten (58.57%).

Table 5. *Table Composition of Household Income per Year of Families with Children in Each Kind of Kindergarten in Yinchuan*

Family income per year	Public kindergarten		Branch of public kindergarten		Transformed kindergarten		Private kindergarten	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
> 40,000	22	31.43	15	21.13	28	50.00	18	32.73
40,000 ~ 50,000	19	27.14	12	16.90	9	16.07	7	12.73
50,000 ~ 80,000	14	20.00	32	45.07	9	16.07	15	27.27
80,000 <	15	21.43	12	16.90	10	17.86	15	27.27

Families in Beijing, with a household income of 60,000 RMB, were identified as being in a low income group. Families in Yinchuan with a household income of 40,000 RMB were similarly classified. This classification was based on the Chinese Statistics Bulletin (2008) for the two cities. In 2008 the average income per year of a worker in Beijing was 44,715 RMB and 33,247 RMB in Yinchuan. Most families had two parents working so the average household income per year in Beijing was 89,430 RMB, and in Yinchuan 66,494 RMB. Therefore, these two groups were in a low-income group. From this we extrapolated that the percentages of children from these two low household income groups, who attend public kindergartens and transformed kindergartens, are higher than the percentage of children from these groups who attend private kindergartens.

In the next section we use scatterplot analysis to provide a view of the relationship between household income per year and kindergarten fees. In order to compare the results of the two cities in the same framework we have generated an index of family income per year.

The calculation formula is: $\text{Index} = \text{family income per year} / \text{average family income per year}$.

This means the household income is under the average level if its index is less than 1.

The pattern of fees paid is erratic in the scatterplots and we explain this in two ways. One is the hukou system where even a child with urban hukou may pay a higher fee in a public centre if they are living and attending a kindergarten in a local authority area where they were not registered. Children with rural hukou in urban areas will also be expected to pay a higher fee. The second explanation is based on observational visits to different types of kindergartens. Most kindergartens offer extra classes and specialized services at an extra cost. Boarding and other fees for these children will be higher. Of the centres we visited one public and one transformed provided boarding facilities. One private kindergarten had a basic fee and then charged for most services, including lunch which was 12 RMB per day. This centre had an English speaking teacher in each class and the base fee was very high. Another private centre charged more for English, music and martial arts sessions.

Costs also were dictated by the age of the child and the length of the lesson. The public centre we visited had specialist English lessons the children could attend separately from the main program. A transformed kindergarten that was visited had a three tier fee structure depending on the type of program, for example Montessori, as well as offering specialist classes in English, eugenics, music and numeracy. Such arrangements led to vast differences in fees charged, even within the same institution.

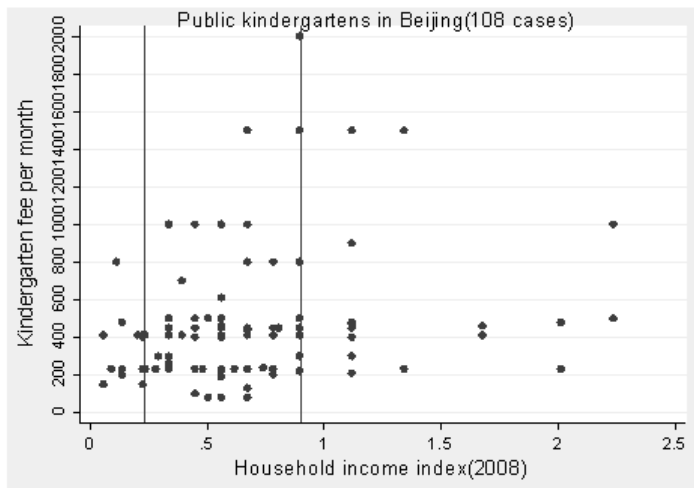


Figure 1. Scatterplot of kindergarten fees and household income index in public kindergartens in Beijing

In the above Figure (1) the x-axis is the household income index and the y-axis is the kindergarten fee per month. Each dot on the chart represents a family. From this scatterplot we can see that in the public kindergarten in Beijing the dots are concentrated in the area between the two red lines where the index is between 0.3 and 0.9. Most of the kindergarten fees per month were under 600 RMB.

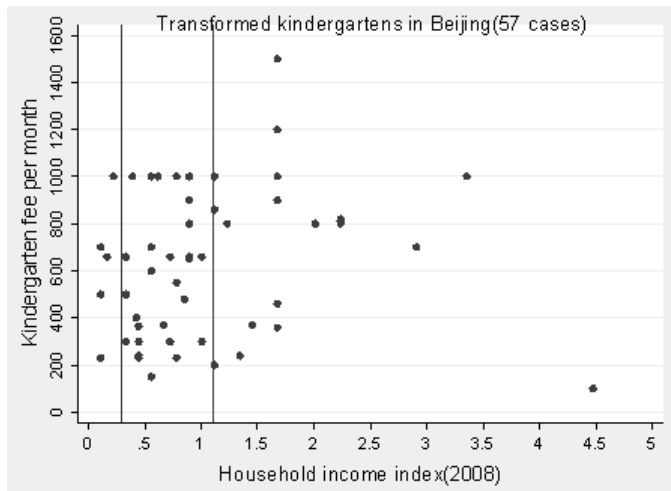


Figure 2. Scatterplot of kindergarten fees and household income index in the transformed kindergarten in Beijing

In the transformed kindergarten in Beijing the household index axis indicates the dots were concentrated in the area between 0.3 and 1.1 and the kindergarten fees, in many cases were, somewhat higher than the public kindergarten, although most were under 1,000 RMB per month.

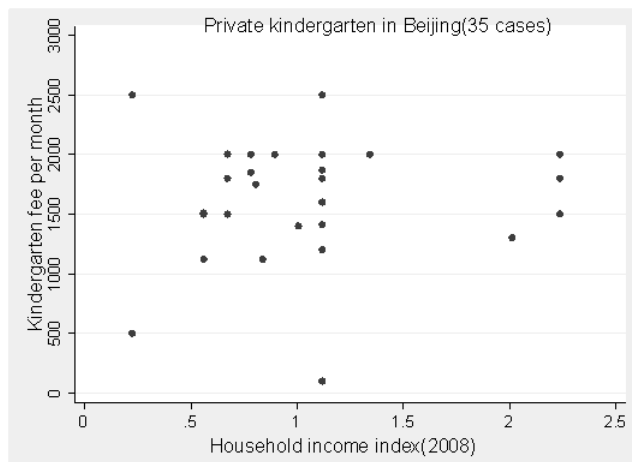


Figure 3. Scatterplot of kindergarten fees and household income index in the private kindergarten in Beijing

In Beijing the fee of the private kindergarten was much higher than the other two, public and transformed and the dots on this chart were more scattered than on the previous two figures. The index of most of the dots was above 0.5, and the index of half the dots was above 1. There were fewer children from low-income families and more children from high-income group families attending private the kindergarten.

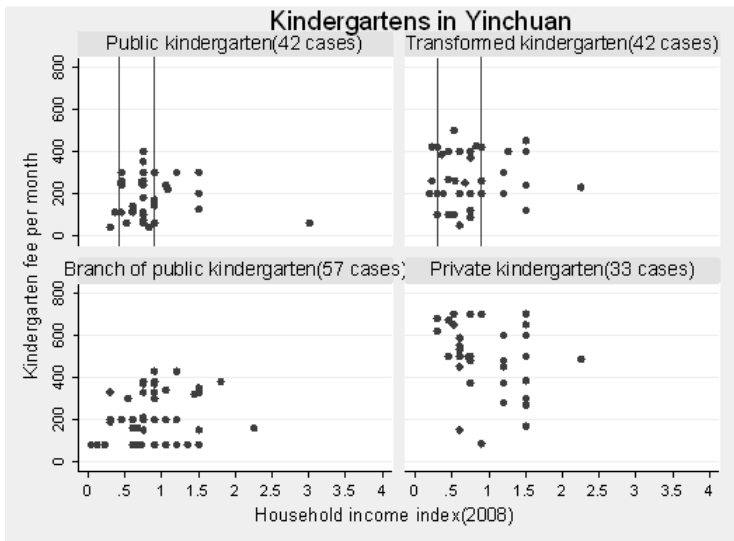


Figure 4. Scatterplot of kindergarten fee and household income index in kindergartens in Yinchuan

As regards to kindergartens in Yinchuan, the concentration of the dots indicates that in the public kindergarten and the transformed kindergarten the income index was largely under 1 for both types of kindergarten and the fee of these two kinds of kindergartens were mostly below 400 RMB per month. In the branch of the public kindergarten 65% of the children were from the low income group and the fees corresponded with those of the public kindergarten. In the private kindergarten 57% of children were from low income families and the fees were much higher.

Discussion

From the survey results presented here it would appear that public and transformed kindergartens are the main ECEC suppliers for children from families in low income groups in Beijing. This was also a pattern in Yinchuan with the branch of the public kindergarten also having a 65% attendance rate in the low income group and the fees were comparable to the public kindergarten. In Yinchuan the private kindergarten had 57% of enrollments from the low income group and fees were significantly higher than the other three services. Therefore the answer to the question: “What kind of kindergarten provides ECEC service for children from low-income groups?” would be all of them with some definite patterns of use suggesting affordability as an issue when choosing a kindergarten. This suggestion that affordability is a concern is supported by the erratic pattern of fees. The pattern of fees paid per month indicates that the majority of parents are paying for extra services and lessons. Presumably as much as they can afford and some from the low income group are paying a significant percentage of their household income to the kindergarten, the most extreme case being the private kindergarten in Beijing.

A Children in Europe Policy paper (2008) lists ten principles for the provision of quality children’s services. The first two principles are interconnected and are access and affordability. Access is described in terms of entitlement whilst the concept of affordability is extended into the realm of public responsibility. The paper supports the OECD Starting Strong 11 (2006) position that argues for direct state funding and free access. This is a model that produces most benefits for families and society. However, it is probably not a model that a country like China can presently think about adopting for reasons of cost, even if it was politically appropriate in a growing climate of marketisation. Proponents of the market support beliefs about the benefits of competition, individual choice and some would even argue inequity, is valuable as it encourages competition (Moss, 2009). However, public policy that has supported market growth has also needed to address the issue of market failure in relation to access of low income groups. Therefore to achieve a workable competitive early childhood education market the following conditions are necessary. Well-informed consumers, sufficient supply, subsidy for lower-income consumers and all providers

operate under the same conditions (Moss, 2009, p.11). These conditions are not present in China where the urban-rural divide has a profound impact on the amount of preschool education children can access as well as the quality.

The focus of the discussion was: “Should public kindergartens specifically provide services for the target population of children from low income groups?” In terms of allocative efficiency this is often a popular policy position. If government resources are limited and the service is not compulsory then the market may be able to distribute resources more effectively and the state can support the market in areas where conditions are less favourable. In the UK the Childcare Act of 2006 required local authorities to manage the market but not be direct providers (Penn, 2009). There is also an issue of quality in a market system and problems can be numerous. In the UK researchers have found there is a negative relation between price and quality. As early childhood services become more expensive parents may need to choose cheaper alternatives or parents may choose programs of lesser quality as they are not well-informed consumers. In Australia early childhood services provided by the ABC corporation, with substantial state funding, forced up prices whilst at the same time providing the poorest quality programs in the country (Rush & Downie, 2006). In this case subsidies were given directly to families, demand side funding, and there is evidence that this type of subsidy does not guarantee quality provision as it is often insufficient to supply a well-trained and qualified work-force which is a main determinant of quality (OECD, 2006).

The question remains what is the best way to provide for low income groups while maintaining standards and a diversity of users within a single centre to encourage social development for the society and culture. The Yinchuan pattern of use had one result that was different from Beijing. The branch of the public kindergarten had fees that were commensurate with the public kindergarten. In both locations the transformed kindergartens had fees that were higher than the public kindergarten but lower than the private centres. As all the centres studied had good reputations and ratings (a measure also used by Tobin et al, 2009) then the centres, transformed and a branch, were providing a service that was more affordable than the private sector. The transformed kindergartens were part of a previous social service system and are still an en-

tity on a local level and presumably also a part of their communities. Public kindergartens have government support and many have excellent reputations (Tobin et al., 2006). With appropriate support there is a possibility that transformed kindergartens could play a greater role in educating children from all income groups. The branch of the public kindergarten could also supply a quality service at the same cost as the public kindergarten. Both options should be of interest to policy makers.

Moss's (2009) concept of democratic experimentalism was mentioned earlier. Under this model the early childhood "service is not a provider of a private commodity to a customer. [It is] ... an expression of a community taking collective responsibility for the education and upbringing of its young children" (p.34). Using Unger and Dewey to support his description of democratic experimentalism Moss describes centres operating under such a model to be "spaces in the public realm" (p.34) that are inclusive and responsive to local needs. There are important connections between legislation and regulation at a national level being expressed as participatory democracy at a local level. The question of entitlement is crucial, funding systems that make participation possible, a curriculum framework that defines broad goals and integrated policies. The development of the workforce is important and strategies are needed that are designed to reduce inequalities between urban and rural services.

In this paper we have examined centres in rural China and Beijing and studied the fees and types of centre families in this study were able to access. There were enormous differences in affordability and the literature review revealed shortfalls in policy development (Zeng, 2008). We have commented on the market model as being problematic in supporting low income groups and have mentioned an alternative way of thinking about early childhood educational services. These are conversations that are needed if policy is to be developed that will assist in the development of human capital and individual and community well-being.

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