

# Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	vii
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	ix
Introduction: Path-dependencies and Change in Child-care and Preschool Institutions in Europe – Historical and Institutional Perspectives <i>Kirsten Scheiwe and Harry Willekens</i>	1
1 Public Child Care in Europe: Historical Trajectories and New Directions <i>Thomas Bahle</i>	23
2 How and Why Belgium Became a Pioneer of Preschool Development <i>Harry Willekens</i>	43
3 Public Child Care and Preschools in France: New Policy Paradigm and Path-dependency <i>Claude Martin and Blanche Le Bihan</i>	57
4 Child Care in Spain after 1975: the Educational Rationale, the Catholic Church, and Women in Civil Society <i>Celia Valiente</i>	72
5 The Paradox of Public Preschools in a Familist Welfare Regime: the Italian Case <i>Eva Maria Hohnerlein</i>	88
6 Public and Private: the History of Early Education and Care Institutions in the United Kingdom <i>Helen Penn</i>	105
7 Danish Child-Care Policies within Path – Timing, Sequence, Actors and Opportunity Structures <i>Anette Borchorst</i>	126
8 Child Care as an Issue of Equality and Equity: The Example of the Nordic Countries <i>Pirkko-Liisa Rauhala</i>	142

9	The Politics of (De)centralisation: Early Care and Education in France and Sweden <i>Michelle J. Neuman</i>	157
10	Slow Motion – Institutional Factors as Obstacles to the Expansion of Early Childhood Education in the FRG <i>Kirsten Scheiwe</i>	180
11	Private Family and Institutionalised Public Care for Young Children in Germany and the United States, 1857–1933: An Analysis of Pedagogical Discourses <i>Meike Sophia Baader</i>	196
12	Maternalism and Truncated Professionalism – Historical Perspectives on Kindergarten Teachers <i>Ursula Rabe-Kleberg</i>	210
13	Money Matters – Experiments in Financing Public Child Care <i>Margarete Schuler-Harms</i>	222
14	Basic Legal Principles of Public Responsibility for Children <i>Ingo Richter</i>	234
	<i>Index</i>	247

# Introduction: Path-dependencies and Change in Child-care and Preschool Institutions in Europe – Historical and Institutional Perspectives

*Kirsten Scheiwe and Harry Willekens*

## **1 The approach – historical, institutional, comparative**

Public child care and collective forms of education in early childhood have already been well researched, not only from a national but also from a comparative perspective.<sup>1</sup> It might not be very productive to add to this literature, were it not that the available research is strongly dominated by a relatively short-range social policy perspective. Where comparison is practised, it focuses on developments of the last decades, which are virtually all connected with the rise in mothers' labour market participation and the ensuing increase in the need for public child-care arrangements.<sup>2</sup> Broadening the temporal horizon of our view to include long-range developments since the nineteenth century allows us to see questions bound to be rendered invisible by the shorter-range perspective.

As will become clear throughout this book, present-day tendencies in the development of public child care and of preschool organisations have their roots in different national traditions, themselves having their origins in different eras of social and economic development. These traditions have been crystallised in different institutions, in socially and legally structured ways of doing things which tend to facilitate the introduction of some innovations and to stand in the way of others. To

understand the development of public child care and preschool organisations and the range of accessible solutions for contemporary social policy issues, it is imperative to see how these institutions create openings at the same time as being obstacles for certain kinds of solutions. For that reason, an institutional perspective and a focus on the issue of path-dependency are central to this book.

It cannot, of course, be the purpose of this book to further develop the theory of path-dependency<sup>3</sup>. Path-dependency for our purposes is just a means to better understand the development of preschool systems in the different European countries. We start with the notion of path-dependency as ‘processes in which choices made in the past systematically constrain the choices open in the future’ (Myles and Pierson, 2001, p. 306), which may lead to ‘institutional stickiness’. In our research into and interpretation of changes and historical turning points we come close to the ideas of Hall (1993), who distinguishes changes of different orders. There are the overarching goals of policy-making, the policy instruments and the precise settings of these instruments. From this distinction three orders of change follow. First-order change is a process whereby *instrument settings* are changed while the overall goals and instruments of policy remain the same. Second-order change involves altering the *instruments of policy* as well as their settings, but still leaves the overall policy goals untouched, while third-order change is marked by the radical changes in the overarching terms of policy discourse associated with a paradigm shift.

The question whether and to what extent a given path, once entered upon, pushes social policy in a given direction and keeps it from developing in other directions is dealt with by most of the authors of this book, but keeping an open mind. We investigate *as a matter of fact* whether the ways of organising public child care chosen – or more probably stumbled upon – in the past have shaped the later development of child-care policies, closed off certain venues, prevented debates from getting underway and/or stimulated innovative policy steps. Important questions in this respect have proven to be: how competences regarding child care are divided between state and church<sup>4</sup>; whether decision-making on child-care issues is centralised on the state level, decentralised towards lower levels of the polity or entirely left to private initiative<sup>5</sup>; whether public care for children under school age is defined as a matter of education, of protection or of the emancipation of women (and, as a corollary, which political actors are supposed to produce discourses and policies with regard to public child care).<sup>6</sup>

Our approach in this book is comparative and interdisciplinary. The comparative study of the institutional structures underlying the provision of public child care obviously requires an input from sociology, political science and history, but also from the law. Most of the relevant institutional factors take a legal form, and, though the analysis of this form is far from sufficient to understand in how far institutions steer policies onto predestined paths, it is nevertheless indispensable: the fixedness which the law gives to institutions and the rigidity of the procedures which have to be followed to change the law form additional barriers to straying from the path entered upon. Although the leading research questions of this book are not of a pedagogical nature, the pedagogical perspective also has an important role to play here. The pedagogical goals pursued by preschool public child care and the historical shifts in these goals are of obvious importance in the formation of social policies, as appears from the contributions of Penn, Baader, Borchorst and Rabe-Kleberg in this volume.

The need for a comparative approach does not only follow from scholarly concerns. The policy issues under study here have in the meantime acquired a European dimension.<sup>7</sup> The European Council set targets for child-care development in the EU at the summit of Barcelona in 2002: in 2010, 33 percent of children under three years old and 90 percent of children aged from three to obligatory school age must have access to a form of child care in order to diminish disincentives for women's employment. If one wants to be able to foresee the difficulties which countries may have in meeting such international targets and to understand why some can meet them effortlessly, it is necessary to take a look at the differences between the countries and to try to understand the causes of these differences. We have tried to accomplish the comparative goals pursued with this book by the inclusion of three kinds of contributions. Bahle's general overview of developments in a wide range of European countries is followed on the one hand by a series of country studies (Willekens on Belgium, Martin and Le Bihan on France, Valiente on Spain, Hohnerlein on Italy, Scheiwe on Germany, Penn on the United Kingdom, Borchorst on Denmark and Rauhala on the other Nordic countries), and on the other hand by several essays exploring specific issues by way of restricted and focused comparisons (Neuman on centralisation/decentralisation in France and Sweden, Richter on the basic legal principles of public responsibility for children, Schuler-Harms on models of financing public child care, particularly focusing on Germany and France, Baader on the relevance of pedagogical paradigms in the United States and Germany, Rabe-Kleberg on guiding

ideologies such as maternalism and their impact on differences in professionalism in early childhood education).

## **2 Different policy motives: ideal types of the institutionalisation of child care**

Looking at European developments from a long-range historical perspective, two *policy motives* for institutionalising public child care and early childhood education can be discovered. One is the idea that even children below the age of obligatory schooling are in *need of public education* (an idea which presupposes children to be already of an age at which they can be publicly educated). The other is to promote the *reconciliation of care work and paid work* – a goal which may justify public child care for children of any age. These motives of course do not in themselves constitute social policies. They are ideal types from which particular sets of organisational and institutional principles can be derived and from which different kinds of questions and problems follow. No actually existing system conforms in its entirety to the logic of one of the ideal types; looking at the degree to which reality corresponds to an ideal type and at the ways in which the two ideal types are combined within a public child care system which really exists enables us, however, to see how the different systems are positioned in relation to each other. The ideal types tie in with dominant notions of gender and class relations and thus make it also easier to see how such notions are incorporated within different social policies.

Policies inscribed within one of the ideal types may nevertheless have different roots and be embedded in different ideologies of the family and of its relation to the state and to society at large. The first ‘foundational idea’, the notion that young children are in need of public education, comes in many variations, which, however, may be grouped into two basic types, one child-centred, the other state- or society-centred.

There are different strains of the child-centred variety. One is the idea that normal child development is only possible if from a certain age onwards children are together with other children and adults from outside the family. Another rests on the presumption that even young children benefit from systematic, school-like learning (see especially Valiente on Spain and Willekens on Belgium, and also the contributions on Italy and France in this volume); the reason why they do not simply attend school is then no more than that young children have special needs which make it advisable from a practical point of view to separate them from the older schoolchildren. Kindergartens are in

this case explicitly conceived as parts of the public educational system and as preparatory to school. The supply of public child care may also be rooted in ideas of equal opportunities for children from different social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds: the inevitable inequalities resulting from differences in children's family backgrounds have to be compensated by the availability of public educational services equally accessible to all. Ironically, this last notion has been the most influential in the Nordic countries (see Rauhala in this volume), where over the last centuries social, cultural and linguistic cleavages have been *less* pronounced than in other parts of Europe (Battail, Boyer and Fournier, 1992).

There is, of course, also a collective interest dimension to all of these reasons why public child care is good for children. It is in the obvious interest not only of the children themselves, but also of society and the state, for children to be integrated and educated and for the talents of the socially deprived to be saved by equal opportunities policies. But young children's need for public education may also be justified more directly by the interests of the state or society. To integrate all within the state, it may be deemed necessary to inculcate the values of the political system in the citizens from the youngest possible age: such was the main reason given for the early development of the preschool system in France (see Martin/Le Bihan and Willekens in this volume) and one of the reasons for generalised preschoolisation in the former Communist countries of Eastern Europe. A similar argument may even be decisive in a society *without* a strong state, as is shown in Baader's contribution to this volume: in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, kindergartens were strongly argued for in the United States on the ground that a culturally mixed migration society can make its new members into citizens only by virtue of imbuing them with the same set of basic values.

It is from the first foundational idea, that is young children's need for public education, that the first preschool systems developed which were universalist in both their ideology and practice. In Belgium and France, the idea that it is normal or even necessary for children between three and six to attend kindergarten was already well-established by the early twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> At least in urban areas, kindergarten attendance became generalised in these countries at a time at which it was still a minority phenomenon in all other countries. In one sense, these developments were no more than straightforward consequences of the pedagogical goals pursued by kindergartens: if children should attend kindergarten to be taught republican values (France) or to be

well prepared for life in a modern society (Belgium), then it follows from this that *all* children should be targeted. What calls for an explanation, however, is that this ideo-logic was translated into the generous allocation of public money to the preschool sector at a time when the welfare state was only just budding in both countries, and that this breakthrough took place in overwhelmingly Catholic countries where a strong ideal of the mother as caretaker/homemaker was dominant (Lenoir, 2003). As can be gathered from Willekens' and Bahle's contributions to this book, the explanation for the willingness of the State to pay for kindergartens is to be found in the fierce competition between the State and the Church in these countries – which explains why the pioneers of the universal supply of kindergartens were Catholic countries: in Protestant countries there simply was no religious organisation with sufficient power to challenge the hegemony of the state and thus to drive it to invest in kindergartens. The kindergarten system as it developed in France and Belgium also proved to be reconcilable with the prevailing ideology of motherhood. Kindergarten attendance was not – as in public child-care systems targeting working mothers' children – conceived as an alternative to motherly care, but as a supplement to it, as a means of smoothing the transition from the unique mother–child relation to participation in the school community; and the kindergarten teachers were supposed to emulate maternal attitudes and behaviour.

Pedagogical goals, whether child-centred, state-centred or both, were present in early developments in public child care in nearly all the countries under review in this book, and such developments were therefore nearly all carrying the seeds of universalism. For several reasons, though, outside France and Belgium those seeds were unable to grow into something substantial. For one thing, in most cases there were no forces pushing the state to make the preschool sector into a budgetary priority. Left to their own financing, preschools, whatever their underlying ideology, could not blossom into universalism. For another thing, the child-centred pedagogical goals were in some countries either pursued by the bourgeoisie alone or defined diversely by different social classes, with the result that no pedagogical platform for a universal provision existed (see for example Penn on the United Kingdom and Rabe-Kleberg on Germany in this volume).

The second basic motive for having public child care (the *reconciliation of care with paid work*) also comes in different varieties. The main purpose of policies of this kind may be *to protect children* whose both parents or single parent are so unfortunate as to have to work to earn

a family income – this was, historically, the first wave of policy in the nineteenth century, addressed towards the children of parents working in agriculture or industry who left their children unattended and on their own. The consequence of such a goal formulation is, of course, that public child care should only be provided to those in dire need of it, so that it remains residual and targeted; a public child-care system covering the whole population can never be built on this foundation. The main policy goal may also be *to liberate women* from their economic dependence on men by enabling them to enter the labour market (or to diminish children's poverty risks through maternal employment), *or to liberate women's labour power* so as to make it available for the market and enhance economic efficiency (as in the actual debates on the 'social investment strategy'; see the contribution of Martin and Le Bihan).

On the face of it, the two main policy motives ought to have very different implications for the organisation of public child care for pre-school children: a system pursuing educational goals tends, as already mentioned, to be universalist – all children must be educated – whereas a system aiming for the reconciliation of paid work and care might be expected to target those children whose working parents are unavailable for care. This correlation holds very well for the period before 1970. From the 1970s onwards, the correlation starts to break down, as is witnessed by the development of a universal supply of preschool places in the Nordic countries, which had started out with a residual and targeted child-care system<sup>9</sup>. The obvious explanation is that universalism may also be derived from our second policy motive, but only on condition that the *whole* adult population is supposed to be in paid work – which has been the tendency in the Nordic countries over the last decades and which is also the implied goal of European policies, illustrated by, for example the Lisbon and Barcelona targets.

The two ideal-typical policy motives have quite distinct implications for class relations. In the *educational model* access is not class-related, while the *reconciliation model* in its narrowest interpretation focuses on children in need and on poor parents who have to work; child-care institutions are then seen as a makeshift for the lower classes, as was the case in the nineteenth century. Even in a broader understanding, the reconciliation model has to work with priorities: if places in public child care are scarce, children with both parents or a single parent in employment or children 'at risk' with disadvantaged family backgrounds will get preferential access. If a parent loses her employment, the child may lose its place in a child-care institution (as used to be

the case in Sweden until 2002, but not in Denmark<sup>10</sup>), or the child of a mother who is a housewife or temporarily at home to care for another child may be excluded. A system which gives preference to working parents' children – and, among them, to the children of the disadvantaged – gives those parents not fulfilling the conditions of access and especially the better-off an incentive to look for alternative modes of child care, with the result that two tiers of child care can emerge: one for the working class and one for the bourgeoisie (see, for example, Penn's article in this volume). Such a split also occurs in systems in which the two basic motives for public child care exist side by side; it emerged for instance in nineteenth-century Germany, where daycare for lower-class children coexisted with the Fröbel kindergartens frequented by the middle classes (see Scheiwe). It is much less likely in those unambiguously education-oriented systems in which all children are assumed to attend preschools, as has been the case for many decades in France and Belgium and has recently become the rule in Spain and Italy; in such systems, not having attended preschool is a handicap upon school entry, and the well-off therefore have a disincentive for developing alternative private solutions for child care. This is not to say, though, that the educational model cannot also produce its alternatives: as appears from the texts of Valiente and Martin/Le Bihan in this volume, some features of the educational model (long school holidays, fixed hours not necessarily concurring with parents' working hours) are not optimally adapted to the needs of working parents. As a result, alternative child-care arrangements (such as professional childminders working in their own home, or nannies) flourish as a *supplement* to the public supply.

### **3 Developmental paths, policy arenas, actors, institutional dimensions and constraints**

Even if both of the foundational policy motives can end up with universalism, they can make a big difference in terms of development paths, of the institutional assignment of child care to different policy arenas (educational policy, employment policy, welfare policy, family policy, gender policies) and of the principles by which public child care is organised. The two models may make differences with regard to the assignment of legislative, administrative and financial competences to different actors within the state, to the degree of centralisation and decentralisation of competences, to the training requirements of the staff, to the question whether access to public child care is free

or fee-bound, etc. Let us take a look at a simplified overview of the institutional dimensions affected by the different goal-setting of public child-care systems:

<b>Institutional dimensions</b>	<b>'Educational model'</b>	<b>'Work-care reconciliation model'</b>
Access	Universal	Targeted
Entitled person	Child	Parent/child with special needs
Pedagogical concept	Educational goals (learning)	Mainly care
Group size and organisation	Relatively big groups (similar to school classes)	Smaller groups
Professionalisation of staff, payment	Teacher training and pay	Lower level of professional education and payment than teachers
Fees	No fees for school (eventually for meals etc.)	Subsidised, but parental fees
Financing bodies	As for schools (national or regional financing)	Mixed financing with a share of communal authorities (less centralised)
Administrative competence	School authorities	Social welfare authorities
Time patterns	Opening hours and holidays like schools	Varying

Some European countries can, for the whole of the period under review here, unambiguously be categorised as belonging to the left or right side of this table. Belgium, France, Luxemburg, Italy, and Spain clearly follow an educational model for children above the age of three or two. Other countries clearly started out with a residual reconciliation model exclusively or predominantly targeting the working poor, but, with the extension of this model to more and more children, pedagogical considerations unavoidably had to enter the equation. The general trend is that these countries move in the direction of the educational model; the idea that learning and education are important also for very young children nowadays tends to become more and more accepted. However, moves in this direction happen among the countries of the 'work-care reconciliation model' at different speeds, to varying degrees and in varying combination with other policy goals and arenas, such as

(un)employment policy, antipoverty policy or family policy. In some countries, even basic organisational and legal principles (such as the division of competences between the education and social welfare administrations, decentralisation or centralisation, financing modes) are subject to change, whereas in other countries their unchangeability proves to be a stumbling block for any reforms whatsoever. For example: in Sweden, in 1996 child-care institutions were renamed 'preschool' institutions and the relevant decision-making competences were hence shifted from the social welfare ministry to the education ministry (although the competence – and duty – to organise preschool services remained with the local authorities) (see Neuman); in Germany, on the contrary, modernisation is retarded as a result of the complex distribution of legislative, administrative and financing competences between the Federal state, the regional and the local authorities, which stands in the way of any swift change (see Scheiwe and Richter). The United Kingdom has to be considered as a case apart here, since the regulatory level of child care and early childhood education has been traditionally very low and much was left to the market, while many changes have been introduced since 1997.

#### **4 Critical junctures and radical shifts or smooth adaptation and slow motion?**

A central question of the different contributions collected in this book is whether and how change happened, whether there was a move – particularly in countries starting out with the 'work-care reconciliation' model – from a targeted towards a universal model, whether shifts towards the educational model happened even at some institutional levels, but not at others. One of the predictions of path-dependency theory is that path-dependency leads to institutional stickiness and that it is very difficult to change the shape institutions have been given by past political decisions. A distinction is made between, on the one hand, path-dependent reforms as 'incremental modifications of existing policies' (Hall, 1993, p. 278), which usually happen continuously, through marginal and unspectacular adaptations, and radical changes on the other hand. Fundamental change may happen, and 'critical junctures' (Collier and Collier, 1991) can be identified which bring about rapid change in a short time. But path-dependency implies that this will be the case only under particular external and internal pressures, especially in times of revolutions, war, catastrophes, occupation, high pressure by actors or the breakdown of parts of the system. Applying

this conceptual distinction to our story, we investigate the course of reform processes (if any): did radical change occur, did the systems change by incremental, possibly smooth modifications or have they got stuck in stasis? Answering these questions is complicated by the fact that making the distinction between modifications and fundamental changes or between the three orders of change theorised by Hall (see above) is not so easy in practice. Applying these distinctions only makes sense if changes are measured starting from a clear point of reference in the past – ideally from the same point in time for all the national systems under review, but this makes little sense in practice, because for some countries (e.g., Belgium and France) path-defining events already took place during the nineteenth century, whereas for other countries (e.g., the Nordic countries or Britain) very little is to be reported for this era.

Let us now, always keeping in mind the two basic paradigms of public child care, take a look at what our authors have found.

The countries represented in our research which follow the ‘educational’ paradigm are the forerunners of preschool education, Belgium and France, and the latecomers Italy and Spain.

Willekens argues that Belgium, besides France the most important pioneer in preschool development, presents a strong case of path-dependency. The path was cut out as early as the 1880s, a period of struggles over education between the State and the Catholic Church which led to ‘pillarisation’ and competition in the educational sector. As a result of this unusually fierce competition, Belgium was the first country in the world to approach universal availability of kindergarten places.

Martin and Le Bihan investigate the French case. On the basis of an in-depth historical and institutional analysis of the development of different family policy instruments in France from the late nineteenth century onwards, they argue that French developments, focused as they have always been on the goal of educating children, show a good deal of continuity. They argue that preschool development has been a strongly path-dependent process since a first law of 1887 institutionalised preschools as a part of public education. However, the picture looks different if arrangements for younger children below preschool age and the whole of child-care policies are taken into consideration. Martin and Le Bihan argue that child-care policies reached a turning point during the 1990s, when tackling unemployment and employment policy gained priority over other considerations and the reform of child-care policies was used as a way to restructure the labour market. The 1990s brought a

move towards reconciling work and family responsibilities and the introduction of the 'free choice' option for parents. This argument is backed up by Neuman in her comparison of changes in governance in France and Sweden during the processes of decentralisation between 1980 and 2005. She points to the differences between preschool development and trends in service provision for children from birth to three in the French bifurcated system. France thus clearly belongs to the educational paradigm only with regard to children in the preschool age group (from two till the age of obligatory schooling).

The latecomers within the educational paradigm are Italy and Spain. Hohnerlein sees the turning point towards the development of preschools in Italy in 1968, when the Act on Establishing Maternal Schools was adopted (Act 44/1968), which transformed the former residual approach of targeted welfare intervention for children into a universal one, conceptualising child-care institutions as places of education and instruction. Former struggles between the Catholic Church and the State over schooling had not led to the rise of new concepts until a State–Church compromise was reached in 1968. For Hohnerlein, the driving forces of change in 1968 were the changing power relations in the political system and a consensus on the need for modernisation of system and the educational system.

The other latecomer is Spain. Valiente analyses 30 years of child-care development after the breakdown of fascism in 1975, when post-authoritarian policy-makers converted a preschool programme of limited coverage into a nearly universal educational scheme. Particular attention is paid to the role of the Catholic Church as a principal actor in education, interested in the expansion of preschooling as long as part of it is private and subsidised by the state, as well as to the position of women in civil society and the women's movement. Spain is a strong example of a country developing early childhood facilities on the foundation of an educational paradigm and within the institutional framework of public education. Even care for children under three is administered by educational, not by welfare authorities. This may have its shortcomings; Valiente argues that the features of the preschool setting cause difficulties for working mothers, since the characteristics of the preschool model – long holidays, big groups/classes, rigid hours – are too inflexible and do not satisfy working mothers' needs.

With regard to these countries of the educational paradigm, attention should be drawn to one conclusion of Bahle's research into the variations in public child care in Europe from the late nineteenth

century onwards. Bahle finds that the initial stronger State–Church competition in Catholic countries from early on led to higher levels of provision than in religiously mixed countries. Welfare pluralism or welfare competition (especially between State and Church), the conflict over the decision-making competences regarding education and socialisation, and the issue of the legitimacy of state intervention into the family are seen to have played an important and path-setting role. Bahle explains the variations between the national systems with reference to different historical trajectories. The first trajectory was related to industrialisation and nation-building, and in this historical context the main issue was education. The second historical trajectory (starting in the early 1970s) was the transition to a service economy and the rise of female employment. In this second historical context the main issue is not education but family policy. This argument is helpful to understand why even the historical pioneers of early childhood education, the countries with the educational paradigm, at a later historical stage were confronted with the problem of integrating educational policies with other political goals stemming from different political arenas, such as gender equality, the compatibility of employment and family life, antipoverty issues or the reduction of unemployment. But in different policy arenas distinct internal logics and regulations prevail and different actors are at work. Different policy arenas are combined in varying modes, which makes international comparison a very complex undertaking. From a comparative perspective, however, the educational paradigm shows a higher degree of stability and path-dependency than the ‘reconciliation approach’.

Looking now at the countries representing this second paradigm (in this book: Germany, the Nordic countries, the United Kingdom), one can observe that the ‘work–care reconciliation model’ has undergone a variety of policy changes at different stages in time and different institutional levels. Again, the question is what has happened at ‘critical junctures’ and how change should be characterised – as path-dependent smooth adaptation, even stickiness, or as a paradigm shift. It has already been mentioned that the model which started out as a residual approach targeting children and families with particular needs can develop towards a universal approach and move in the direction of the educational model. Such a transition, however, runs into special difficulties and has to do battle with institutional constraints inherent to the residual welfare approach.

Borchorst argues that in Denmark a transition from a residual to a universal approach has occurred. The Danish model is characterised by

a high level of public commitment, the principle of universalism and social-pedagogical objectives. The critical path-breaking development occurred in 1964 as universalism replaced the former residual approach as the guiding principle of child-care policies. To explain continuity and change, Borchorst goes back to the historical development from 1919 onwards, when the social-pedagogical tradition was institutionalised and the path was set. For the next 45 years public child care was based on the principle of residualism. Public subsidies were only granted on condition that two-thirds of the children in a kindergarten came from low-income families. As in Britain and other countries, the starting point in Denmark was a two-tier, class-based child-care model, but in Denmark (as opposed to, for example, Germany or the United Kingdom) this was gradually replaced by people's kindergartens. A change in the financing principles was an important step towards universalism. The change to universalism was framed in relation to children's needs and educational arguments, while women's employment and gender considerations did not play a central role in framing policy at the beginning of the 1960s – the time analysed as a critical juncture by Borchorst. Obviously, the extensive child-care facilities foster and allow the high female employment participation in Denmark; but access of a child to a place in kindergarten has not been linked to the employment status of the mother – the child-centred discourse stands in the way of a child losing its place in kindergarten if the mother becomes unemployed (contrary to Sweden, where a child of an unemployed parent or of a mother at home, up to 2002, had no right to a place in kindergarten). All in all, Denmark takes a special position within the comparative spectrum. The first decades of the development of public child care in Denmark are clearly to be situated within the social welfare paradigm. There then occurred a switch to the pedagogical paradigm, which, however, did not require fundamental changes in the organisation of public child care, because social-pedagogical considerations – albeit originally restricted to the lower classes – had always been central to the structure of public child care.

This book does not contain a country report on Sweden as such, but the developments in Sweden are dealt with by Bahle in his comparative contribution, by Rauhala, who focuses on the common features of the organisation of public child care in the Nordic countries as they have developed mainly since the 1970s, and by Neuman in her comparative contribution on decentralisation trends and governance changes in Sweden and France since the mid-1970s. Bahle explains the development of child-care institutions towards universalism in the Protestant

Scandinavian countries by 'integration' as the institutional mode of Scandinavian child-care systems. By 'integration' is meant the absence of cultural divisions and conflicts and the weakness of class antagonism. Integration also means that children are seen primarily as individual members of society, not as members of a family. This explanation helps to understand how the Scandinavian countries, though starting from a residual welfare model, could nevertheless find the path towards universalism. At the institutional level, important steps in Sweden were the shift of decision-making competences from the ministry of social welfare to the ministry of education in 1996, the change of the name of the services from child care to preschool in 1998, and changes in the financing and organisational principles in the direction of decentralisation. The importance of pedagogical concepts was emphasised through the introduction of national curricula for children aged one to five in 1998. Subjective rights of children to kindergarten places were gradually extended, but were for a long time based on a targeted approach making the employment of the parent/s a precondition for the child's entitlement. This last restriction fell only in 2002, when children of non-employed parents became entitled to at least three hours' child care a day.

Germany is an example within this group where strong path-dependency has led to stickiness in the expansion of early childhood education. Scheiwe analyses the German case as a 'late-comer' in the expansion of early childhood education and explains this slow motion historically (going back to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). Institutional constraints, especially legal features of federalism, the resulting split of legislative and administrative competences between the federal state, the regional authorities and local municipalities, and the presence of rules inhibiting efficient political cooperation between the federal and the regional authorities (named the 'joint decision trap' by the political scientist Scharpf, 1988) have played an important role as impediments to the expansion of public child care. A rigid institutional separation between kindergarten and child care on the one hand and schools and formal education on the other hand is upheld by institutional rules and by a lack of political consensus among actors with competing interests in a federal system of multilevel governance. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, child-care institutions have been conceptualised as targeted welfare services for families in need and were integrated into the social welfare sector, administered and financed by the municipalities. As the social welfare sector is subject to the legal principle of subsidiarity (see Richter in this volume),

which posits that the state only has to intervene when intermediary organisations fail to do so, the Churches and other nongovernmental organisations play a dominant role in the field; they are in fact the biggest employers of child-care staff in Germany. This whole approach was reinforced by a traditional family and gender model in (Western) Germany (see also Rabe-Kleberg). The first wave of expansion in the 1990s only became possible as a result of the German unification of 1989 and the incorporation of the formerly socialist GDR, in which public child care had been a universal provision. And the actual plans towards an upgrading of rights to early childhood education for under-threes are a result of EU targets and of political compromises within a great coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, which move towards retarded modernisation – but on a fragile basis, since some actors might be tempted to question the constitutional basis of the compromise package and bring the Federal Constitutional Court into play, an important actor in German politics with the power to reverse even the slow motion visible at present.

The United Kingdom is a country which, even up to the present, has been comparatively slow and hesitant in developing public child care. Helen Penn minutely analyses the relevant developments and the ideological debates surrounding them since the nineteenth century. She points to the importance which social class has always had and still has in the provision of different kinds of child care in the United Kingdom. Over the last years, there have been several initiatives to restructure public child care in the United Kingdom, but the author argues that they have not brought any spectacular breakthroughs and have tended to subject the organisation of child care to the logic of the market. Thus, the door to universalism in Britain was shut by the strong class barriers and the split system involving a public system for the poor and a private one for the better-off (see Bahle in this volume, who describes the British system as a pattern of ‘separation’ in terms of social class). It is difficult to classify the British system as it does not properly fit either of the two paradigms described here. The residual system of nursery schools for the poor was traditionally integrated into the school system, following an educational paradigm (however limited, and with strong emphasis on social control). Compared with the state nurseries, there were only a few local authority day nurseries, and even these were under the inspection and control of the Educational Board – arguments which might lead us to assign the British case to the first paradigm. However, the public sector of early childhood education was closely linked to class politics for the poor, while the better-off

classes relied on nannies, private schools, boarding schools and private services, so that the guiding paradigm is separation, not universal education. One might characterise the British model as a 'targeted educational approach' instead of a universal one; a model apart and an exceptional case within the 'educational paradigm', which is normally associated with universalism.

With regard to recent developments under New Labour since 1997, opinions are split. Is this a significant, path-breaking change, or simply a gradual catching-up process? In England, ministries have been reorganised and all children's services are under the Department for Children, Schools and Families (the former Department for Education and Skills). Children aged three and four have guaranteed access to nursery education in schools (although on a part-time basis). Employed parents of children aged 0 to 5 have access to nurseries outside the school system, and fees are subsidised by child-care tax credits. Separate targeted programmes were developed (see Penn for a detailed account). Is this a path-breaking development and a radical shift? Penn says no; the public-private split has been upheld, and a turn towards an equitable system would require public funding and a separate and coherent system of education and care, not watered-down schooling or a commercial baby park. Bahle agrees in so far as he considers separation along class lines still to be characterising the child care system in the United Kingdom, but points out that the whole range of innovations which have taken place in the United Kingdom over the last decade appear to move the system away from its initial paradigm of child care as a private matter.

## **5 Cleavages, actors, power relations**

In the field of early childhood education, we deal with relationships between different groups of actors: the State, the churches and parents, especially mothers, play a role in the provision of education, socialisation and care for children. Ideological notions of how children should be raised and of what they need come into play. Different paths may be set depending on whether children are perceived primarily as future citizens or as members of the private family, on whether they are perceived as being more in need of 'citizenship education' than of 'home-made education',<sup>11</sup> or on whether the provision of such services is seen as a state task or left mainly to the family, the state stepping in only as a last resort for children deprived of maternal care, as used to be the case in the United Kingdom (Penn in this volume).

The assignment of responsibilities to maternal or family care and/or to publicly provided or financed education for young children has important gender implications which go beyond the reconciliation issue. The status of educational work and the professionalisation of educational activities are affected at different levels, such as training and career opportunities, pay, recognition of skills and abilities etc. of professionals as teachers or as lower-paid and less trained educators (Oberhuemer and Ulich, 1997). The history of the professions and of different associations and unions in this area provide rich material for an understanding of the struggles about recognition and status and about exclusion and inclusion (see Rabe-Kleberg on maternalism and professionalism in this volume).

Other important actors in civil society are indeed *professional organisations and trade unions, NGOs and private initiatives*, as well as private and *commercial suppliers* of marketed or publicly funded child-care services and education. Their role in national processes of the development and change of early childhood education is highlighted in different contributions. Borchorst shows that the turn towards universalism in 1964 in Denmark was strongly influenced by educational professionals, who were able to gain strong support from the civil servants charged with drafting the reform bill. Penn presents many details of the numerous professional and voluntary organisations who tried to influence the reform process in the United Kingdom over a long period, though much less successfully than the reform pedagogues in Denmark. Rabe-Kleberg argues that the comparatively low status and low level of professionalisation of the staff in the German child-care system, who have had little organised influence and played a negligible role as promoters of change, have their roots in the ideology of *maternalism* and the initial exclusion of women from teaching as a profession and from teachers' organisations.

The French example shows an important influence of trade unions upon developmental paths, and Neuman claims that the strong role of trade unions in the highly centralised educational sectors, of which preschools are a part, prevented further decentralisation and spending cuts in this area. Her focus is on how governance shifts have affected the position of different political actors. The shift from 'governance by rules' to 'governance by objectives' in Sweden has increased professional responsibilities of teachers and school directors at the local level. Decentralisation has shifted the main venue for advocacy, political debate and decision-making from the national to the local level, with local elected officials as new players who hold greater discretion

in setting early childhood policy. As a result national organisations representing local actors have also gained power. While this may be a new development in formerly more centralised systems, in systems with multilevel governance local and regional actors traditionally have had a stronger impact upon decision-making processes. This power constellation may lead to reform blockages, as Scheiwe shows for Germany with regard to the distribution of legislative, administrative and financial competences under the federal system. This ‘joint decision-making trap’ also characterises other political systems, such as the EU. Richter’s contribution also addresses the distribution of authority within federal systems and its impact on the influence various actors can have upon the development of institutions. Within the same state, power relations are different within more centralised subsystems (characteristically the school sector) from what they are within more decentralised subsystems (for example, typically, the targeted public child-care systems) where local municipalities shoulder more responsibilities for implementing and creating services which meet demand, but also enjoy more discretion. It would be interesting to study in more depth how voters or organisations on the demand side (parents’ initiatives, women’s groups etc.) can affect local services’ provisions and policies, a point that is mentioned by Borchorst – Danish politicians are aware that parents who expect high-quality child care make up a large and visible part of the electorate, she says. Since the early childhood education sector is under reform, sometimes highly contested, more comparative research is desirable on power relations and political conflict in this area.

The *financing* of preschools and public child care is a critical issue, especially in times of welfare cutbacks. Recently, financing principles have become a focus of reform, as Schuler-Harms shows in her contribution. A major shift in financing principles currently under discussion is the one from object-related subsidies (for the institution) towards subject-related financing (through vouchers for parents), which is aimed at increasing the power of the recipients (parents) by enabling them to make choices and which introduces more competition and market-related elements. Schuler-Harms investigates these alternative ways of financing public child care and analyses the legal framework of vouchers, underlying voucher experiments in England, the United States and Germany. She also compares the voucher experiments to another alternative mode of financing public child care: the French ‘caisse familiale’ (CAF), an institution with far-reaching powers in French family policy and in the child-care system, with a unique financing mechanism which has since

the 1920s been based predominantly on employers' contributions (see also the contributions of Martin/Le Bihan and Neuman in this volume). Because of the specificities of the French institutional context (which grants a highly independent and influential position to the Caisse in a thoroughly centralised state system and integrates the employers into public financing structures) and of French family politics – geared as it is to explicit demographic goals – Schuler-Harms is, however, rather sceptical as to the possibility of exporting the Caisse Familiale financing model to other countries.

Finally, we would like to thank Dr Gretchen Wiesehan for her efficient help with English language editing of the contributions by non-native speakers, and acknowledge the helpful comments of an anonymous referee who draw our attention to inconsistencies in the original manuscript.

## Notes

1. Comparative literature on child-care arrangements and policies in different countries started up in the 1980s and 1990s. The subject gained attention in the following years, fuelled by different policy initiatives and research funding through international organisations, such as the OECD, the ILO and the European Commission. In 1986, the EU-Childcare Network started its work and initiated various comparative investigations. The OECD Directorate for Education initiated country studies and comparative investigation of child-care issues in 1998; in the context of the 'Starting Strong (Early Childhood Education and Care) Network' 20 countries were investigated up to 2004 and several comparative issues were analysed. The scientific body of literature and the number of research networks and projects have spread widely in the meantime. Comparative work concentrates on issues such as quality aspects, professional training and education of staff, costs and finances, preschool programmes and curricula, interaction processes, parental involvement and child development.
2. The strong emphasis of child-care research upon the reconciliation aspect and the employment and work relationship is visible, for example, in the contributions to the EU conference held in 2004 in Groningen on 'Child care in a changing world', which concentrated on the socioeconomic aspects of child care (see [http://www.childcareinachangingworld.nl/downloads/conference\\_report.pdf](http://www.childcareinachangingworld.nl/downloads/conference_report.pdf)). From the scientific comparative literature, we especially want to mention the publication 'Child care policy at the crossroads – Gender and welfare state restructuring' (Michel and Mahon, 2002): while many other comparative publications remain very much at the surface of empirical analysis of the actual situation, the contributions assembled in the book edited by Michel and Mahon develop a conceptual framework that focuses on welfare state restructuring and the decline of the male-breadwinner family to analyse the development

of child care from a feminist perspective, thus widening the perspective to integrate historical and institutional analysis as well as actor- and policy-related questions with the purpose of understanding divergent development patterns in the politics of child care. This comes closest to our approach; however, even in this book the historical perspective for the most part only extends to the period from the 1960s onwards, and in the present volume we go much further back.

3. For the theoretical debate on path-dependency see North (1990), Pierson (2000; 2004) and Mahoney (2000).
4. Compare the contributions of Bahle, Willekens, Valiente, Hohnerlein and Martin/Le Bihan in this book.
5. Compare the contributions of Penn, Neuman, Scheiwe, Richter and Martin/Le Bihan in this book.
6. Compare the contributions of Willekens, Scheiwe, Martin/Le Bihan, Valiente, Baader, Borchorst and Neuman in this book.
7. The first initiative of the European Council dates back to 1992 when a legally non-binding recommendation on child care was enacted (recommendation 92/241/EC of 31 March 1992).
8. For more information on this whole paragraph, see the contributions of Willekens and Martin/Le Bihan. It becomes clear from *all* the other contributions to this book that the early developments in Belgium and France were unique.
9. See Rauhala and Borchorst in this volume.
10. See the contributions of Neuman and Borchorst in this volume.
11. Baader (in this volume) on pedagogical discourses and the reception of Fröbel in the United States and Germany from 1857 to 1933.

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22 *Child Care and Preschool Development in Europe*

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## Index

- America, *see* United States  
Austria, 26, 32, 33f, 53, 181, 231, 242
- Baltic states, 33, 34  
Belgium, 3ff, 11, 21, 25ff, 31ff, **43ff**, 65, 76, 181f, 205, 231
- CAF/CNAF, *see* Caisse Familiale  
Caisse Familiale, 19f, 61, 161f, 168, 175, 177f, 222, 228ff  
centralisation/decentralisation, 3, 8, 10, 12, 14f, 18, 29, 54, 61, 76, 139, 154, **157ff**, **172ff**  
child, right of a child, 191  
child protection, 44f, 51, 161  
children under three, 3, 12, 61, 66, 159, 168f, 174, 190f, 206  
church, 2, 6, 11ff, 24, **27ff**, 32, **44ff**, **53ff**, 72ff, **78ff**, 88ff, 100, 136, 183f, 187, 198f, 206, 222, 234, 238, 240f  
church, Catholic, 11f, 46, 55, 72, 75, **78ff**, 84, 88, **90ff**, 100, 241  
church, Protestant, 6, 14, 29f, 34, 92  
citizenship, 17, 68f, 85, 105, 148, 153, 182, 204  
class, 4, 6, 7ff, **12ff**, 16, **26ff**, 66, 74, 77ff, 83ff, 93, 99, **102ff**, 116f, 120f, 130ff, 138, 143ff, 167, 171, 183, 198, 211f, 216ff, 225, 228, 239  
class, middle, 8, 30, 106ff, 111, 116, 183, 198, 211f, 216ff  
class, upper, 83ff, 105, 116, 130  
class, working, 8, 28, 30, 108, 111, 115ff, 130ff, 198, 212, 216f  
compatibility of employment and family life, 4, 6f, 9f, 13, 18, 20, **32f**, 55, 60  
competences, 2, 8, 10, 13, 15, 19, 24, 54, 182, 189ff, 217f, 234f  
competences, administrative, 15  
competences, financing, 10, 182, 190, 222ff  
competences, legislative, 182, 189, 191  
constitution, 16, 46, 47, 79, 94, **181ff**, 234ff  
constraints, 8, 13, 15, 85, 160, 169, 175, 181, 188  
courts, 44, 186, 236  
crèches, 27, 39, 61, 63, 111f, 129, 139, 144, 160ff, 168, 171, **173ff**, 188, 194, 245  
curricula, 15, 20, 49, 78, 80, 95, 109, 131, 139, 187
- decentralisation, *see* centralisation/  
decentralisation  
Denmark, 3, 8, 13f, 18, 25f, 32f, 36, 38f, 44, **126ff**, 142, 153f, 192
- education, 1ff, 28ff, 36f, 40, 43ff, 52f, 55, 58, 62, 65ff, **72ff**, **89ff**, 101f, **105ff**, 125, 130f, 136f, 142ff, **157ff**, **162ff**, **181ff**, 196ff, 211f, 214ff, 219, 222ff, 235, 239, 243, 245  
employers, 16, 20, 48, 136, 145, 161, 228f  
employment, 3, 7f, 10f, 13ff, 20, 27f, 31, 34, 37, 51, 57, 60ff, 67ff, 77, 83, 88, 121, 123, 126f, 132, 134, 136ff, 140, 142, 144ff, 151f, 154, 158, 177, 190f, 228ff  
employment, mothers', 51, 138  
England, 17, 19, 105, 107, 120, 198, 204, 226  
equality/inequality, 13, 23, 24, 27, 30f, 60, 75ff, 81f, 119f, 126, 132, 136f, 140, 142ff, 150, 152ff, 163, 174, 213, 236  
ethnicity, 143  
EU, *see* European Union

- European Union, 3, 16, 19, 24, 45, 60, 68, 72, 76, 78, 83f, 122, 126f, 140, 154, 180, 190, 239, 245
- family policy, 8, 10f, 13, 19, 23f, 27, 31ff, 37, 40, 54f, 57ff, 65, 88, 154, 161, 205, 228, 230ff
- fascism, 12
- federalism, 15, 181f, 189, 192ff, 234, 239, 242ff
- fees, 9, 17, 100, 103, 128, 130, 158, 162, 164f, 168, 175, 177, 188, 205, 237
- fertility, 59f, 66, 138, 154, *see also* pronatalism
- finances, 20, 34, **222ff**
- Finland, 26, 27, 32f, 142, 148, 153f
- France, 3ff, 8f, 11f, 14, 21, 25ff, 31ff, 37ff, 43ff, 51, 54f, **57ff**, 76, 142, **157ff**, 164, **166ff**, 181f, 204, 212, 216, 228f, 231f, 244f
- Fröbel, 8, 21, 45f, 50, 107, 130, 144, 181, **183f**, **196ff**, 215
- gender, 4, 8, 13f, 16, 18, 20, 23f, 27, 31, 45, 57, 60, 63, 68, 75f, 81f, 85, 119f, 126f, 132, 134, 136f, 140, 143ff, 147, 149ff, 206, **210ff**
- Germany, 3, 6, 8, 10, 13ff, 19, 21, 24, 26ff, **32ff**, 40, 58, 130, 142, **180ff**, **196ff**, 203ff, **210ff**, 228ff, 235ff, 242ff
- governance, 12, 14f, 18f, 157, 160, 164, 174ff, 234, **239ff**, 245
- grandparents, 37ff, 55
- group size, child-staff ratio, 9, 101, 158, 160, 163ff, 171f
- historical institutionalism, *see* institutionalism
- ideal type, 4
- institutionalism, historical, 131, 139
- Italy, 3f, 8f, 11f, 25f, 32, 76, **88ff**, 142, 181, 216
- law, 3, 11, 44f, 47, 51, 57f, 60f, 77, 80, 89ff, 96ff, 102, 133, 142f, 159ff, 167, 180, 182, 185ff, 193ff, 223, 225, 228, 233f, 236ff, 241ff
- legislation, 45, 69, 90, 93, 98ff, 128f, 131, 133ff, 167, 181f, 185, 188ff, 239, 241ff
- liberalism, 29, 46, 234
- lone parent, 190f
- market, 1, 7, 10f, 16, 18f, 24, 30ff, 43, 50ff, 62f, 67ff, 75, 83, 93, 98, 106, 119ff, 128, 136ff, 144ff, **150ff**, 188, 224f, 227
- maternalism, 4, 18, 210ff
- migration, 5, 95, 106, 182, 194
- ministry, 10, 15, 77, 89ff, 112f, 123, 131, 133, 163f, 171, 173, 184, 198, 229, 231f
- Montessori, 50, 92, 107f, 117, 130
- mothers, 1, 6, 12, 17, 32, 39, 44f, 48, 50f, 59, 62, 67f, 73, 81, 83f, 88, 91, 93, 106, 111ff, 128, 132ff, 146, 150ff, 188, 199f, 206, 210ff, 218, 220
- multicultural, 85, 119, 152
- municipalities, 15, 19, 47ff, 61, 76, 89f, 97, 128, 133, 138, 140, 147, 150, **159ff**, 173, 175f, 182ff, 187ff
- the Netherlands, **25f**, 29, 32f, 36, 53, 137, 142
- Norway, 137, 142, 153f
- nursery school, 16, 36, 108ff, 123, 144
- parents, 6ff, 12, 15, 17, 19, 23f, 28, 37ff, 47, 51ff, 61ff, 69, 73, 78, 82f, 88, 101, 103, 107f, 115ff, 121, 128, 130, 134, 136ff, 142ff, 152, 154, 159, 161, 163ff, 169ff, 187ff, 198, 203, 214, 223, 226, 228, 235ff
- parents, parental rights, 60, 182, 187
- parties, political, 53, 55, 58, 74, 77, 81, 95, 126, **132ff**, 140, 161ff, 176, 184, 189, 194, 223, 227, 236
- path dependency, 1ff
- pedagogical ideas, **130ff**, 139, 183, 197
- Pestalozzi, 144, 183, 197ff, **202f**, 207

- pillarisation, 11, 29, 52f  
 pluralism, 13, **28ff**  
 poverty, 7, 10, 13, 58, 60, 68, 92, 121, 145, 147, 152, 188, 232  
 professionalisation, 9, 18, 61, 210, 213ff, 218f  
 pronatalism, 54, 59, 152  
 Protestantism, 6, 14, 29, 30, 34, 92
- reconciliation, *see* compatibility of employment and family  
 religion, 28, 47, 51, 74, 79f, 106, 154, 199, **206**  
 republicanism, 5, 80  
 responsibility, public/private, 3, 30, 44, 47f, 55, 61, **89ff**, 94f, 100f, 112f, 116, 118ff, 132f, 144, 148, 150, 153, **159ff**, 165ff, 174, 176, 181, 184, 200, 206, 212, 218, 229ff, **234ff**  
 rights, 15f, 57, 59f, 68, 76, 94, 143, 150ff, 167, 176, 182, 185, 187f, 190, 192f, **234ff**, 241, 245
- Scandinavia, 15, 23, 25ff, **29ff**, 39, **126ff**, **142ff**, **162ff**, 178, 181, 212f  
 school, 2ff, 9, 12, 15f, 24, 36, 44ff, 61, 66f, 75, **89ff**, **106ff**, 127ff, 138ff, 147, 157ff, 167, 171ff, 180ff, 196, 199ff, 212ff, 225, 228, **234ff**, 241  
 service economy, 13, 27, 32  
 socialism, socialists, 48, 53, 95f, 161, 198, 205
- Spain, 3f, 8f, 11f, 26, 32, 37f, **72ff**, 181  
 staff, 8f, 16, 18, 20, 51, 77f, 84, 90ff, 97ff, 108, 112ff, 119, 122, 130, 135, 139, 147ff, 157ff, 171ff, 176, 187f, 185, 222, 226  
 steiner, 128  
 subsidiarity, 94  
 Sweden, 3, 8, 10, 12, 14f, 18, 25f, 32f, 36, 38f, 137, 142, 146ff, 153f, **157ff**, **162ff**
- targeting, 6, 9, 13  
 taxes, 17, 24, 63, 79f, 85, 121, 128, 134, 138, 143, 151, 164f, 228ff, 237, 243  
 teacher, 6, 9, 18, 47ff, 66, 77, 91, 95ff, 101ff, 107ff, 113ff, 121, 130, 147, 149, 159, 167, 171, 176, 178, 188, 198, 203, **213ff**  
 trade unions, 18, 48, 81, 163, 239
- unemployment, 11, 13, 34, 57, 60ff, 134, 137  
 United Kingdom, 3, 6, 10ff, 24ff, 32ff, **105f**, 129, 137, 215, **226**  
 United States, 3, 5, 19, 21, 35, 94, 142, 178, **196f**, **200ff**, 212ff, 236, 242ff  
 universality, 28, 101, 234  
 vouchers, 19, 193, **222ff**

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