

International Comparison and Domestic Implication of Childcare Service System from the Perspective of Family-Based on the Typology of Familial Policy System

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Abstract: In recent years, China's aging problem has become increasingly serious, and the birth rate has continued to decline. Under the combing factors such as the prevalent family core structure, the weakening inter-generational mutual assistance, and the strong willingness of women to develop their careers, the demand for family childcare services has been on the prominent rise. According to the data of the seventh census, 1/3 of infants aged 0-3 in China have a strong demand for childcare, but the actual nursery rate is only 5.5%. Therefore, the gap between the supply and demand of childcare services is huge.

1. Introduction

As an important project benefiting the people, childcare service has been highly valued by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council in recent years. The *Report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China* and the *Implementation Plan of Actively Responding to Population Aging and Nursery Policy Construction in the 14th Five-Year Plan* have been issued one after another, indicating that the development of childcare service has been put on the policy agenda. Various provinces and cities have also issued corresponding opinions on implementation and related documents to promote the development of childcare services. However, China's childcare service is in its infancy on the whole, with some problems such as insufficient supply, lack of supervision, and insufficient anti-risk ability of nursery institutions.

Optimizing the supply system of childcare services is not only a strategic need, but also a will of people. Internationally, the childcare service system in some countries was built early and achieved certain results. Since the beginning of the 19th century, some countries have started the construction of childcare services and now they have formed a relatively complete, multi-level, and effective childcare service system for children from 0 to 3 years old. It is of great practical significance to compare the childcare service systems in different typical countries and sum up experiences for promoting the development of childcare services in China.

2. Literature Review At Home and Abroad

At present, domestic research mainly focuses on the current situation and problems of childcare development, service supply mode, etc. In terms of the current situation and problems of childcare development, Yang Xueyan (2019) believes that the lack of childcare service policy and management is the main problem in the development of childcare services currently. Hong Xiumin (2019) believes that there are contradictions between high cost and inclusive demand, between uneven supply quality and demand for high-quality childcare resources, and between single supply form and diversified demand for childcare. In terms of the supply model of childcare services, Yang Juhua (2018) believes that the market should be taken as the main body in the supply of childcare services, while the family, market, and public resources should be rationally allocated. Xie Yu (2020) proposed that the subsidy target should be adjusted based on the Japanese mixed model to give full play to the compatible model of the market. Zhao Jianguo et al. (2018) put forward that China should choose the childcare service system mixing authority, commerce, and volunteer based on the governance theory.

There are many perspectives in the study abroad about childcare mode and experience, which are divided by most scholars into three categories for discussion and research: government-led mode, market-led mode, and pluralism governance mode. In the research of childcare service supportive policy, foreign scholars mainly focus on time policy, service policy, and economic policy. In the aspect of international comparative research, although there are many controversies about the classification of the welfare state system, most scholars still adopt Esping-Andersen's classification in *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Meanwhile, some scholars constantly refine and adjust based on its framework, and give a more refined classification system of social policy. For example, Sigrid Leitner (2003) focused on the caring function of the family based on the trichotomy of the welfare system and distinguished four types of nursing policies for children and the elderly according to the degree of familization and de-familization, which became an important framework widely adopted by later scholars when analyzing family policies.

As for the research at home and abroad, the related research in childcare in China has gradually transformed from a slow start to rapid development. From the perspective of research disciplines, the research on childcare services has been concerned by many disciplines such as preschool education, demography, and family planning, with interdisciplinary characteristics. As for the research content, many scholars have discussed the problems existing in the current childcare service in China and put forward relevant countermeasures and suggestions, which mainly emphasize the building of a four-dimensional system in which the state, market, society, and family participate together. Foreign research on childcare is relatively mature in all aspects, which provides great reference value in concept definition, theoretical basis, model construction, supporting policies, etc. Among them, the research results on influencing factors of childcare service demand, childcare service mode, and experience are the most abundant. Generally speaking, few scholars at home and abroad have made comparative studies on the construction of childcare service systems in different types of countries from the perspective of family. Existing comparative studies are more aimed at developed countries, lacking research based on different national welfare systems.

3. Theoretical Framework: from “Welfare State Typology” to “Typology of Familial Policy System”

As an outstanding representative of the comparative study of the welfare state, Espin Anderson refined three models of welfare system from the relationship model between government and market in *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Besides, two concepts of “familism” and “de-familization” were introduced, and the welfare state was divided into three different types: social democracy, conservative corporatism, and liberalism, taking the different orientations of state responsibility and family responsibility as classification criteria. However, in this set of classification standards, the long-awaited “family function” is still unclear.

In 2003, Sigrid Leitner paid attention to the part of social policy aimed at supporting the family care function in the *VARIETIES OF FAMILIALISM: The caring function of the family in a comparative perspective*. It for the first time included the functional support level for family care (i.e., the intensity of family-oriented policy) and the degree of social substitution (i.e., the intensity of de-family-oriented policy) as indicators to define familism in more detail. From the perspective of the family care function, the means and methods of strengthening the family care function of public policies are put at the center of analysis. According to the two different welfare system structures of “familism” and “de-familization” as well as their strength and weakness, the countries with different policy orientations are subsumed under four ideal types, including implicit familism, explicit familism, optional familism, and de-familization, which is as shown in the Table 1.

Table 1 Classification Method under Typology of Familial Policy System

		De-familization	
		Strong	Weak
Familization	Strong	Optional Familism	Explicit Familism
	Weak	De-familism	Implicit Familism

De-familializing welfare regimes are characterized by adequate care services provided by the state or the market and little family care support. Under this policy, the family's "right to allocate care time" is not respected. Countries in this category include Ireland, Britain, and so on.

Optional familism not only strengthens the caregivers' family care function through family policy, but also endows families with the right to choose from the care responsibility, which greatly reduces the load of family caregivers, especially women. Sweden, Denmark, France, and other countries fall into this category.

Explicit familism strengthens the family's care for children, the disabled, and the elderly through familial policies while lacking public and market care, which clearly and effectively returns the care responsibility to the family. Although both "optional familism" and "explicit familism" respect the right to time to care for children, "selective familism" emphasizes the right to family care rather than the responsibility of care. Austria, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and other countries fall into this category.

Implicit familism neither provides care support to families nor develops "de-familization" care services, which implies that the family care function of such countries can only be realized by families.

Seged Leitner pointed out in his research that "childcare", as a public service or market-driven care service, has the effect of socializing or "marketing" the family care function, playing as a concrete carrier of the de-familializing policy. Nursery policy belongs to one aspect of fertility support policy and it is a social policy that supports the realization of family care function. Therefore, compared with the typology constructed by Espin Anderson, the theme of this study is more suitable for the typology of the family policy system developed by Seged Leitner based on Anderson.

In addition to drawing lessons from Seged Leitner's typology of the familism policy system, this paper sorts out and compares the childcare policies of explicit familism, de-familism, and optional familialistic countries. It also explores the current development status and existing problems of China's childcare policies to obtain localization enlightenment and realize the vision of "endowing children with education" in China.

3.1 De-Familialistic Countries Represented by Britain

3.1.1 Ideological and Institutional Basis

1) Profound Influence of Neoliberalism

Britain is usually classified as liberal capitalism and a liberal welfare system. The de-familialistic countries represented by Britain encourage individuals to obtain the goods and services they need through the market. The government only provides basic protection for people who cannot enter the labor market.

2) Orientation of Interest Seeking under the Political Pluralism System

Political pluralism restricts the formation of a nationwide and inclusive childcare service policy. Due to the complexity of the childcare service system in Britain, the related lobbying groups are also diverse. In order to gain the support of the media, businesses, and the favor of voters, they have different policy concerns even with conflicts of views and interests.

3.1.2 History of Development

Childcare services in Britain started earlier. In the Middle Ages, churches and charitable organizations played an important role in childcare and caring for orphans. During the Second World War, women followed soldiers to the battlefield or factories to solve economic problems. Nursery institutions emerged from the people to solve the problem that no one cared for children at home. After the war, the government began to attach importance to early education and preschool education for young people.

Since the 1970s, Western countries have vigorously developed family-centered family policies and family public services. In 1998, Britain promulgated the Green Paper *Meeting the Challenge of Child Care* and put forward the Sure Start Local Program, aiming at improving the education of

poor children and breaking intergenerational poverty through state intervention. In 2004, Britain issued Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children-A Ten-year Strategy for Childcare, which planned the development direction of early education in the first decade of the new century.

In September 2008, the EYFS framework regards care and education for children aged 0-5 as a unified whole, which stipulates that “education projects” of childcare institutions must cover three basic areas and four specific areas of children’s learning and development. At the same time, 117 evaluation criteria are put forward to evaluate all childcare institutions in a unified way. Since then, the British government has continuously updated EYFS and issued new versions (the latest one was revised in March 2021).

3.1.3 Sources of Funding

In the financing of childcare services, the funds for childcare services in de-familialistic countries mainly come from infant families. The government’s financial investment in childcare institutions mainly plays the role of “checking for and filling imperfections”, which provides an all-around guarantee for childcare services for disadvantaged children’s families. Most of the financial funds flow directly to parents of infants and young children. Besides, the financial investment is mostly reflected in demand-side investments such as vouchers, tax relief, and cash concessions. This demand-oriented investment leads to a higher cost of capital supervision. At the same time, the government’s subsidy for parents of infants and young children to purchase childcare services has not reduced parents’ childcare costs.

3.1.4 Payment of Services

In terms of payment methods, the supply of childcare services in Britain especially depends on the market mechanism and follows the supply principles of commercial organizations, parents’ payment, and market self-regulation, which is in line with the characteristics of the market-led mode. Childcare services are mainly provided by commercial providers, with private nursery institutions accounting for 97%. The government only provides supplementary services for a very small number of families in difficulty. In terms of payment items, the degree of marketization of childcare services in Britain is the highest in Europe, with various institutions and different functions. Britain’s public service system is roughly divided into care and education according to children’s age. The welfare, social and health departments are responsible for care services for children aged 0-3, while the Ministry of Culture or Education focuses on education for children over 3. Private family day care, nurseries, and kindergartens are open to infants aged 0-2. Children aged 3 and above can enter public kindergartens or nurseries.

3.1.5 Management Mode

From the perspective of responsibility mechanism, regional and state governments are responsible for financial support, standard setting, curriculum setting, supervision and management of childcare services in their areas, while local governments need to bear the responsibility of financial support, supervision and management of childcare services within their respective jurisdictions. At the same time, national education departments are responsible for the unified management of childcare services for preschool children. In terms of specifications, institutional care practitioners in the UK must have a care qualification certificate issued by the regulatory authorities and participate in training on time. Family care practitioners must have the minimum secondary qualification certificate. In the aspect of childcare service curriculum standard, there is the *Statutory Framework of Early Basic Stage* as the compass of infant education curriculum reform. In addition, the Education Standards Office is responsible for formulating national unified standards for the quality of educational services in childcare institutions and conducting third-party supervision over childcare service institutions throughout the country.

3.1.6 Policy Effects

Childcare services are expensive. According to OECD data, the UK ranks third in the world in the cost of childcare. According to the TUC survey, 92% of British parents said that the cost of

childcare affected their living standards, and 50% said that the cost of childcare was completely unaffordable or led a significant impact.

Low nursery rate under high fertility rate. De-familialistic countries benefit from diversified market childcare service systems as well as open and inclusive immigrant culture. They often have a high total fertility rate. However, due to the uneven distribution of childcare service resources and the high price of childcare services caused by the de-familial childcare policy, the nursery rate of infants under 3 years old in Britain is not high, as shown in fig.1.

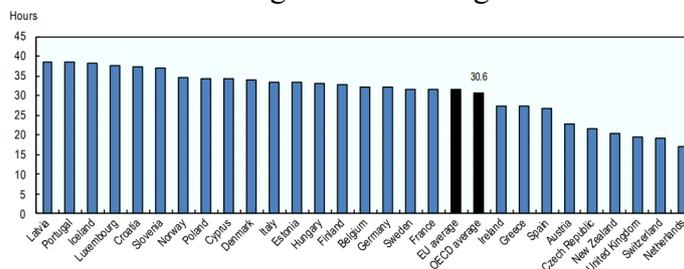


Figure 1 Average Weekly Time for Children Aged 0-2 to Participate in Childcare Services (in Hours)

Source: OECD National Family Database, data time is 2021.

There is a big gap between rich and poor families. In de-familialistic countries, the financial investment in childcare services is insufficient and the childcare industry relies more on market self-regulation. Although this model can make the childcare service reach a certain scale in the early stage, it cannot guarantee that the service benefits different types of families. There are significant differences in the nursery rate of infants with different family income backgrounds, and the fairness of childcare services is low.

3.2 Optional Familialistic Countries Represented by Sweden

3.2.1 Ideological and Institutional Basis

1). Profound Influence of Social Democracy

Swedish childcare system and its development ideas are deeply influenced by social democracy. Social democracy advocates correcting the social injustice caused by the distribution form of the market mechanism through the redistribution of national income, providing universal social welfare to improve citizens' living standards and avoid the economic risk of poverty.

2). Tradition of Cooperation and National Responsibility under the Child Welfare System

The development of the child welfare system supports the formation and development of the Swedish childcare service system. The history of the progressive development of the Swedish child welfare system reflects the Swedish tradition of paying more attention to compromise and cooperation. In the policy orientation of the Swedish child welfare system, the Swedish government emphasizes that it is the national responsibility to take care of children and cultivate high-quality citizens.

3.2.2 Development Process

Before the 1990s, the health and welfare board was in charge on behalf of the nation, while the social service department was in charge on behalf of the local governments. Sweden's preschool education service adopts the public nursery policy and has implemented free public nurseries (full day care) since 1944. In 1975, the *Preschool Act* was promulgated, which proposed to provide free preschool education for 6-year-olds for 3 hours a day, while compulsory education started from the age of 7.

In the mid-1990s, in order to make childcare and school education an integral part of lifelong learning, childcare services were transferred to the education department for unified management, and the state was encouraged to decentralize power to local governments. At the same time, the new policy incorporates 6-year-old preschool education into school education.

In 1998, Sweden promulgated the *Preschool Education Curriculum*, which indicated that the

school law replaced the original social service law to further integrate preschool education and childcare into a single system, making it the second country in Europe to complete the integration of preschool care. After that, the main preschool education institutions in Sweden were divided into three types: preschool schools, family nurseries, and preschool classes. In addition, open kindergartens are set up in sparsely populated remote areas.[1]

After the impact of the economic recession in the 1990s, in addition to the reduction of welfare allowances for the elderly and children, social welfare institutions have moved from the vast majority provided or funded by the government to the participation of more non-public sector institutions. Among these independent institutions, 35% are parents' group cooperation mode and 30% are attached to companies. Therefore, non-profit institutions are still the main suppliers in structure, and to some extent, government funds can be obtained.

3.2.3 Sources of Funding

Funds mainly come from government subsidies and grants, and families pay service fees. The government is the main undertaker of the cost of childcare services. The Swedish government mainly adopts the supply-side investment mode of investment institutions, and the municipal government subsidizes public and private childcare institutions without discrimination, with the scope of subsidy almost covering the total cost of institutions.[2] Meanwhile, the government provides maternity allowance and family allowance for parents of infants and young children. The amount of service fees paid by families is determined by the income of parents, mainly based on the total income of families, the number of children, the school period of children, etc.

3.2.4 Payment of Services

The Swedish government-led public childcare service system is constantly developing. The supply, financing, and supervision of childcare services are mainly undertaken by the government. Childcare services have been integrated horizontally and vertically. Public child daycare services were once regarded as a model in terms of accessibility, quality, and price. Full-time nurseries are the main ones, taking care of children aged 1-6, supplemented by the establishment of family nurseries under 12 years old (with a scale of 3-5 people), so as to achieve the organic integration of "education" and "nursery". Its characteristic is that kindergartens are open to young infants. Infants aged 0-3 can get full-time childcare services for 30 hours a week in public family day care institutions. Family day care is more common in rural areas. The proportion of folk childcare institutions in Sweden is very low, but they play an important role in institutional childcare.[3]

3.2.5 Management Mode

From the perspective of the responsibility mechanism, there are two parallel administrative systems for childcare services for children aged 0-3. The health, social, or welfare departments are responsible for the care function, while the education department is responsible for the education function. In terms of system guarantee, Sweden has higher requirements for practitioners' qualifications, promulgating *Preschool Education Law* and *Swedish Preschool Education Curriculum*. The supervision of childcare services is also very strict. In terms of economic supervision, the "maximum fee policy" has been formulated. In the aspect of social supervision, *The Education Act* establishes goals and guidelines. In terms of supporting policies, Sweden adopts the male quota system of parental leave, which is characterized by giving fathers longer paid paternity leave or paid parental leave.[4]

3.3 Policy Effects

Under the state-led model, childcare services are available, affordable, and of quality for most families with infants and young children. The ratio of infants to faculty members and the ratio of infants to full-time teachers in the care service for infants under 3 years old in Sweden is lower than the OECD average level, with the higher government supervision degree and the guaranteed quality. The OECD survey found that the childcare service in Sweden has a high nursery rate and high fairness. Under the state-led mode, the total cost of childcare services and the proportion of family

fees to family income are low.

The policy orientation of “optional familism” needs sufficient public finance to support it. With the increase in the number of immigrants, especially refugees received by Sweden, France, and other countries in recent years, the welfare system is also facing more obvious pressure on public finance expenditure. This may increase the expenditure pressure on the national economy and the burden on taxpayers, resulting in unsustainable government investment in childcare services.[5]

As for other related fields of childcare services, Sweden, as one of the Nordic countries, has a fertility trend consistent with that of Nordic countries. The fluctuation trend of the “W-shaped” fertility level in Sweden in recent decades shows that the total fertility rate shows a rising trend, which is always above the average level of OECD countries.

3.4 Explicit Familialistic Countries Represented by Germany

3.4.1 Ideological Basis

1) Profound Influence of Conservatism

Germany is a typical conservative country, which emphasizes law and order representing continuity and stability to maintain traditional social ties such as family, ethics, and religion. The conservative welfare system is characterized by the fact that eligibility for social rights is calculated based on the work performance, i.e. participation in the labour market and social security contribution records are preconditions.

2) Value Orientation of “Vacancy Filling-Survival” and “Family”

From the perspective of state responsibility, the concept of childcare service for infants aged 0-3 in conservative countries pursues the value orientation of “vacancy filling-survival”. From the perspective of family responsibility, the value orientation of “family” is pursued, the social welfare policy emphasizes the ability of family self-support, and family services such as public care and market care are not fully developed.

3.4.2 Development Process

Germany has a long history of developing infant care services. Influenced by the traditional family model, infant care are mainly the responsibilities and obligations of families. Before the end of the 1990s, the infant care policy in Germany was based on the welfare system of “conservatism” and “familism”.

In October 1990, Germany became a typical federal country, and the power of infant care management and supply mainly belonged to the state governments. With the unification of Germany, childcare services have entered the process of integration and unification. Infant childcare has gradually been at the forefront of policy-making and social reform from a marginalized policy field. Quality and fairness have become the core themes of infant childcare reform in Germany.

After the unification of Germany in 1990, the reform of infant care showed progressive and phased characteristics. The core task of the first stage is to promote accessibility. After the reunification of Germany, the demand for nursery schools surged and the government focused on expanding resources. The legislation in 2008 made it clear that the right to education for infants aged 1-6 years is an important turning point in expanding infant care resources.

The second stage is after 2014. How to guarantee quality is a dilemma faced by the German government. Germany’s infant care reform has changed from expanding resources to improving quality based on demand, paying equal attention to expanding quantity and improving quality from multiple angles such as teacher construction and financial input. In January 2019, the *Act on Further Improving the Quality of Infant Care Services* (referred to as the *Good Kita Act*) came into effect, providing states with a policy toolbox for quality improvement from ten major areas, such as promoting healthy growth and creating a child-friendly environment.

3.4.3 Sources of Funding

First of all, the state and local governments are mainly responsible for the financial input of infant care in Germany. Because there are many restrictions on the use of federal financial input, it

is generally only used for infrastructure construction and repair. However, the state and local governments flexibly control their financial input, so infant care in Germany varies greatly between the state and local governments. Secondly, demand-oriented financial assistance and fee reduction are provided, which mainly includes reducing the cost-sharing ratio of families. Free childcare services are provided to disadvantaged families nationwide. In addition, the *Good Kita Act* will gradually exempt low-income families from basic education fees from August 1, 2019.

3.4.4 Payment of Services

As for the way of payment, the countries with the policy orientation of “explicit familism” play an active role in the sharing of care responsibilities, but the intervention of the state is based on the support of family care responsibilities, which tends to strengthen the family care function through parental leave and parental allowance. In addition, the mixed development of public and private childcare services is one of its major features, with infants of different ages getting different childcare services. In Germany, infants aged 0-2 can get trusteeship services through public-assisted private family day care and nurseries, and children aged 3 and above can enter public-assisted private kindergartens. In terms of payment items, the service objects of daily trusteeship and early education have a clear age division in countries with explicit familism, and infants of different ages receive different care services. In Germany, Italy, and Austria, infants aged 0-2 mainly receive daily custody services, while children aged 3 and above begin to receive early education services.

3.4.5 Management Mode

In the distribution of powers and responsibilities, regional and state governments are responsible for financial support, standard setting, curriculum setting, supervision and management of childcare services in their areas. Meanwhile, local governments need to assume the responsibility of financial support, supervision, and management of childcare services within their respective jurisdictions. The National Civil Affairs and Welfare Departments are responsible for the unified management of childcare services for preschool children. In terms of system guarantee, nursery practitioners need to go through different professional studies and work practices before they can take up their posts. Many colleges and universities across the country offer continuing education courses for preschool teachers, which can provide opportunities for childcare service practitioners to obtain higher professional degrees. “Robert Porsche Foundation” has also launched the *Early Childhood Education Program* and *Professional Training Program for Teachers and Nurses in Day Care Institutions* to improve the education quality of childcare services. In terms of supporting policies, mothers can enjoy 14 weeks of paid maternity leave and 44 weeks of paid parental leave, and fathers can enjoy 8.7 weeks of paid parental leave. Family welfare expenditure in public finance accounts for 3.03% of GDP.

3.4.6 Policy Effects

As for countries with explicit familism, due to the imperfect public childcare service system as well as the implementation of the paid vacation policy and financial subsidy policy featuring “re-familization”, their total fertility rate has been below 1.5 at the low fertility level for a long time. Their nursery rate of infants under 3 years old is lower than the average level of OECD countries, and the employment rate of women with infants under 3 years old is relatively low. In 2014, the nursery rate of infants under 3 years old in Germany was 32.3%, but the average weekly nursery time was 38 hours, and the employment rate of women with children under 3 years old was 51.5%;

As shown in Table 2, according to the statistics in 2016, the number of public childcare institutions generally shows an upward trend. About two-thirds of childcare institutions in Germany are supplied by non-profit organizations and only 33% are government-run childcare institutions. By 2018, the number of public childcare institutions aged 0-3 has nearly doubled compared with 2009. However, in terms of structural proportion, non-profit childcare institutions are still the main ones, and the government provides financial subsidies and management standards for non-profit childcare institutions.

Table 2 Types of Childcare Institutions in Germany in 2016

Type	Proportion (%)	
Public Childcare Institutions Established by Municipal Departments	33	
Non-profit Childcare Institutions Founded by the Church	Protestantism	15.9
	Catholicism	17.0
Non-profit Childcare Institutions Founded by Non-churches	Non-governmental charitable organizations	9.1
	Workers' welfare organization	4.5
	German Red Cross	2.7
	Other non-profit organizations	14.8
For-profit Nursery Institutions	3.0	

Source: Schreyer, I.P. “German-Key Contextual Data”: Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Child Education and Care in Europe [EB/OL]. (2018-03-04) [2019-06-10].

According to the data, the fertility rate in Germany in 2019 is the same as the average level of OECD countries, but the participation rate in childcare services for children aged 0-2 is higher than the average level of OECD countries. Besides, there is still a certain gap with Sweden and Britain. It shows that Germany’s reform measures in recent years have achieved remarkable results, such as expanding infant care resources through multiple paths, launching a series of quality improvement projects, and launching a federal financial input plan.

3.5 Comparison and Commentary

This study combs and summarizes the childcare service systems in Britain, Sweden, and Germany, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Comparison of the Overall Characteristics of the Three Types of National Childcare Service Systems

System Type		De-familism	Optional Familism	Explicit Familism
Country		Britain	Sweden	Germany
Value Orientation		Emancipate the responsibility of caring for young children from the family and promote family caregivers to participate in market labor more widely	Strengthens the family care function of caregivers and endows families with the right to choose from the responsibility of care	Return the child care function to the family
Specific Content	Sources of Funding	Except that some low-income families can get government allowances to subsidize some childcare expenses, the childcare expenses are borne by families themselves	Government subsidies and grants Families pay service fees	State and local governments are responsible for the financial input of infant care
	Service Payment	There are many kinds of commercial organizations and nursery institutions with different functions Private and public childcare institutions pay attention to young children of different ages	Give full consideration to the needs of people in different regions and different characteristics Realize the horizontal functional integration of the “education” and “care” as well as the vertical integration of the learning section	Mixed development of public and private childcare services Infants of different ages can get different childcare services
	Management Mode	State governments and local governments undertake different financial input, regulation, and management responsibilities, while the national education	The central government is responsible for planning, arranging the main local jurisdictions, and raising funds and budgets Promulgating the	State governments and local governments assume different management responsibilities in different scope and content, while the

		<p>department is responsible for unified management</p> <p>Strict qualification standards have been carried out for practitioners, and there are clear norms and articles of association for curriculum reform</p> <p>The Education Standards Office formulates the national unified service quality standards and conducts third-party supervision over the national childcare service institutions</p>	<p><i>Preschool Education Law</i> and other norms with national legal effect to ensure the quality of childcare services</p> <p>Strengthen the social and economic supervision of the supply of childcare services through <i>The Education Act</i> and the Maximum Fee Policy</p>	<p>National Civil Affairs and Welfare Departments are responsible for unified management</p> <p>The minimum qualification standards for teachers in childcare institutions have been clarified, and relevant regulations and laws have been introduced to improve the quality of childcare services</p> <p>There are many local laws and regulations that try to standardize the childcare service curriculum</p>
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Source: Self-made by the author

On the whole, de-familialistic countries tend to let workers transfer the responsibility of caring for children outside the family and the cost of childcare services is paid by the family independently. The market realizes the balance between supply and demand of childcare services as well as the coordination of the price and quality of childcare services through internal mechanism adjustment. Besides, the government’s responsibilities are mainly regulation, supervision, and all-around guarantee. However, as a public service, the highly market-oriented development of childcare services will inevitably bring about expensive consequences, which will lead to the widening gap between the rich and the poor and the reduction of service accessibility.

For the optional family-oriented countries, while sharing the responsibility of care, they also respect the right of family care. When the childcare service has developed vigorously, the family-oriented time policies such as paid parental leave and paid paternity leave have also been generously “distributed”. Parents have more right to choose, and the policy orientation of “family-friendly” is both “family-friendly” and “child-friendly”. However, the optional familism policy orientation needs sufficient public finance as support, which also faces more obvious pressure of public finance expenditure to maintain an equal and inclusive welfare system.

For the explicit familialistic countries, although they play an active role in the sharing of care responsibilities, this intervention is based on the support of family care responsibilities, so they tend to strengthen the family care function through parental leave and parental allowance. From a positive point of view, this policy orientation respects parenting and affirms the important role of the family in infant care. On the other hand, in addition to further consolidating the traditional model of “male breadwinner” and strengthening the role of women as caregivers, it also aggravates the gender segregation in the labor market and leads to the subordinate position of women in both the family and the labor market.

4. Existing Problems in the Development of China’s Childcare Service System

4.1 Lack of Corresponding Policies, Regulations, and Industry Standards in the Field of Childcare Services

At present, China’s childcare policy is mainly characterized by macro-orientation, with specific policies, regulations, and industry standards in a state of absence. The existing local laws and regulations also have some problems, such as small space, general provisions, no substantive guiding significance, etc. It is impossible to clarify the division of labor, confirm responsibilities, and supervise their responsibilities.

4.2 No Clear Financial Input Plan and Insufficient Public Input

Currently, there are few early education institutions providing custody services in the market and

charging extremely high fees. Private care institutions are lacking, which is unbearable for ordinary families. It is even more difficult for children from low-income and poor families to get involved. Due to the lack of public investment, the development scale of childcare is limited and the cost of child care has become an important factor restricting the development of child care.

4.3 Unfinished Construction of Teacher Training System and Quality of Teachers Difficult to Guarantee

The reserve of nursery talents is insufficient, and neither vocational education nor normal university training involves nursery education, which makes nursery talents extremely scarce. At the same time, industry certification is simple and easy to obtain. Thus, there is no clear relevant training and targeted teacher qualification assessment at present.

4.4 “Inclusiveness” of Childcare Services is Difficult to Measure with Implementation Problems

China intends to develop inclusive childcare services, which require childcare services to be “accessible” and “affordable”. However, under the huge population of China, there are differences between families in terms of wealth and cognition. Meanwhile, “accessible” and “affordable” often have different meanings for different families. At present, the specific measurement standard of childcare services “inclusiveness” is still absent, which needs further research and exploration[6].

5. Domestic Implication

Combining with China’s basic national conditions, the infant care service system is reconstructed from the perspective of the family. No matter from the modern governance of social basic public utilities and ensuring the family care service system, the “optional familism” model has become the priority choice to resolve the disadvantages of “de-familization” and “re-familization” in the new period. Specifically, it is necessary to establish a family-based policy logic, change to “moderate inclusiveness”, and encourage the formation of markets, communities, social organizations, and families by increasing financial input to build a high-quality and accessible childcare service supply network covering all infant families[7].

5.1 Pursue the Concept of Childcare Service of “Filling the Vacancy and Ensuring the Necessity” Before “Moderate Inclusiveness”

First of all, the Chinese government should take the lead in shouldering the responsibility of “filling the vacancy” in the supply of childcare services and speeding up the construction of public childcare service institutions. Besides, it should take the lead in meeting the families’ urgent needs for childcare services, improve the ability of childcare and service quality, and play a leading role in the market. Secondly, with the further development of the economy and society, the concept of childcare service will be changed to “moderate inclusiveness”. Meanwhile, the market, community, social organizations, and families will be encouraged to form a joint force to build a high-quality and accessible childcare service supply network[8].

5.2 Provide Childcare Services with Different Emphasis According to the Age of Infants and Young Children

The primary purpose of building a childcare service system in China is to relieve the pressure of family care for infants and children. Therefore, at the beginning of building a childcare service system, childcare services with different emphases can be provided according to the age of infants and children. For infants aged 0-2 years, the focus of childcare services should be on childcare services. Professionally qualified baby nurses and staff should provide patient and meticulous services. For infants aged 2-3 years, we should implement the idea of “integration of care and education” to gradually shift the emphasis from trusteeship to early education. Professional early education teachers should focus on developing and training children’s various abilities to provide scientific early education guidance for families.

5.3 Overall Planning and Layout, Increase the Supply of Childcare Service Resources through Multiple Channels

First of all, continuously increase the number and mode of childcare services. Qualified enterprises and non-profit organizations should be encouraged to set up nursery institutions, advocate the gradual transformation of private kindergartens that meet the requirements into nursery institutions, and implement various modes such as all-day, half-day, hourly, holiday, and boarding, so as to enhance the inclusiveness and coverage of nursery institutions and meet the differentiated needs of the public. Secondly, according to the different conditions of each region, appropriate resources should be invested to promote fairness. Thirdly, in addition to synchronizing infant care with community planning and encouraging communities and units to make effective use of existing care services, we should explore the establishment of community care stations, improve the participation of community care, and reduce family time costs.

5.4 Accelerate the Introduction of “Rule-Based” Childcare Service Standards

First of all, we should establish the leading position of the government, enhance the importance of childcare work, and explore the appropriate management mechanism of childcare services. Moreover, we should clarify the specific work of relevant government departments and gradually bring childcare services into the scope of public services. Secondly, the standards and norms of childcare services should be constantly improved to formulate targeted standards in line with the actual situation according to the objects, contents, and environment of childcare services, including access and exit. We should also appropriately improve the access standards of the industry to ensure the sustainable development of childcare services. Finally, we should formulate relevant laws on childcare services, standardize the industry with the help of laws, and promote the long-term steady development of infant childcare.

5.5 Promote the “Family-Friendly” Supporting Policies for Childcare

Parental leave is not only to meet the needs of children’s welfare, but also contains many policy objectives, especially for balancing employment and parenting. Therefore, it is necessary to actively explore parental leave items other than maternity leave and accompanying leave, so as to ensure the equal role of fathers in infant care and alleviate the potential unemployment risks for women. Secondly, it is a historical necessity for China to transform from a complementary welfare system to an inclusive welfare system. Drawing lessons from the beneficial experience of the international community, we should implement diversified economic support policies for infant care families, alleviate the financial pressure of family care services, and improve the growth quality of infants.

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