PF4.1: Typology of childcare and early-education services

Definitions and methodology

Childcare and early education services for children not yet of schooling age can be categorised into three broad groups:

Centre-based day care: encompasses all childcare that is provided outside the home in licensed centres. The services provided can be full- or part-time, and are most commonly referred to as nurseries, day care centres, crèches, playgroups or playschools, and parent-run groups. In general, these services are provided to children under 3 or 4 years of age before commencing pre-primary education.

Family day care (FDC) is traditionally provided in a home setting, usually by a childminder. This can be at the childminder's home or at the child's own home. In some countries childminders are required to hold qualifications and to register with an official authority. The maximum number of very young children who can be cared for in this way is usually 3 or 4. This type of care is most common for children prior to pre-primary education (i.e. those aged up to 3 or 4), and is sought either because the availability of places in crèche/nurseries is limited or parents prefer a homely environment (particularly for very young children).

***Pre-primary or pre-school early education programmes*:** this category includes centre-based (or sometimes school-based) programmes designed to meet the needs of children preparing to enter primary (compulsory) education. In most countries, these programmes include at least a 50% educational content and are supervised by qualified staff. In some countries, these programmes are run on a full-time basis and offer out-of-school-hours provision on the same premises, although others traditionally provide kindergarten programmes on a part-time basis. Others still have effectively extended their primary school programmes by bringing in one or two years of pre-primary education into primary schools, such as, for example, the 'Prep' year in Queensland, Australia.

Key findings

The broad design of childcare and early-education services is generally fairly similar across most of the covered Asia/Pacific countries, albeit with some clear exceptions (Table PF4.1.A). In most of the covered countries, children are most often cared for in 'care-oriented' day-care centres or family day care services when very young, before entering 'education-oriented' pre-primary education services like kindergarten at around age 3, and then primary (compulsory) school at age 6. The most obvious exceptions to this broad picture are in Australia and Malaysia, where children tend not to enter pre-primary education until age 4 and in Indonesia, where they also enter pre-primary education at 4 and compulsory schooling a year later than elsewhere at 7. Although compulsory education begins at age 6 in Australia and New Zealand, the majority start primary schooling a year earlier at age 5. In Australia, Japan, Korea and New Zealand, integrated services that provide both 'care-' and 'education-oriented' services are available to children all the way through early childhood. However, in most of the covered countries, services remain separated into 'care-oriented' day care and family day care services for children under age 3 or around, and 'education-oriented' services for those aged 3 or above.

Other relevant indicators: PF1.3: Family cash benefits; PF2.1: Key characteristics of parental leave systems

Table PF4.1A. **Typology of Childcare**

	Centre-based care, family day care, kindergarten or pre-primary education						Compulsory school	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Australia	Family day care				Pre-school		Compulsory schooling	
	Centre based day care			Quality early childhood education program				
	In home care							
China	Family day care and childcare centers			Kindergartens			Compulsory schooling	
Japan	Day care centre for 0 to 2-year-old children			Day care centre for 3 to 5-year-old children			Compulsory schooling	
				Integrated centre for early childhood education and care for 3 to 5-year-old				
	Integrated centre for early childhood education and care for 0 to 2-year-old children			Kindergarten				
				Kindergarten Department of Special Needs Education School				
Korea	Infant course, Childcare Center & Special School			Kindergarten			Compulsory schooling	
				Kindergarten course, Childcare Center & Special School				
New Zealand	Centre-based early childhood education						Compulsory schooling	
	Home-based early childhood education							
	Kōhanga Reo (Māori lanugage nest)							
	Playgroups							
Singapore	Infant care centres	Childcare centres and kindergarten					Compulsory schooling	
Thailand	Family day care			Kindergarten			Compulsory schooling	
	Centre based care			Pre-school				
Viet Nam	Family care and day care centres			Kindergartens, day care and pre-school			Compulsory schooling	
Malaysia	Child care [TASKA/Nursery]: (1) Home-based [< 10 children]; (2) Center-based [≥ 10 children] either at the (a) workplace; (b) community; or (c) institution (>10 children)						Compulsory schooling	
					Kindergarten/pre-school [TADIKA]			
Mongolia	Family day care provided in home settings by childminders	Kindergartens and pre-school					Compulsory schooling	
Indonesia	Childcare centres, integrated ECCE service, family day care						Compulsory schooling	
		Playgroups						
					Kindergarten & pre-school			

Note: Data for Vietnam from 2019, Indonesia from 2020, Malaysia, Mongolia and Thailand from 2021, and Singapore from 2023, and Australia, China, Japan, Korea, New Zealand from 2025.
Sources: For Australia, Japan, Korea and New Zealand: OECD Early Childhood Education and Care Systems; China:The State Council, The People's Republic of China (2025); Singapore: Ministry of Education (2021). Overview of compulsory education.; Ministry of Social and Family Development (2022). Early Childhood And Development Agency; Thailand: Educational Statistics in Brief 2009, Bureau of Information and Communication Technology, OPS, Moe (Compulsory education until age 15 or Junior High school); Vietnam: Law on Education 2019; Malaysia: Child Care Centre Act 1984 (Act 308); Ting, M. L (2018) Master's thesis.; Mongolia: Law on Pre-School education; Law on Primary and Secondary education; Indonesia: ILO (2020) Extending childcare services to workers in the informal economy: Policy lessons from country experiences.

Sources and further reading: OECD (2021), *Process quality, curriculum and pedagogy in early childhood education and care*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/eba0711e-en; OECD (2021), *Starting Strong VI: Supporting Meaningful Interactions in Early Childhood Education and Care*, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/f47a06ae-en.