

Working flexibility and caring arrangements: the impact of changing working conditions on childcare services

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1. Introduction

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Developing flexible childcare in France

- Working time flexibility can be an opportunity
- It generates new demands for childcare services
- Parents increasingly expect flexible services
 - they prefer collective services (for children's well-being)
 - but choose individual childminders (for flexibility)
- Family policy promotes flexibility in childcare services
- What are the implications ?

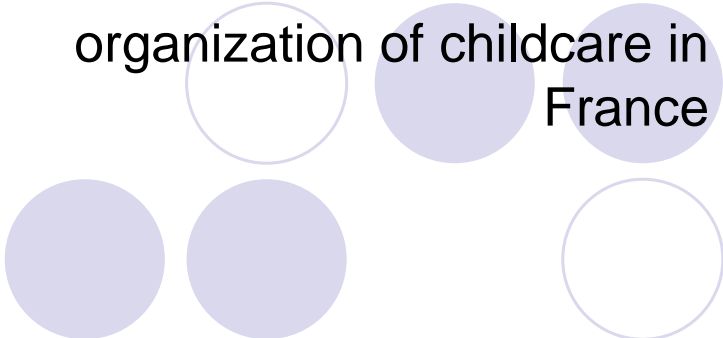
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A qualitative research on atypical childcare services

- A research conducted
 - in various innovative care services and organizations
 - Crèches, childminders, home services
 - with extended or atypical time schedule
 - 24 hours, or according to companies' schedules
- Childcare workers were interviewed about
 - experience in the workplace, the organization of work
 - work and family balance, etc.

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2. Parents' needs and the organization of childcare in France



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Parents' working schedules



- The norm of working time remains strong in France
 - working days: still mainly a standard schedule
 - childcare services are adjusted to this norm
- A slow flexibilization of working schedules
 - part-time work has considerably developed
 - atypical working days are developing
- Work and life balance becomes more complex to organize

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Change in family structure and organization

- Change in family structure
 - development of a dual earners model for couples
 - increase of single parent families
- De-synchronization of working times for dual earners
 - is increasing
 - mainly affect low-income couples
- Consequence: increasing demand for flexible childcare, when
 - both parents work at atypical hours
 - (single) parents cannot rely on family solidarity

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Work organisation of couples aged 25–40 with at least one partner in employment in selected EU member states (% of couples)

	EU 25	France	Italy	Germany	UK
Both partners working full time	45	52	38	37	44
Only man working	29	25	45	26	21
Man full time/woman part-time	19	16	13	28	30
Both part time or woman full time and man part-time	2	2	2	2	2
Only woman working	5	5	2	7	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Eurostat (2004), L'emploi en Europe 2003.

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Working hours schedules in selected EU members states (% of workers)

	Working hours changing every day	Working days changing every week	Flexible working hours	Non standard day	Shift work
Finland	47.6	26.6	39.9	17.9	22.9
France	39.3	22.4	29.2	13.5	20.9
UK	36.1	20.9	31.8	10.1	25.2
Italy	31.8	19.6	23.4	8.6	26.3
Portugal	20.1	10.6	18.6	6.8	10.4
EU 15	36.6	21.9	28.2	10.1	22.0

Source: Boisard *et al.*, 2002, p. 36

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The organization of childcare services

- The French organization of services combines
 - State regulation
 - decentralization and segmentation
 - public services
 - market services
 - private non-profit services
- As opposed to
 - The universal welfare State model
 - Northern countries
 - The private model
 - Southern countries

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Childcare supply in France

- Collective services (“crèches”)
 - childcare workers : qualified
- Individual services
 - childminders at (their) home (“assistantes maternelles”)
 - approbation / 60 hours training
 - family employees at parent’s home
- Various responses to parent’s demand for flexibility
 - Collective services: “normal” schedule
 - Childminders and nannies: more flexibility ?
- Childcare is sometimes a nightmare for parents
 - combining low-pay and atypical hours
 - living in the countryside

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3. Innovating in childcare: challenges and dilemmas

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Flexibility: a challenge for childcare

- Parents' needs for flexibility: a challenge for childcare
 - professional needs
 - social needs
- How to provide quality childcare to meet these needs ?
- Innovative childcare services are due to the civil society
 - Local actors, professional in the social sector, parents, employees, etc.
- Family policy promotes flexibility by encouraging
 - individual services
 - innovative flexible childcare services
 - more flexibility in collective services
 - companies to invest in childcare

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The case of innovating services

- Responding to professional needs
 - « crèches » with financial participation of local firms
 - « the children's house » (5 a.m to 10 p.m)
 - « small ducks » (9 a.m to 9 p.m)
- Responding to social needs
 - various services
 - extended time schedule
 - « The puppies »: crèche opened 24/24
 - « For children »: childminders 24/24
- Responding to parents' needs by demanding care workers to adapt their working time...

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Care workers: a work-family balance dilemma

- Why care workers accept atypical hours ?

- responding to parents' and children's needs
- choosing atypical time schedule
- the need to work

Care worker's situation is linked to the local context

- Schedule constraints are however problematic

- very few compensation for atypical hours
- a work-family balance dilemma
 - leaving their own children while they care for other's children

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4. Conclusion

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Towards a « 24 hours economy » ?

- Developing flexible services: extending atypical hours to
 - an increasing numbers of workers
 - and to children
- It raises questions as to
 - What society do we want (for our children) ?
 - a « 24 hour economy » (H. Presser) ?
 - To what extend should childcare services adjust to business demand ?
- Parents' and children's needs cannot be ignored
 - but they should not be overestimated
- Parent's needs and companies schedules may often be questioned and negotiated

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