

Flexibility in Child Care Services: Discussing quality criteria.

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Content of lecture

1. **Why we need quality criteria in *FLEXIBLE* child care arrangements.**
2. **Presenting results of the study:**
Flexible child care services: New challenges for arranging the daily pedagogical schedule of caregivers and children.
3. **Flexibility and Quality:**
Conditions for flexible child care

I. Changing working sphere & challenges for child care centres

- Flexible, variable working hours increase the demand for more flexible child care arrangements.
- Flexibilisation of child care services = key role within the debate about reconciling work and family.
- **Challenge:** Organisation of the new care needs within the care context without reducing high quality care for children (e.g. staffing and scheduling policy).

The role of quality criteria in *flexible* child care

- Difference to ‘traditional’ child care: complexity of organising schedule
 - reasonable organisation of flexibility
 - pedagogical concept in accordance to flexibility
 - qualification of pedagogical staff
- Flexibility adjusted to the age of the child (‘attachment’ aspects)
 - secure well-being of the child
- Definitions of standards
 - equality & quality within the social infrastructure for families

II. The study 'Flexible child care centres' and its objectives

- Finding and analysing innovative flexible child care services
- Cognitive interest: Arrangements of the pedagogical schedule and new forms of organisation
- Focal point: Daily experiences of caregivers and children within a flexible child care institution

Basic characteristics of flexible child care centres

- **Individual care** contracts basing on the demand of every family (booking system)
- Internal restructuring:
 1. **Modularisation** of pedagogical schedule within the frame of extended opening hours
 2. **Working schedule** of pedagogical stuff is adjusted to the **care times** of children (esp. through part-time)
- **Cooperation** with external (care) services like childminders, nannies/babysitter, family service to cover ‚border times‘

Consequences of flexibility within the daily care context - Interviews with caregivers

- Effects for one's own as well as the team work
 - Importance of parental involvement (regarding individual care contracts)
 - Organisational structure within the course of the day
- Rituals and pedagogical instruments

Interview results (2): Caregivers

- Limits of flexibility within the care context
 - Evening/overnight care
 - Well-being of the child
 - **Key challenge:** Tightrope-walk between parental care demands & child's interests and needs

Children's perspectives on the day-care context

- Important aspects for children:
 1. Attendance of friends and participation/involvement in projects
 2. Reliable agreements with caregivers and parents
 3. Opportunities/chances to have a choice and to participate
 4. Balance between family time and day care time

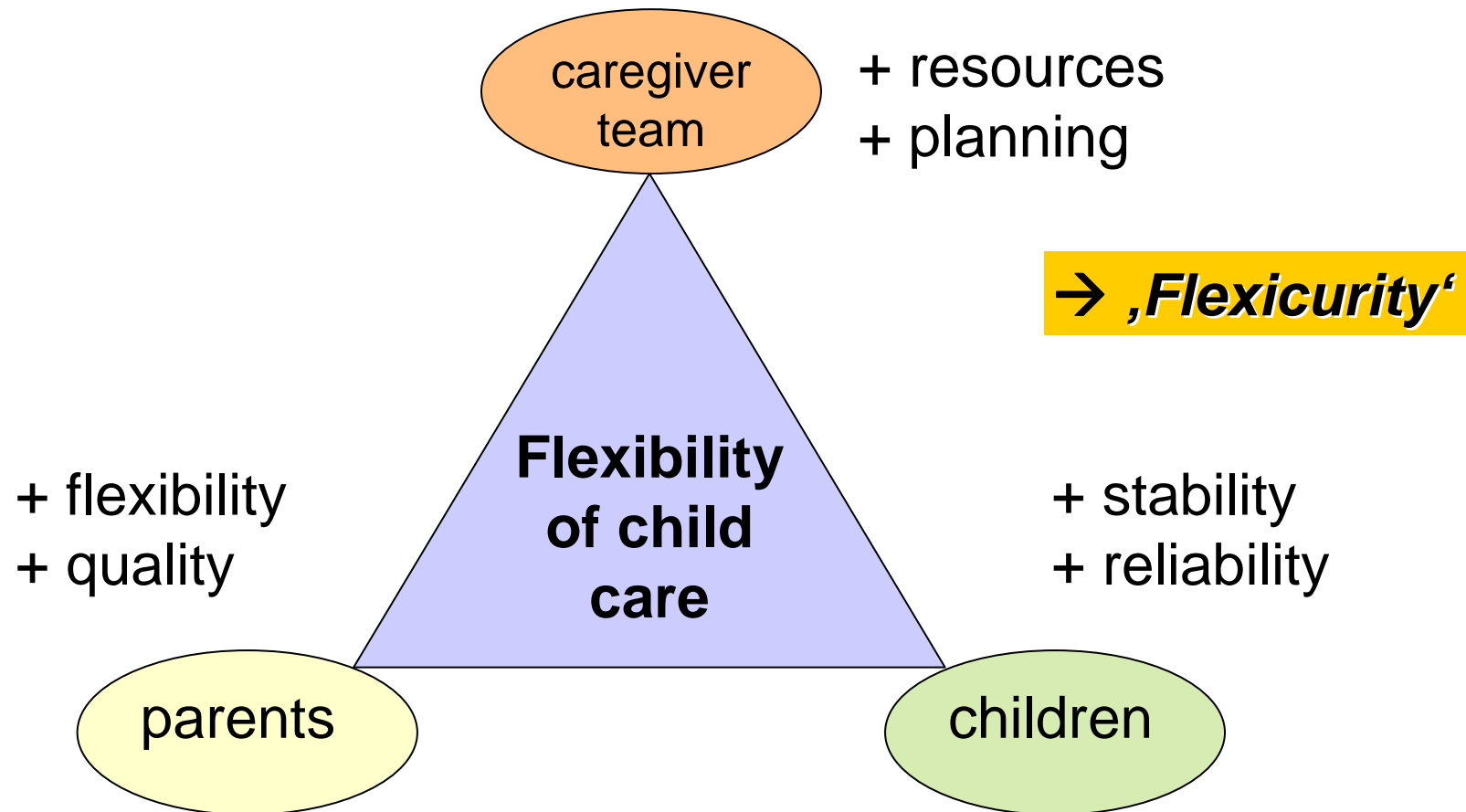
Summing up:

**The concept of ‘Flexicurity’ and its
effort in balancing differing interests.**

&

**How can we secure quality in flexible
child care?**

Quality standards in flexible child care → to secure *'flexicurity'*



III. Flexible Child Care: Conditions for saving pedagogical quality

- Important condition for balancing differing interests:
 - reasonable organisation of day care schedule
 - resources concerning financial support and staff
 - organisational and conceptional consultation of child care centres
 - further training, education and professional coaching for caregivers (individual and as a team)
- Multiple Flexibilisation (Rauschenbach 2000)



***Thank you for
your attention!***

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