

Participation of Flemish children (0–12 years) in different forms of external education: actual state of the democratisation process

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Summary

This paper studies the actual participation of Flemish children (0–12 years) in the main forms of external education, starting from the idea that sufficient participation is positive for the personal development of children and for the combination of professional and family life of parents. Departing from an integrated approach to the daily life of children, the concept of democratisation and a short historical overview, the participation in the main forms of external education is presented by means of seven complementary empirical models. The results of the study largely support the main assumptions.

As expected, the participation rate and number of hours per week and per day in total external education and formal external daytime education is very high for the age group 3–12 years. The participation of the youngest children (0–12 months) is still much lower but rises rapidly with age. In addition, only a small number of children spend few or many hours per week and per day in external education, except for children aged 3–12 months showing a larger share with few hours.

Both participation rate and number of hours for staying with grandparents are much lower than for formal external education, because grandparents are not available for many children. The number of hours is fairly high for the youngest kids but it constantly decreases with age.

Participation in other external activities is very low for the youngest children but strongly rises with age. However, still 20% of the children aged 6–12 years do not participate in these activities.

Formal daytime education almost completely occurs from Monday to Friday, with the lowest participation on Wednesday, due to the free afternoon. Staying with grandparents is evenly spread over the seven days of the week, with somewhat more time on Wednesday afternoon and weekends. Participation in other external events is equally distributed over the seven days of the week.

Finally, all formal external education is restricted to normal hours, between 7:30 in the morning and 5 in the afternoon. Staying with grandparents and participating in other outside activities starts a little earlier in the morning and runs out to about 10 in evening for a very small group.

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Literature

Introduction

In this paper we study the participation of Flemish children (0–12 years) in (the main forms of) external education, as an important part of their daily life and as a major public service. We try to show the actual result of the democratisation process during the past decades. Starting from an integrated approach to the daily life of children, in the same way as for adults, we focus on the division of basic activities, as the motor for an adequate combination of personal, social, material and financial means/benefits (Van Dongen, 2009a). Each basic activity offers a specific combination of these benefits which are the input for other activities. Although the structure and dynamics of the daily division of activities is very complex, the new approach shows that empirical analysis and presentation is possible by means of easily comprehensible (graphical) models or indicators. External education is used as broad concept for all external activities of children with an explicit educative or pedagogical character (caring, keeping, guarding, raising, upbringing, educating, teaching, coaching etc.), under the active responsibility and guidance of the adult persons outside their own family: daytime education for children of 0–2 years old by day care centres, minder families and grandparents, basic education for children of 3–12 years in schools, additional child care by different organisations, playgrounds, activities in different clubs or associations and education at home by external persons. External education of children is the complement of the activities in their family, with or without direct presence and guidance of the parents.

Basically, external education is a main part of the daily life of children and is seen as a supplement and enrichment of the education at home. During the previous decades, the external education of children aged 0–2 years has been streamlined to a large extent with the external education of older children in basic schools. We assume that this process of streamlining will go on during the next decades, implying that external education becomes a major contribution to the personal development of all children, in interaction with their parents. At the same time, external education is important for (young) mothers and fathers aiming at a good balance between their professional, family and social life, and, consequently, for all organisations employing these parents. The positive feedback between the different functions implies that external education for the youngest children is (becoming) a full pillar for society as a whole, similar to external education in basic schools.

Van Dongen (2004) previously focused on the evolution in Flanders of the availability, the use, the occupancy, the cost and financing of external education for children younger than 3 years old, based on official data coming from the supply side. A major disadvantage of this study was the lack of individual data on the use of external education/care, preventing us from creating a clear picture of the gradual differences in the participation rate and the number of hours per week and per day. Moreover, a comparison with the time use of older children (0–12 years) was impossible. Using time use data of 2005, this paper studies the individual division of time of Flemish children of 0–12 years and creates a more differentiated picture of the participation in external education/care, as a complement of the time in their family. We show and discuss the main similarities and differences between the relevant age groups.

The first section briefly presents the integrated conceptual and normative approach to the daily life of children and the translation to a number of empirical models of indicators of the division of time. The second section gives a brief overview of the historical evolution of external education in Flanders during the previous century. Then the third section shows the empirical results by means of seven complementary empirical indicators or models, in a graphical way, based on data of the time use module of the broad ‘Flemish Families and Care Survey’ of 2005 (FFCS–2005) (CSB, University of Antwerp; Ghysels & Debacker, 2007):

- 1 Participation rate of children in external education by age
- 2 Average number of hours per week in the family and external education by age
- 3 Average number of hours per week in external education by age
- 4 Distribution of children for the number of hours per week in external education
- 5 Average number of hours per week in external education by age
- 6 Distribution of children for the number of hours per day in external education/care
- 7 Progress of the participation rate in external education during the average day

The paper concludes with a summary of the results and formulates some policy perspectives, starting from three policy models for the future, inspired by the general concept of ‘democratisation of external education’ in society.

1 An integrated approach to the daily life of children

1.1 The daily life of men and women

We start from a broad integrated approach to *the daily life and the life course of men and women in the different societal entities or organisations*: families, clubs, companies, public organisations etc. It is essentially an interdisciplinary approach, reformulating the useful concepts of traditional models, formulating some new concepts and integrating them in a new general framework (Van Dongen, 2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b). In an integrated approach, all actors of society (individuals, families, enterprises, organisations, public institutes etc.) and their activities are explained within the same general theoretical model, covering all basic components of the societal system.

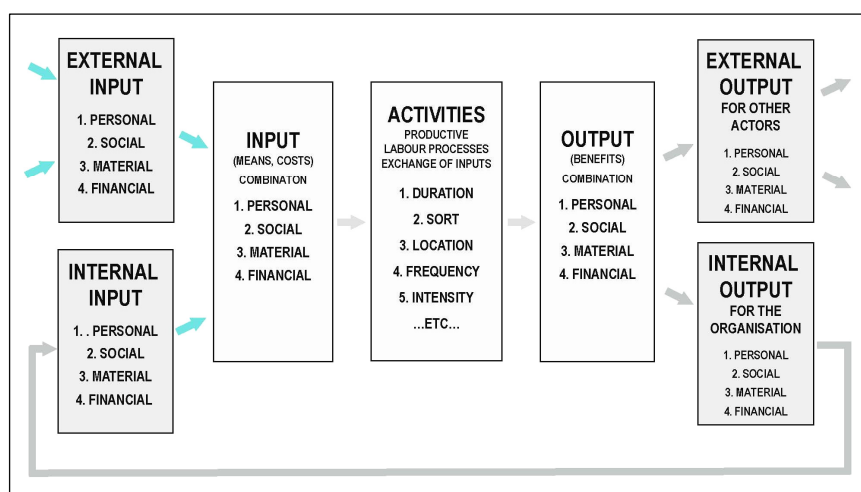
The *daily life* is seen as the daily division of activities and their results. The activities are the dynamic 'vehicles' of the daily life during the life course. All activities of all subjects are seen as productive labour processes, i.e. material input-output processes that produce a certain valuable output and that are regulated by the general mechanism of human exchange or of demand and supply. During the labour process, the input elements exchange certain aspects which results in an output that differs qualitatively from the input. Labour is a central part of all activities, i.e. the 'physical energy' offered by the input elements. In that way, Figure 1 shows us that the different inputs offer different forms of labour or energy that are being combined in the activities (labour processes), to produce a useful, valuable output.

The different means at the input and the output side of the activities are called the available total capital or potential, which is being expressed and evaluated at certain moments of the life course, using a specific time perspective (minute, hour, day, month, year, decade etc.). Because the total capital can never be determined exactly, it is expressed in terms of the quantity and quality of the main components:

- personal capital: physical abilities, cognitive abilities, values, attitudes, needs, emotions, ...
- social capital: the social network or baggage,
- material capital: durable and non-durable goods and housing facilities,
- financial capital: monetary income and saved income in different forms or assets.

Seen from the point of view of the actor, Figure 1 also illustrates the origin of the input and the destination of the output of the activities. Part of the overall output (with a specific combination of personal, social, material and financial elements) of all organisations in society (external output) (more or less intentionally, consciously, well-planned, etc.) and serves as inputs for the activities of these external actors. The other part of the overall output remains in the organisation and serves as input elements for the activities during the next stage. These internal inputs are always combined with new external inputs for the activities in the next period. Therefore, all organisations permanently face the challenge to realise a good balance between the four basic components of external and internal inputs and outputs.

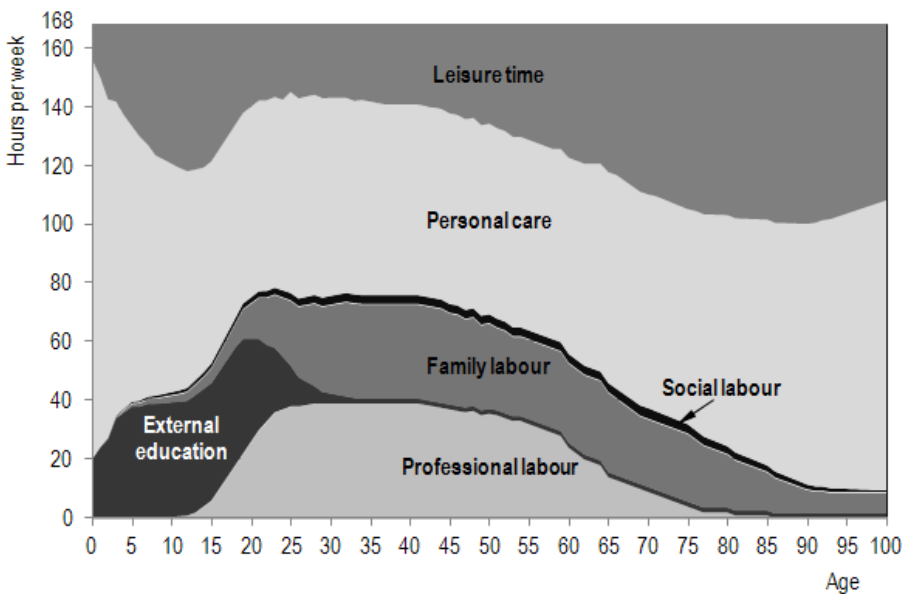
Figure 1. A general conceptual model for human activities



Source: Van Dongen, 2009a, 2010a

The activities of individuals can be classified in a number of main categories: professional or paid labour, family labour, (voluntary) social labour, education, leisure activities and personal care. These categories can be further subdivided into smaller activities. Figure 2 illustrates a general conceptual model of the individual division of main activities of men and women during the life course. During the past years, the model has been translated into empirical models of the division of time of adult men and women (Van Dongen & Danau, 2003; Van Dongen, 2008a, 2010; Glorieux & Van Tienhoven, 2009).

Figure 2 General conceptual model of the combination of main activities in hours per week (Y-axis), by age group or during the individual life course (X-axis)



Source: Van Dongen, 2009a, 2010a

Men and women daily aim at a balanced *portfolio or combination of the main activities*, which has to offer the desired composition of personal, social, material and financial means, in all stages of their life. Each activity provides a certain output which is an input for other activities. The activities are functionally integrated in a complex and dynamic feedback system. All activities are therefore in principal equally important in daily life. They (have to) provide each other with the necessary combination of personal, social, material and financial means. The differences are gradual and refer to the basic functions and the specific characteristics of the activities. The *combination of family and professional work* refers to a central part of the daily life of men and women.

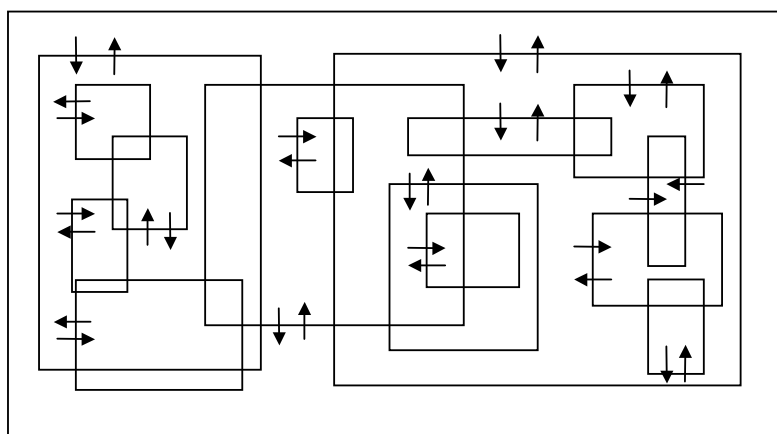
The meaning or value of the different activities is determined by the specific combination of personal, social, material and financial benefits, at the input and the output side. *Professional labour* is to a large extent externally oriented and offers most of the financial benefits, necessary to buy different input elements for the other activities. Yet, also the direct personal, social and material benefits are important. In other words; the financial reward is very important but people do not have a job only for the money. *Social or voluntary labour* is also largely oriented towards persons or organisations outside the own family but it offers only a little or no direct financial benefit. The activity aims more at direct personal, social and material benefits. Yet, a relatively small financial compensation or reward is possible. At the same time, one can always express these benefits in monetary terms to a certain extent, for example the money being spared. The basic goal of *family labour* is to directly provide certain personal, social and material services in the family, by means of exchange between family members. The direct reward for this activity is offered in the family. Indirectly, family labour also offers an output for other activities (outside the family). Also here, one can always express the benefits in terms of the amount of money being spared. A similar reasoning is possible for external education, leisure time and personal care.

Equally important is the *life course perspective*. During the various phases of the life course, the division of activities and means changes. Many combinations within different families are possible, according to sex, age, education etc. In the short run, everyone tries to realise a positive result, i.e. a growth of the total capital. Yet, from time to time, everyone can/will fail to a certain extent

and can/will suffer losses in the short run. This means that the long term finality is expressed by the adaptation capacity to change a negative development into a positive one. In the life course perspective, it is clear that the division of time within families strongly depends on the *actual family form*: living alone, living together (married or unmarried), with or without children or other dependent persons (elderly people, handicapped persons).

The individual division of activities of men and women is always taking place within one of the different societal organisations (Figure 3). In this integrated model, the different subjects, labour and exchange processes can be located in an adequate and gradual way on the different complexity levels of society. The central notion is the gradual distinction between (more) private and (more) collective systems. The mutual functionality and division of labour is the basic principle, saying that every system provides certain services for and receives certain services from smaller as well as from larger systems and vice versa (see arrows in Figure 3). In this model all existing subjects are principally complex: they are part of larger, more enclosing systems and at the same time they are constituted of a number of smaller partial objects. This implies that the traditional distinction between the economic, social and cultural sector is no longer recognisable.

Figure 3 A new basic model of the complex society



Source: Van Dongen, 2009a, 2010a

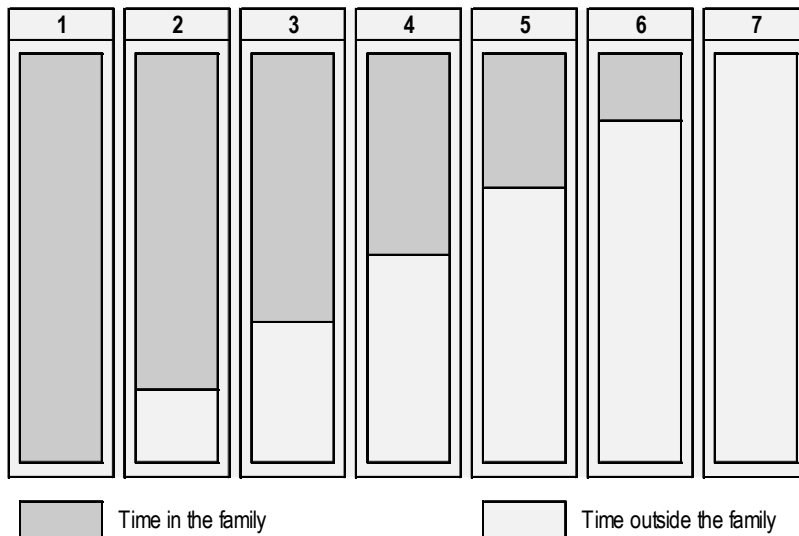
Within this complex model of society we come to the basic concept of the *internal and external division of labour*, the mechanism by means of which the activities and their results are distributed among the different societal entities, in time and space: families or households, clubs or associations, companies, public institutions etc. The internal division of time and means is called the *labour organisation*, the external division of time and means with other subjects is the *market functioning*. The system of market transactions among all societal actors is the *market system*. This means that all subjects have market transactions and participate in the market system to a certain extent, as a complement to their internal transactions. Reflecting the normative view on society, many different market systems can be conceived, for example from a strong liberal free market system on the one hand to a strong collectivist market system on the other. The actual market system of a country or region is the complex combination of gradually different partial markets, according to a number of gradual characteristics, such as openness, profit motive, product segmentation, decentralisation, competitive pressure.

The division of time of men and women is very often analysed in terms of the position within their *family or household*. Each family (member) acquires inputs for the labour and exchange process outside the family through the external division of labour or market transactions. In the same way, the output of the internal division of labour provides inputs for the activities and transactions with subjects outside the family. Complementary, also organisations (professional and non-professional) must be integrated within the analysis of the daily life of men and women.

1.2 The daily life of children

The daily life of children can be presented in the same way as that of adults. In the first place we can create a simple gradual typology of children according to the relative share of the time in their family and outside it (other families, day centre, school, association etc.) (figure 4). Types 1 and 2 refer to the children who spend (almost) all their time in their own family and do not or very seldom participate in the external settings. Types 6 and 7 concern the small group of children (temporarily) staying in an institution and having no or only little participation in a common family. We assume that most children actually are situated in types 3, 4 and 5, with a more or less balanced participation within and outside their family.

Figure 4 Typology of children according to the share of the time within and outside their family



Source: Van Dongen et al, 2001

Figure 5 presents a general conceptual model of the division of basic activities of children/youngsters aged 0–25 years, following the model of all age groups in Figure 2. On the one hand, the figure illustrates the *combination perspective*: all children permanently aim at a suitable combination of activities in different sorts of organisations, which has to offer the preferred mix of personal, social, material and financial benefits for their development. All activities have to be efficient enough to deliver the best possible output for the other activities. On the other hand, the figure shows the *life course perspective* as the division of time of an average child during the different stages of the life course.

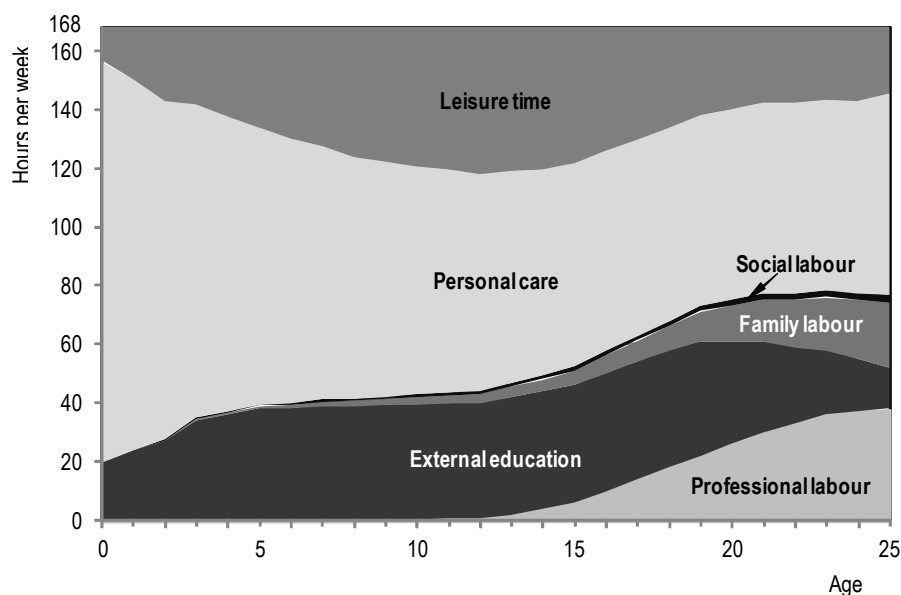
The combination of activities changes with age. For babies the personal care and education within their own family takes by far the largest share, but it decreases systematically during the following years. Already at birth, external education takes an important place and the number of hours increases sharply during the first years of life. After 1 year, leisure time and relaxation becomes more visible as a separate activity. From the age of five or 6 years, family work takes a limited but increasing part of the time. Finally, from the age of twelve years, paid work gets a small but growing place in the daily division of time.

For young children one can clearly define the broad category of 'external education' (upbringing, caring, guarding, raising, educating, teaching, coaching etc.) as a set of activities within specific living entities: daytime education, day time child care, additional child care, playgrounds, youth club, sports activities etc. Obviously, other classifications are possible depending on the characteristics and differentiation to be expressed.

The central question from the perspective of children is to what extent their family and the external organisations can answer their need for personal, social, material and financial means. Children should have the opportunity to participate in different social settings in order to realise a suitable combination of these elements, as the basis for a full development. The parental family offers spe-

cific living conditions/sources that are not available outside it, and therefore is essential. However, most families cannot give a number of important aspects or provisions, such as friends of the same age, adjusted spaces and materials for sports, playing, arts, education, broader social activities, specific pedagogical expertise or skills etc. Since each form of external education offers a specific combination of activities and means, a well-balanced participation in the different forms is essential for all children. Both the highly internal and external education cannot offer such a balanced combination of activities and means, strongly restricting the development opportunities of the children involved.

Figure 5 General conceptual model of the combination of main activities of children/youngsters in hours per week (Y-axis), by age group or during the life course (0-25 years, X-axis)



Source: Van Dongen et al, 2001

The different provisions of external education differ with respect to the meaning or finality for the daily life of children, as a complement and enrichment of the education at home. Next, we must emphasise the importance for the parents aiming at a balancing their professional and family life. External education guarantees that their children are taken care of in a decent way when they are not available because of other activities. At the same time, these external activities can enrich the internal family live of both children and parents. Additionally, also the grandparents are important stakeholders, as demanders of the presence of and activities with their grandchildren and as suppliers of education/care for them. A similar reasoning counts for other family members, friends and neighbours. Finally, external education is also important for all professional organisations employing young parents and for all associations engaging parents as active volunteering members. Sufficient external education of sufficient quality guarantees these organisations that their employees can execute their task decently, without bothering about the living conditions of their children.

In short, external education in this approach is an important part of the daily life of all children and a basic provision offered by many sorts of organisations to children and their parents. In that way, all families with children and many organisations take part in the complex market of education in terms of demand and supply of different forms of educational services. The study of this network or market must deal with different aspects, such as the quality level of the service, the available places, the number of participating children, the number of hours per week and per day, the qualification and productivity of the personnel, the policy choice concerning the degree of freedom and equality in the actual use of external education, the degree of solidarity expressed by the share of personal and collective contributions, and finally, the degree of efficiency (Van Dongen, 2004, 2009a, 2009b).

In this study we focus on the actual participation of Flemish children aged 0-12 years in external education. External education here consists of three main categories:

- 1) formal external daytime education in minder families, day centres and schools,
- 2) informal education by persons outside the family, mainly grandparents,
- 3) other external activities consisting of additional child care (before and after daytime education, during holidays etc.), activities in playgrounds and different associations, and caring at home by external persons.

1.3 Normative approach: democratisation of external education of children

The integrated approach also contains a new normative analysis of the division of time and means of all participating actors in the complex society. All countries stand for the basic normative question how the division of time and means should develop in the (near) future, given the evolution during the past decades. To answer this question, an adequate normative approach has to be formulated for future society and actively used in a controlled way, as a positive and constructive instrument for the development of relevant normative future models, also called policy models.

The new normative approach uses the concept of democracy as the overall normative principle for (the daily life of all actors in) society, from the micro to the macro level (Kruithof, 1980; Van Dongen, 1993, 2004, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2009a, 2010a, 2010b; Van Dongen et al, 2001, 2003; Gratton, 2004; Pinxten, 2011). In that way, democracy is a *multidimensional* normative concept for society always combining four basic values which are permanently being applied on all levels of society: freedom, equality, solidarity and efficiency. Together, these basic values express the essential direction of the development of societal life. *Democratisation of societal life* then is the realisation process towards a higher level of democracy in all parts of society. So we can place different variants of democracy on a continuum, from a very weak to a very strong democracy. Applying it to all actors and domains, we can speak of a democratic division of time and means in families and organisations, democratic family and business life, democratic market systems, democratic public services etc.

With the broad normative concept of democracy and democratisation, we build further on the development of the broad concept during the long history of modern society. By doing so, we explicitly criticise and reject the philosophical stream which strongly reduces democracy to a narrow principle of political decision making (Van Parijs, 1992, 1995, 2011), as a sort of necessary practical instrument for realising (more) social justice. Instead, the broad concept of democratisation here is seen as the general expression of social justice on all levels of society. This broad concept was at the heart of all societal movements fighting against inequality, the lack of freedom, discrimination, poverty etc. in society during the past centuries. The basic idea behind the concept was simple but strong: 'by the people and for the people', expressing the need for a good balance between the basic values in decision making and the division of time and means. The logic is quite simple and old: 'by the people' makes no sense without a sufficient level of the notion 'for the people' and 'for the people' cannot be satisfied in an acceptable way without a sufficient level of the notion 'for the people'.

In the period 1960–1980 the process of democratisation was at the centre of political life in Western Europe, with the 'democratisation of education for all children and health care' as major societal issues of discussion and action. The democratisation movement was also active on other fields, such as child care, mobility, energy, sports, arts, social activities and recreation.

During the past decades, the democratisation movement lost part of his force and ambition, mainly due to the revival of the conservative, neo-liberal vision on society, undervaluing or even minimising the notion 'for the people'. As a consequence, the concept of democracy has been strongly reduced in terms of meaning and application. In its most reduced meaning democracy refers to process of political decision making by means of a western parliamentary system. Fortunately, the broad concept of democracy is again gaining field during the past years, especially by the increasing number of applications on the daily life of families, clubs, companies and institutions.

The concept of democracy/democratisation always applies the four basic values in a combined way. They feed, encourage, restrict and control each other permanently in all fields of society. A democratic model can never be dominated by one of these basic values but always demands a sufficient balance between them. Therefore, by definition, democracy can never be extreme in its content. The level of democracy is determined by the combined score for the four values. It offers a useful in-

strument for the description and evaluation of societal processes of all actors and for the elaboration of the most desirable situation in the future.

In addition, many other important instrumental values are permanently being used for the realisation of the basic values in daily life, such as independence, durability or sustainability, accuracy, responsibility, flexibility, security, caution, prevention, providence, trust, respect, effort, openness, co-operation, etc.

In general, a highly democratic division of time implies a real balance between the basic values freedom, equality, solidarity and efficiency with respect to the division of labour. All values have to be realised in a sufficient way simultaneously, both stimulating and restricting one another.

Equality within and among families is very important but must be demanded in a gradual way, leaving choice for all possible options to a certain extent. The logical objective then is that all individuals and families can combine the basic activities in a sufficiently equal way, expressed by the number of hours per week or day and the quality of the activities and results.

At the same time, all individuals and families must have sufficient freedom to choose the division of activities according to their own historic background, within the societal boundaries. A democratic society needs a diversity of family types with respect to the division of labour. The main challenge is to find a model that explicitly combines sufficient equality with sufficient free choice for employees and their families and for employers.

The model must also sufficiently satisfy the solidarity principle, which implies that individuals or organisations with a certain restriction, handicap or dependency are being supported during a certain period by other people or organisations not or only minimally dealing with those problems. Different systems of solidarity are possible to deal with the (financial) dependency of those people and organisations. To finance those systems, society has to collect sufficient collective (financial) means. In that perspective, sufficient adult men and women should be sufficiently professionally active (enough hours a week and enough years in the total career).

Finally, also the efficiency principle must be met, which implies that all four capital form of all people in all age groups are being developed and employed in a sufficiently efficient way, for all activities, both at the input and output side.

The application of the concept of democratisation already has a long history. So, we are certainly not inventing the wheel. Yet, it is possible and useful to elaborate and translate the concept in a more complete and consistent way. The first basic question is to what extent external education actually meets the condition of equality for its primary participants or users (children and parents), in terms of quality, participation rate, number of hours per week and per day, personal contribution, etc.). The same question counts for all suppliers dealing with quality levels, available places, occupancy rate, subsidies, market prices etc.).

The next question is to what extent children/parents have the freedom to choose or determine the different aspects of the daily demand or use and to what extent the different suppliers can freely determine the different aspects of their supply.

Then one has to look at the forms and degrees of solidarity actually existing and those necessary to realise the desirable degree of equality and freedom in the participation: the degree of (financial) support for the users, mostly by public bodies. The financial support is mostly realised and expressed by means of subsidised prices for the use of the service.

Finally, one must investigate the degree of efficiency which is actually being realised and which should be realised, in the light of the other basic values, i.e. whether external education sufficiently uses and further develops the four forms of capital of the children and adults involved, both at the input and output side of the educational process.

The actual degree of democratisation of external education as a basic activity of and societal provision for children and parents, can be expressed in a quantitative way by means of a number of easily understandable empirical models or indicators. These empirical models can then be used for the elaboration of normative future models or policy models, as the basis for the elaboration of policy perspectives in the long run and of policy programmes in the short run.

2 Historical evolution of external education in Flanders

This section briefly sketches the evolution of external education (child care and basic education) in Flanders during the previous centuries. This evolution is strongly connected to the evolution of the division of labour of adult men and women. For a more elaborated analysis we refer among others to De Mey (1988), Van Gils (1991, 1992), Depaepe (1998), Hermans (2000), Vandembroeck (2003) en Van Dongen (1993, 2004, 2009a).

Between 1750 and 1850 the schooling society started to develop, with the focus on the 'educating or raising character and capacity' of schools. Most children could only enjoy primary school during their whole life. The basic infrastructure for primary school was strongly extended during this period, yet with large regional differences. The strict physical separation of boy and girls was still a basic feature of the pedagogical view.

Between 1850 and 1900 the education system became a stronger societal power and presented itself as a reliable instrument of socialisation, with a specific pedagogical project. Education remained a largely class related institution and at the same time confirmed the increasing segregation of men and women in society. Primary school was provided for all boys and girls of all societal classes, secondary school mainly focused on boys and to a lower extent on girls of the higher classes. Higher education was almost exclusively reserved for boys of the highest class.

After 1850, the first period of industrialisation, also the first 'cribs' (crèches) or 'guarding centres' were established in Flanders, to answer the need of many working (lone) mothers, often living in poor circumstances. The initiative mainly came from charitable institutions, sometimes with small subsidies of local authorities (towns and provinces). In 1900, about 50 day care centres provided care for about 3.500 children. The terms 'crib' and 'guarding place' were highly applicable since guarding and physical care were the main functions and a decent pedagogical vision and setting was hardly available. Only after 1914 the first pedagogical and social perspectives were introduced.

Since 1900, the discussion about the function of external education has been characterised by two basic views. The dominant view is entirely linked with the emerging breadwinner's model. The place of children younger than 3 years is at home with the mother, departing from the idea of the 'natural' role of the mother. For children older than 3 years, external education is a positive service, contributing to their personal development. For younger children, external education ('child care') is in principle not favourable but in a number of family situations it is necessary, due to poverty, bad educational situations, lone parenthood, etc. External day care is seen as an artificial replacement of education in the family. That is why education within the family must be imitated as much as possible. There is a strict distinction between child care (keeping, protecting) and upbringing (educating all children). This implies that formal education is above all a task of society (the government), whilst child care is mainly a task for private (Catholic) institutes.

The alternative view stated that professional labour by the mother was necessary and desirable for most ordinary families and that children also needed a good educative place (a 'warm crib'; 'crèche') outside their home. Child care is seen as an instrument of emancipation and social development and therefore as an enrichment of the education at home. In that respect, the right to child care for all children is being argued for. This implies that child care must be provided as a general facility largely financed by the government, just like basic education for older children.

We hardly need to say that the first view won the intense battle at that time. The result of this view was a strong development of external education for children older than 3 years and a slow development of child care for children younger than 3 years.

After the introduction of compulsory education for all children between six and fourteen years in 1914, primary school really expanded in all villages. Between 1930 and 1958, the same expansion is visible for technical and professional education and from 1960 on for the general secondary education. At the same time, also the number of toddler schools ('guarding or nursery schools' at that time) for children of three to 5 years old increased rapidly.

In line with the basic view on external education, the establishment of day care centres went at a much lower speed. In 1944 only 64 day care centres existed, for almost 2.700 children. The period from 1950 to 1970 was the peak of the breadwinner's model. Most of the children under the age of three were raised by the housewife, due to the conviction that this was better for the child. External day nurseries were a necessary evil imposed by the labour market and the professional situation of the parents. This vision also becomes clear in the quantitative evolution. In 1970 only 280 day nurseries were available for 16.700 children, about 7% of the children younger than 3 years.

During the period 1970–1990 (moderate breadwinner's model), the need for external day care increased due to the increasing professional participation of women. The number of children under the age of three that made use of the day nursery increased sharply. In 1978 almost 550 day nurseries were available for 35.000 children, around 15% of the children younger than 3 years.

Because child care was considered more as a 'substitute educational environment', mainly due to the professional activity of the mother, from 1980 onwards a lot more was invested in day care by minder families. They largely supported the traditional education in the parental family. The number of organisations for minder families rose sharply during that period.

The number of children using day care increased rapidly so that more parents came into contact with the various functions of child care: personal education, social contacts, broader pedagogical basis, etc. In an increasing number of families external day care of children under the age of three became a regular part of their daily life. Consequently, it was increasingly viewed from the perspective of the children. Education outside the family was seen more as part of the fully-fledged development or education of the child. External day care increasingly became a basic facility for young children and their parents. And this process diminished the difference between child care and pre-school education with respect to educative finality, organisation and finance.

During the period 1990–2010 (moderate combination model) this process was continued step by step. With the further increase in the number of combination families, the need for additional child care (before and after school hours, during periods of illness and during holidays) increased every year. At the same time, the daily division of time inside and outside the family of children younger than 3 years increasingly resembled that of children older than 3 years. So, more families experienced external day care/education as a normal part of the daily life of children and as an important service for their combining professional and family life.

Van Dongen (2004) shows that the actual development of external day care in Flanders during this period clearly follows the 'asymmetric multi track policy' of the Flemish government. This policy at first largely invested in the day care in minder families, because this setting strongly resembled the 'care at home' and the direct cost for the Flemish government was lower. To a large extent, this policy was at the cost of further increasing the number of places in subsidised day care centres.

Some years later a process of privatisation was started, leading to a strong increase of the number of (places in) non subsidised private day care centres, with less pedagogical and organisational conditions, but also with less financial support than the subsidised centres.

The overall result of the Flemish policy is a largely fragmented market of day care for the youngest children, with different pedagogical, organisational and financial conditions and criteria at both the demand and supply side. Moreover, there are strong indications that more than 10% of the parents are unable to find a suitable childcare service (rationing) (Ghysels & Van Lancker, 2009, 2010; Van Lancker & Ghysels, 2011). Not surprisingly, this shortage hits poor and otherwise socially vulnerable families relatively harder. Consequently, the availability and use of childcare services are not equally distributed across society.

This explosive situation led to a increasing protest of different stakeholders and a growing recognised need and demand for a more general and thorough revision of child care as part of the daily life of children and their parents. After many years of discussion, the Flemish Government started a policy process to reform child care more thoroughly. We can refer here to the final design of the new Flemish decree 'Pre-school child care in Flanders, 2010', as a basic part of the overall policy for the (external) education of children in Flanders (Kabinet van Vlaams minister van Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Gezin, 2010). The decree wants to answer the problems and challenges that emerged during the past decade.

The Flemish government starts from a broad view that stresses the combination of the pedagogical, economic and social function of pre-school child care. The ambition is that within a period of five years all families with a need for formal pre-school child care are able to find a decent and accessible place. The 'right to external child care' is the basic pillar in the new decree, which is connected with the free choice of parents to determine whether or not their young children will participate in external education. At the same time, parents will be able to choose the sort of external education and the organisation providing it. External child care (among other facilities) offers parents the possibility to harmonise their professional and family life but it also contributes to an optimal educative transition of children to the toddler school. Sufficient attention must go to the availability and accessibility of the provisions for vulnerable families in order to support their participation. The near future will show which policy plan will actually be executed in Flanders.

3 Actual participation of Flemish children in external education

3.1 Data, method and hypotheses

Data: time use survey FFCS–2005

Following the historical sketch we now discuss the actual participation of Flemish children of 0–12 years old in external education in 2005, by means of seven basic empirical indicators or models. The data come from the time use module of the ‘Flemish Family and Care Survey’ (FFCS–2005) (CSB, University of Antwerp; Debacker et al, 2006; Ghysels & Debacker, 2007). The research population consists of all families of the Flemish region where the youngest child is between 0 and 15 years old. Children of 0–2 years are overrepresented in the sample, together with handicapped children and children of poor families.

For the time use survey, the parents recorded on a special registration sheet per half hour of the day which person(s) or organisation took care of their children, during a whole week. The activities are classified according to the ‘responsible and caring actor’: respondent, partner, ex-partner, brother–sisters, child himself/herself, grandparents, school, day care centre, minder family, outside school child care, all sorts of youth, sports and hobby associations, carer at home or another provision.

The time registration based on this classification does not offer detailed information about the content of the activities (what the children are doing, for instance sleeping, playing, eating, having a bath ...), as is the case for most activities in most time use surveys. Yet, with this classification it is possible to determine and calculate the time children spend in external education as a whole and in the main separate forms of external education, which can be compared with the time spent within their own family. After all, most studies on external education also use the general variable ‘time spent in external education’, referring to the time children stay at a certain caring actor and not to specific activities they are actually doing there.

In this study, external education is subdivided into three categories: *formal daytime education* in day care centres, minder families and schools, *informal daytime education* mostly by grandparents (only very rarely by other persons outside the family) and *other external activities* (outside school child care, all sorts of activities in youth associations, sporting clubs etc., carer at home or another provision). The partial activities of the latter category are not analysed in this study due to the very low participation rate and number of hours.

We use the data of children aged 0–12 years for whom the parents correctly completed the registration sheet of the whole week. The final sample used counts 1.185 children, with 616 boys and 569 girls. The group of 0–2 years counts 519 children and the group of 3–12 years 666 children. The sample is weighed for the age and sex of the children and for some variables of the living conditions of the parents. For more explanation of the weighing procedure, see Debacker et al (2006).

Method

Since the time use of children is strongly connected to the time use of their parents, we present a number of empirical indicators or models which are comparable with the models of the time use of adults (Van Dongen, 2009a):

- Participation rate of children in external education by age;
- Average number of hours per week in the family and in external education by age;
- Average number of hours per week in different forms of external education by age;
- Distribution of children according to the number of hours per week in external education;
- Average number of hours per day of the week in external education;
- Distribution of children according to the number of hours per day in external education;
- Evolution of the participation rate in external education during the day.

In the following sections we mostly present and discuss the group of 0–12 years first, followed by a separate presentation of the group 0–2 years and sometimes of the group van 3–12 years. In that way the relevant similarities and differences between these age groups are clarified. We do not show and discuss separate figures for boys and girls because the differences are negligible for all seven indicators. As far as these indicators are concerned, the participation of Flemish boys and girls of 0–12 years in the main forms of external education this study deals with, is almost completely equal. This is the result of the fact that Flemish parents treat their boys and girls in a maximal equal way with respect to participation in those main forms of external education.

Although the empirical models concern the year 2005, they certainly remain useful for the actual policy discussion on external education in Flanders (and other comparable countries and regions).

The main reason is that the time use of a certain group does not change that much in a period of 5 years. Given the recent increase of the participation in pre-school external education in Flanders, we can assume a small additional increase of the participation rate and the number of hours per week during the period 2007–2010. A few relevant scenarios of this assumption could be easily elaborated.

The importance of this study is that for the first time a number of useful complementary empirical models/indicators of the use of external education in Flanders can be presented which are based on reliable time use data of children. These indicators illustrate the actual process of democratisation in an understandable way. Unfortunately, due to the lack of data, we cannot show the evolution of these indicators during the previous decades. To further improve the empirical analysis, therefore, such time use surveys have to be repeated periodically, in order to visualise that process during a longer period. Moreover, it should be able in the future to connect the indicators of participation to indicators of the quality of external education. Whatever the limitations, these models offer a strong empirical basis for the policy debate about the future development of external education in Flanders. At the same time, they can also inspire the research and policy debate in other countries and regions.

Hypotheses

The seven indicators together give a fairly differentiated and full picture of the participation of Flemish children in external education. Starting from the historical evolution in Flanders, we can formulate some basic *hypotheses* about the empirical indicators presented in the next parts.

We assume a high overall participation rate of Flemish children in external education, starting on a low level for children younger than three months, but strongly increasing during the first year and being almost maximal for children older than 3 years, mainly due to the general availability of basic education for all children older than 2 ½ years. Controlling for professional participation of the parents, educational level of the mother and family income, the persistent different approach to external education for children aged 3–12 years and for children aged 0–2 years, becomes visible, as explained in the historical overview.

Next, we expect that the total number of hours per week in total external education is relatively restricted in proportion to the total time within the family, and as such is not really ‘threatening’ the living conditions of most children in their actual family context.

Yet, the average number of hours per week in external education is fairly large in comparison with the average number of hours of professional labour of parents, especially for effectively participating children. Again we assume a strong increase of the number of hours during the first years of life. We can formulate it in a positive way: as far as external education is seen as a major supplement to and enrichment of the education at home and as an important support for the daily combination of professional and family life of young parents, sufficient hours per week in external education are both desirable and necessary. But again, controlling for the same three social variables, the different societal approach to external education in Flanders for children of 0–2 years and of 3–12 years becomes visible.

Given this perspective, it is furthermore to be shown that the distribution of children according to the number of hours per week in external education is fairly positive, i.e. that most children stay between 25 and 50 hours a week in (formal) external education and that very few children spend extreme low or extreme high number of hours in external education. This is mainly determined by the combination of the implicit societal restrictions at both the demand side (parents) and the supply side.

In this line, we can further expect that the average number of hours per day of the week in external education is fairly acceptable. First, it is logical that most children spend very little time in external education during the weekends. Second, the average number of hours is expected to be fairly high from Monday till Friday, largely comparable with the time of parents in professional work, with a significantly lower number of hours on Wednesday due to the free afternoon.

Consequently, we also assume that the distribution of children for the number of hours per average day (Monday till Friday) in external education is also positive, with most children staying between 6 and 9 hours per day in (formal) external education and very few children having an extreme low or extreme high number of hours.

Finally, the evolution of the participation rate during the average day completes the picture, saying that most children stay in external education during the normal daytime hours (8 am and 5 pm) and that very few children participate in external education between 6 and 8 am and between 5 and 7 pm.

3.2 Participation rate of children in external education by age

Figure 6 firstly shows the participation rate of children of 0–12 years in total external education, formal external education, education by grandparents and other external activities. It is a basic indicator often used in studies of human activities and (the use) of societal provisions.

Children 0–12 years

About 95% of the children 0–12 years participate in *total external education*. Children younger than 1 year have a participation rate of 75% and that percentage strongly increases with age, till 85% of the children of 1 year, 92% of the children of 2 years and 98% of the children of 3 years. Among all older children the participation rate remains almost 100%.

For *formal external daytime education* the participation rate of the total group amounts to 89%, mainly due to the significantly lower percentage for the youngest children: 49% for children younger than 1 year, 57% for children of 1 year, 75% for those of 2 years and 95% for those of 3 years. Children older than 3 years show a participation rate of almost 100%, due to the maximal participation in the toddler school.

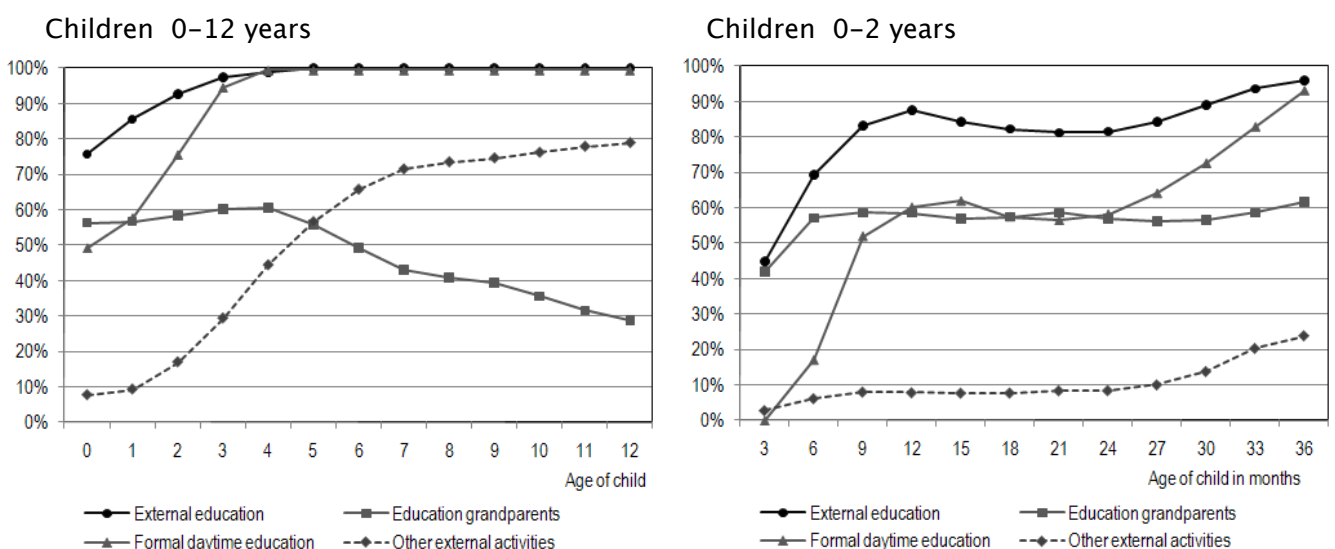
About 47% of all children of 0–12 years regularly stay at their *grandparents*. For children younger than 2 year the percentage amounts to 57% and it increases slightly to 60% at the age of 3 and 4 years. Afterwards the participation rate decreases continuously with age, to 42% at the age of 7 years and 30% at the age of 12 years.

Almost 54% of the children of 0–12 years take part in *other external activities*. For children younger than 1 year the percentage is much lower (8%) but it rapidly rises to 70% for children of 7 years and slower to 80% at the age of 12 years. Yet we can emphasise that still 20% of the children aged 6–12 years do not participate in other external activities as out of school child care, activities in youth organisations, sporting club, artistic association etc.

Children 0–2 years

The total *external education* shows a participation rate of 83% for children younger than 3 years. Children younger than 3 months have a much lower participation rate of 43%, obviously because most mothers are full-time at home during their maternity leave. That percentage increases very strongly with age, to almost 70% for children of 4–6 months, 82% for children of 7–9 months and 87% for children of 9–12 months. Afterwards the participation rate goes down slowly to 81% for children of 22–24 months. From the age of 24 months the participation rate rises again to 97% for children of 34–36 months.

Figure 6 Participation rate of Flemish children (0-12 years and 0-2 years) in total external education, formal daytime education, education by grandparents and other external activities



Source: FFCS–2005, CSB, University of Antwerp

The participation rate in *formal external daytime education* comes to 61% for all children younger than 3 years. For children younger than 3 months the percentage is almost zero: during the period of maternity leave of the mother, formal external daytime education is not being used. Afterwards the percentage strongly rises to 18% for children of 4–6 months, to 50% for children of 7–9 months and to 60% for children of 10–12 months. Then the participation rate goes down to 55% for children of 19–21 months but strongly increases to 93% for children of 34–36 months, mainly because most children enter the toddler school. The decrease of the participation rate for children of 16–19 months is probably linked to the negative effect of the birth of a second child in a number of families on the labour market participation of mothers and to the positive effect on their presence in the family.

Almost 57% of the children of 0–2 years regularly stay with their grandparents. For children younger than 3 months this is only 41%, but the percentage rises to 58% for children of 7–9 months and remains more or less constant until the age of 34–36 months.

Around 11% of the children of 0–2 years attend *other external activities*. For children younger than 3 months this amounts to 3%. The percentage rises to 9% for children of 7–9 months and remains constant at 9% until the age of 22–24 months. Then the percentage strongly goes up to almost 23% for children of 34–36 months.

In addition, table 1 shows the results of a **bivariate analysis** of the participation rate of Flemish children (0–2 years and 3–12 years) in total external education, formal daytime education, education by grandparents and other external activities, for professional participation of the parents (NPA = at least one parent has no job; PA = all parents have a job), educational level of the mother (lower, higher) and family income (50% lower, 50% higher). The grey cells show the significant differences.

For children aged 0–2 years, the analysis shows significant differences in the participation rate of total external education, formal daytime education and education by grandparents, for all three control variables. For other external activities there is a significant difference for professional participation of the parents. For children aged 3–12 years, we only notice significant differences in the participation rate of education by grandparents.

Table 1 Bivariate analysis of the participation rate of Flemish children (0-2 years and 3-12 years) in total external education, formal daytime education, education by grandparents and other external activities, for professional participation of the parents, educational level of the mother and family income

		Profess. participation		Education mother		Family income	
		NPA	PA	Lower	Higher	Lower	Higher
0-2 years	External education	64	94	59	93	68	92
	Formal daytime education	27	79	35	78	42	73
	Education grandparents	44	63	33	65	47	64
	Other external activities	8	14	13	13	13	10
3-12 years	External education	98	99	98	99	99	99
	Formal daytime education	98	99	98	98	98	99
	Education grandparents	27	53	24	54	32	57
	Other external activities	69	73	64	73	70	69

Source: FFCS–2005, CSB, University of Antwerp

The table clearly shows the different societal approach to external education that still exists in Flanders (and many other European countries/regions). For children aged 3–12 years, formal external daytime education is primarily conceived, financed and organised as a ‘basic service’ for all children of that age group. So decent financial conditions for the suppliers and minimal direct financial contributions go hand in hand with very high participation rates, and differences for professional participation, education and income no longer occur.

Formal external daytime education for children aged 0–2 years, mostly called ‘external child care’, is still primarily seen and financed as a secondary ‘necessary service’ for families with ‘child care

needs', mainly because of the professional participation of young mothers. This implies worse and unequal financial conditions for the suppliers and relatively high personal financial contributions, leading to much lower participation rates and major differences for the educational level of the mother (a higher education implies a higher labour participation rate) and for family income (higher income families are more able and willing to pay the relatively high contribution for child care). Given the main motives for using 'child care', also staying with the grandparents shows significant differences for these three variables.

Summary

As expected, the participation rate of Flemish children of 0–12 years in the total external education and in formal external daytime education is high to very high. The participation rate of the youngest children is very low but rises quickly with age and is almost maximal for children older than 3 years. On the one hand, this supports the idea that a sufficiently high participation rate is both desirable and useful when (formal) external education is seen as a positive contribution to the personal development of children and to the combination of professional and family life of parents. On the other hand, controlling for professional participation of the parents, educational level of the mother and family income, the persistent different approach to (formal) external education for children aged 3–12 years and for children aged 0–2 years, is even more visible.

The participation in education by grandparents is much lower, because they are not available for all children. It is fairly logical that the youngest children show the highest participation rate.

The participation in other external activities is very low for the youngest children, but it strongly rises with age, to 80% for children of 6 years and older. This means that still 20% of the children of 6–12 years do not participate in out of school child care, activities in youth organisations, sporting clubs and artistic associations.

3.3 Average number of hours per week in the family and in external education by age

Figure 7 illustrates the average number of hours per week in the parental family (education by parents and children's own time) and in external education, for different ages. The left graphs show children aged 0–12 years, the right graphs give a more detailed picture for children of 0–2 years, per three months. 'Education parents' refers to all activities with direct presence and care of at least one parent. 'Personal time child' consists of all activities without direct attendance and care of a parent, especially sleeping/resting and playing. 'External education' refers to sum of formal external daytime education (in day care centres and minder families), informal education by grandparents and other external activities.

Paid labour is not visible in the figure because it only occurs from the age of 12 (Figure 5). The few hours of family labour are included in the time within the family, while the very few hours of social work are part of other external activities.

Children 0–12 years

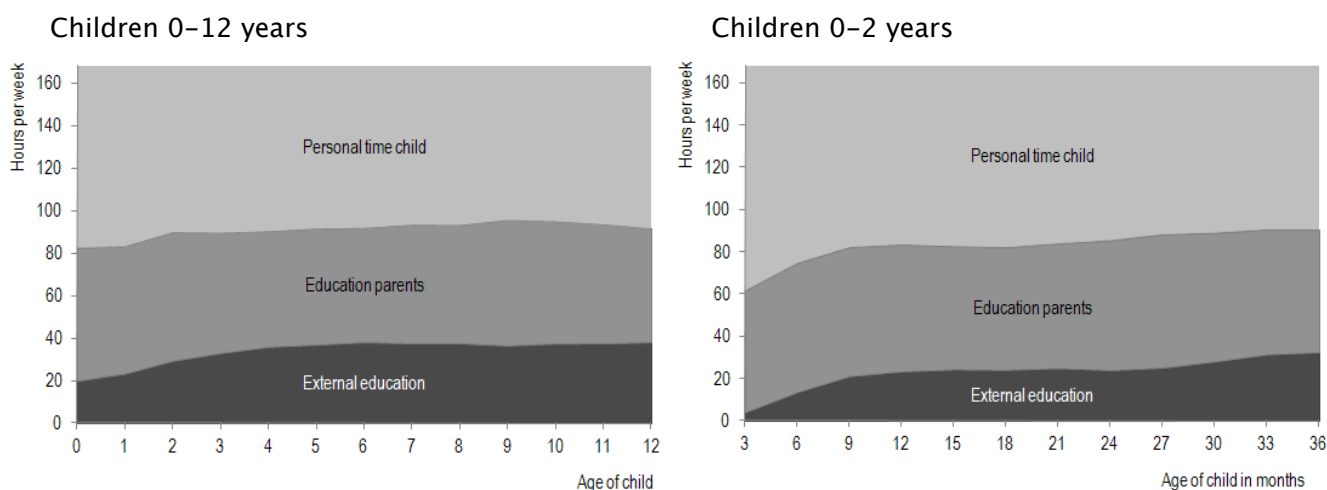
The number of hours of *total external education* is only a relatively small share (maximum 25%) of the total time (168 hours per week), and is much smaller than the total time with parents and personal time. So children aged 0–12 years stay most of the time within their own family.

Children younger than 1 year stay on average 20 hours per week in external education. The number of hours increases to 23 hours for children of 1 year, 29 hours for children of 2 years and 36 hours for children of 3 years. For children older than 3 years, the number of hours in external education remains constant at 37–38 hours a week.

Children 0–2 years

During the first three months of their life, children spend only 4 hours per week in external education, mainly because almost all mothers are at home all the time during their maternity leave. Later on external education strongly rises: to 13 hours per week in the 6th month, 20 hours in the 9th month and 23 hours in the 12th month. During the 2nd year of life, the number of hours remains constant around 24 hours per week. In the third year of life the number of hours goes up to almost 33 hours in the 36^{ste} month, especially by the rapidly increasing participation in the toddler school. The increase of the average number of hours in external education for the group 0–2 years which is visible in the left figure, is mainly on the account of children of 3 to 9 months and those of 30 to 36 months. For children of 9–30 months the number of hours is largely equal.

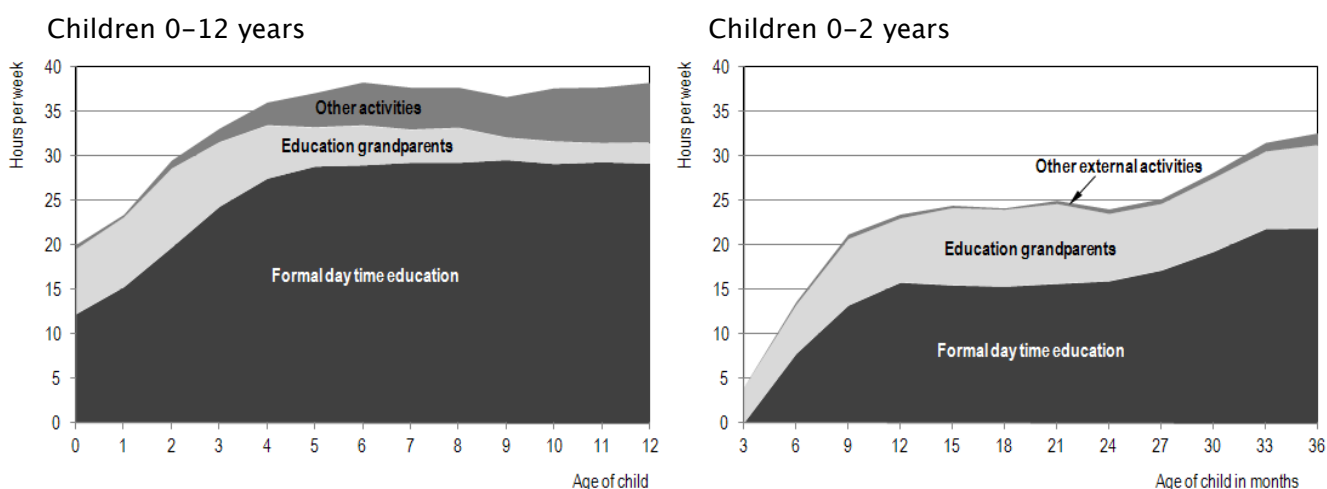
Figure 7 Hours per week Flemish children (0-12 years and 0-2 years) spend on average within the family and in external education, by age



Source: FFCS-2005, CSB, University of Antwerp

In addition figure 8 shows the average number of hours per week in external education, with the distinction between formal daytime education, education by grandparents and other external activities. It clearly illustrates the changing composition of the three sorts of external education by age.

Figure 8 Hours per week of Flemish children (0-12 years and 0-2 years) spend on average in formal daytime education, education by grandparents and other external activities, by age



Source: FFCS-2005, CSB, University of Antwerp

Children 0-12 years

The number of hours per week in formal daytime education is much larger than in education by grandparents. During the first year of life children stay around 12 hours per week in formal external education and this number rises strongly: to 14 hours for children of 1 year, 19 hours for children of 2 years and 26 hours for children of 3 years. Then the number of hours remains fairly constant between 26 and 28 hours per week.

Until the age of 4 years, children stay on average 8 hours per week with their grandparents. The number of hours decreases with age, to around 3 hours per week for children of 11-12 years.

The number of hours spent on other external activities is still very small for children of 0-4 years. Then it rises systematically to about 8 hours for children of 11-12 years. We mention here that the additional care of children of 0-2 years is mostly registered as daytime education. That is why we

recalculated the time in external daytime education before 8 am and after 5 pm as time spent on other external activities.

Children 0–2 years

During the first three months of life, the external education of children is almost exclusively done by their grandparents, but with only a small 4 hours per week. From the age of 3 months the number of hours in formal daytime education is much larger than the number of hours with the grandparents and the difference increases with age. The number of hours in formal daytime education quickly rises after the third month, to around 15 hours per week at the age of 9 months. Then the number of hours remains constant until the age of 21 months and strongly increases again to 22 hours at the age of 30 months.

The education by grandparents goes up after the third month to almost 9 hours per week at the age of 12 months and then remains more or less constant until the age of 36 months.

The number of hours in other external activities is very small and decreases from the age of 18 months to about 1 hour per week.

Summary

The figures largely confirm the assumption that the total number of hours per week in external education remains relatively small in comparison with the total time within the family. The number of hours in external education therefore is not a threat for the daily life and personal development of most children in their family context. Or in positive terms: when external education is seen as an important support and enrichment of the education at home and as an important facility for the combination of professional and family life of parents, a sufficient number of hours per week is favourable and desirable.

3.4 Average number of hours per week in the different forms of external education, by age

Figure 9 then shows in another way the average number of hours per week spent on total external education, formal external daytime education, external education by grandparents and other external activities, at the top for all children in the sample, down separately for the participants, i.e. children who actually participate in the activities. The left figures give the number of hours of children aged 0–12 years, the figures at the right side separately that of children aged 0–2 years.

Children 0–12 years

Children aged 0–12 years stay on average 34 hours per week in *total external education*. That is almost one quarter of the available 168 hours per week. This figure is roughly equal to the number of working hours per week of adults aged 25–64 years.

Children younger than 1 year spend on average 20 hours per week in external education and the number of hours increases sharply to about 38 hours for children aged 6 years. Then the number of hours is more or less constant until the age of 12 years.

The curve of *formal external daytime education* has approximately the same shape but at a lower level: from 12 hours for children under 1 year to nearly 30 hours for children of 5 years and older. Then the number of hours is constant until the age of 12 years.

Children younger than 1 year stay about 8 hours per week with their *grandparents*. That number increases to approximately 10 hours for children aged 1–2 years, but then it drops sharply to nearly five hours at the age of 5 years and then slightly goes down to almost 3 hours at the age of 12 years.

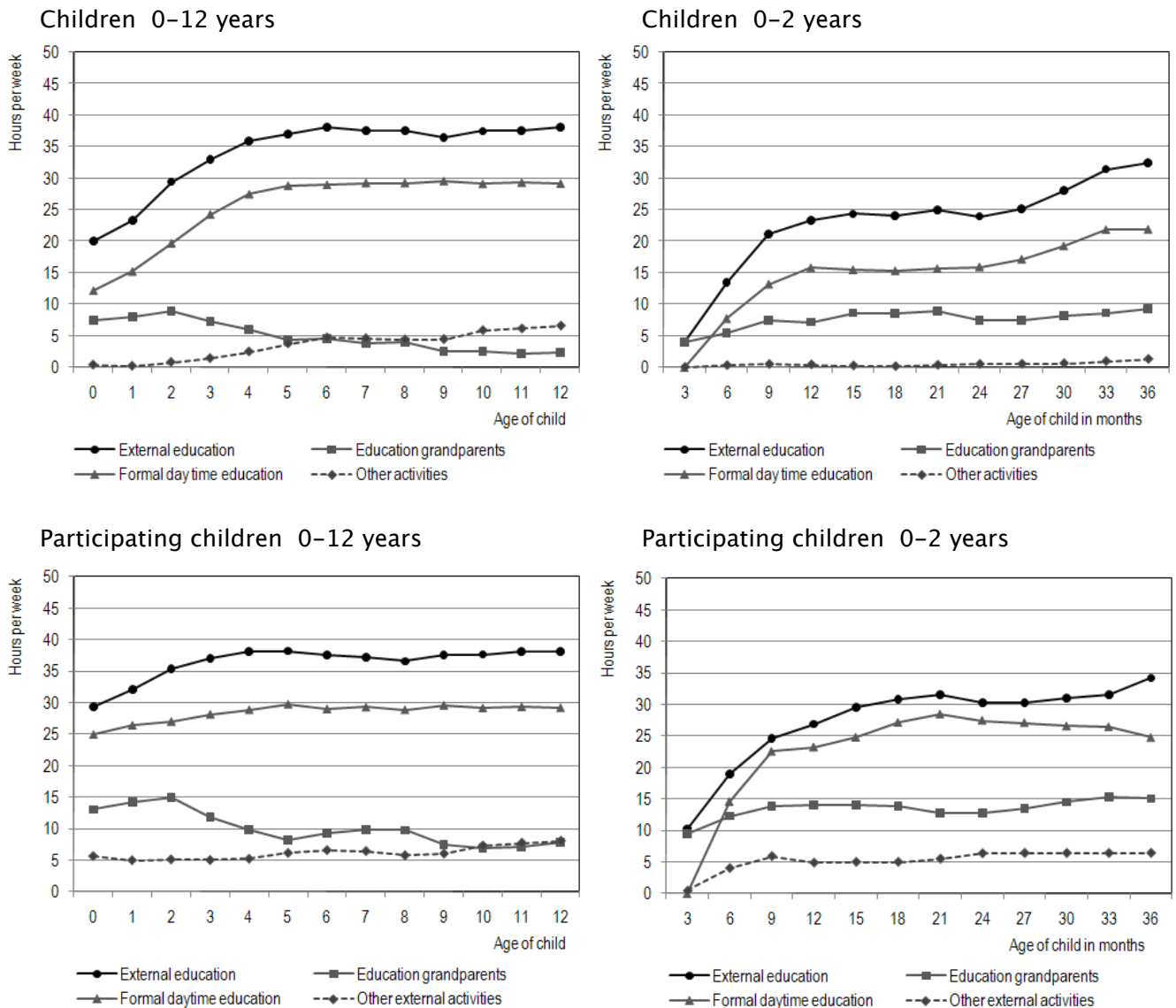
The curve of *other external activities* shows the opposite course: from 30 minutes for children younger than 2 years to almost 5 hours for children of 6 to 9 years and to almost 7 hours for children of 12 years.

Children 0–2 years

On average children 0–2 years stay 24 hours per week in *total external education*. During the first three months this is only 4 hours per week, but then the number of hours sharply rises to nearly 25 hours per week at the age of 13–15 months. Then the number of hours remains constant until the age of 25–27 months, followed by an increase to 33 hours at the age of 34–36 months, due to the higher participation in the toddler school.

The curve of *formal external daytime education* again largely has the same shape but at a lower level, with an average of 16 hours per week for the entire group: from 0 hours for children under 1 year until 15 hours for children of 10 to 24 months, up to 22 hours at the age of 34–36 months. This group stays on average 8 hours per week with the grandparents. For children younger than 3 months this is only 4 hours per week, but that number goes up to 8 hours for children aged 13–15 months and then remains approximately constant until the age of 34–36 months. The curve of *other external activities* almost coincides with the X-axis, with only half an hour per week until the age of 28–30 months and nearly 1 hour per week at the age of 34–36 months.

Figure 9 Hours per week children (0-12 years and 0-2 years) spend in total external education, formal external daytime education, external education by grandparents and other external activities, by age



Source: FFCS-2005, CSB, University of Antwerp

Participating children 0-12 years

The curves of participating children logically lie higher, especially for the age groups with a relatively low participation rate (Figure 6). For total external education, formal external daytime education and other external activities this mostly concerns children younger than 3 years, while for education by grandparents this concerns all children. Participating children of 0-12 years stay on average almost 36 hours per week in external education. This is about 2 hours per week more than for the whole group, because only for the children

0–2 years the number of hours increases significantly, due to the lower participation rate. The small gradual differences by age are the result of differences in the number of hours of partial activities.

The curve of *formal external daytime education* is much lower, with an average of 28 hours per week. With respect to all children aged 0–12 years, the number of hours of the youngest participating children is much higher: from 25 hours for children under 1 year to nearly 30 hours for children aged 5 years and older. This is an important signal for the future: the number of hours in formal education of young participating children is almost as high as that of older children.

They combine that with a higher number of hours with the grandparents (on average 10 hours per week for the whole group) and an almost equal number of hours in *other external activities* (on average 6 hours per week for the whole group).

Participating children 0–2 years

This group of children stays on average almost 30 hours per week in external education. During the first three months that is only 10 hours per week, almost exclusively with the grandparents. Then the number strongly increases to 25 hours at the age of 7–9 months and then slightly to 32 hours at the age of 19–21 months. Thereafter, the number of hours remains more or less constant until the age of 28–30 months, to increase again to 35 hours at the age of 34–36 months.

The curve of *formal external daytime education* again has almost the same shape but at a lower level, with an average of 26 hours: from 0 hours for children under 1 year to 28 hours for children aged 19–21 months, followed by a slight decrease up to 25 hours at the age of 34–36 months.

On average, that group stays 14 hours a week with the *grandparents*. Participating children younger than 3 months stay about 10 hours per week with the grandparents, followed by a slight increase to 14 hours for children aged 7–9 months and older.

In relative terms the curve of *other external activities* shows the biggest difference for the small group of participants, with an average of 5 hours per week: about 5 hours a week from the age of 4 months and almost 7 hours from the age of 22 months. This higher score is mainly due to the participation in pre-school child care.

In addition, we briefly give for **children actually participating** in external education the main results of a **bivariate analysis** of the number of hours per week, for professional participation of the parents, the educational level of the mother and family income.

A really large difference is visible for the professional participation of the parents: participating children aged 0–2 years living in families with at least one non working parent, spend on average 18 hours in external education, while those with all parents working spend 34 hours in external education. This difference is the cumulative effect of the smaller differences for formal external daytime education and education by grandparents. The differences for educational level of the mother and family income are significant but smaller. Again, for children aged 3–12 years, no significant differences exist.

This analysis additionally illustrates the different societal approach to external education in Flanders. Once parents decide that their children of 0–2 years participate in (formal) external education, the influence of professional participation on the number of hours in external education is strong, but that of educational level and family income becomes weaker. For children aged 3–12 years, formal external daytime education is primarily conceived ‘basic service’ for all children of that age group, with a largely equal number of hours per week, without significant (negative) relation with professional participation, educational level or family income.

Summary

For the whole group of 0–12 years, the average number of hours per week in external education is fairly high, but still with large differences between the group of 0–2 years and that of 3–12 years. Moreover, there is a strong increase during the first months and years of life. This also applies to formal daytime education, albeit with a lower number of hours per week. The children spend much less time with the grandparents and that number of hours decreases with age. The number of hours spent on other external activities is very low, especially among the youngest children.

For participating children, differences for age are only visible among children younger than 9 months. For older children, the total number of hours in external education is largely similar to the number of working hours of men between 25 and 64 years old. With 29 hours a week, formal external daytime education represents almost 65% of the total external education.

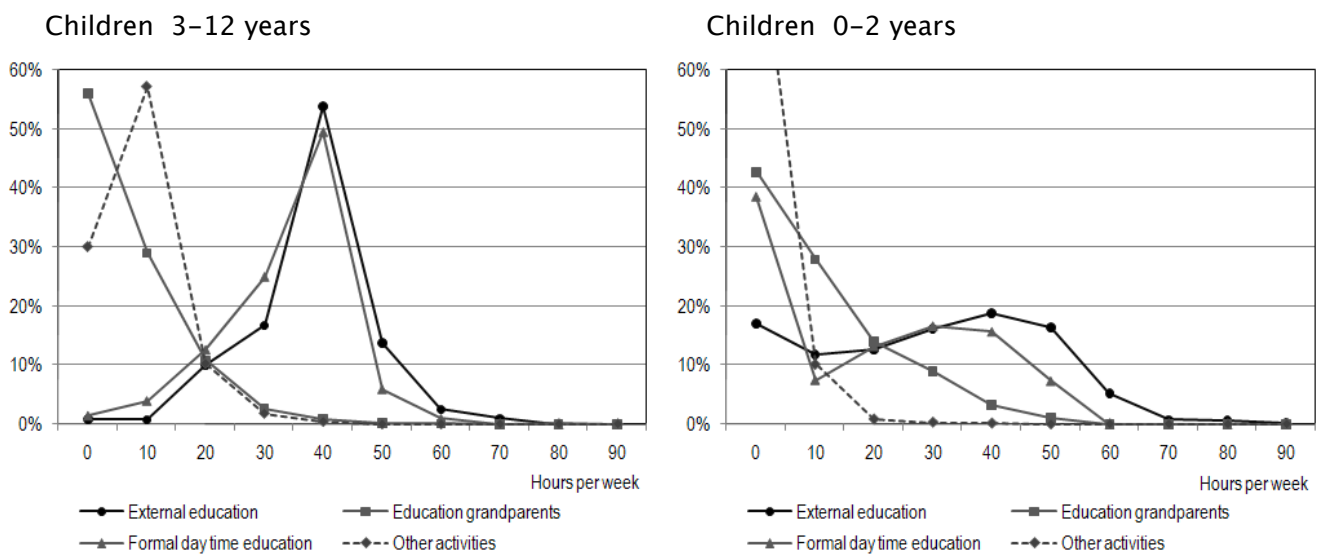
Controlling for some major social variables, the different societal approach to external education in Flanders for children of 0–2 years and of 3–12 years becomes visible again.

3.5 Distribution of children for the number of hours per week in external education

In addition Figure 10 shows the percentage distribution of the children (Y-axis) according to the number of hours per week (X-axis) in total external education, formal external daytime education, education by grandparents and other external activities. The left figure deals with children of 3–12 years, the right figure with children of 0–2 years. We use the age groups 3–12 years and 0–2 years because the differences by age are not visible in these figures.

This indicator clearly shows the gradual differences in the number of hours within the two age groups and expresses the degree of equality and diversity. This basic indicator in the form of a distribution curve is also used in Van Dongen (2009a) for the presentation of policy models for the future division of time of adult men and women. In the same way, they can be used for the presentation of policy models for the future division of external education of children, as a basis for the development of policy perspectives.

Figure 10 Distribution of children (3–12 years and 0–2 years) according to the number of hours per week in total external education, formal external daytime education, education by grandparents and other external activities



Source: FFCS–2005, CSB, University of Antwerp

Children 3–12 years

The curve of *total external education* is a fairly small and nearly symmetrical bell curve around the average of 35 hours per week. Only 1% of children do not participate in external education, 1% participates 1–10 hours per week, 11% 11–20 hours, 17% 21–30 hours, 54% 31–40 hours, 14% 41–50 hours and 2% over 50 hours per week. That curve is much more symmetrical than the curve of the number of working hours of adults aged 25–64 years, because the share of non participating children is smaller than the proportion of professionally inactive adults (Van Dongen, 2009a).

The curve of *formal external daytime education* has almost the same shape but lies more to the left because of the lower number of hours.

The curve of education provided by *grandparents* is different, with 56% of the children not staying with their grandparents, 29% staying 1–10 hours per week with the grandparents, 11% 11–20 hours and 4% over 20 hours per week.

The curve of *other external activities* shows 30% non-participants, then 57% of the children spending 1–10 hours a week on this category, 11% 11–20 hours and only 3% more than 20 hours.

Children 0–2 years

For children 0–2 years the *total external education* shows a flat asymmetric bell curve around an average of 25 hours per week, mainly because of the higher percentage (18%) non participants (especially among children younger than 6 months). Furthermore, 12% stays 1–10 hours per week in external education, 13% 11–20 hours, 16% 21–30 hours, 19% 31–40 hours, 16% 41–50 hours, 5%

51–60 hours and 2% over 60 hours per week. About 23% of that group stays more than 40 hours per week in the remote education.

The curve of *formal external daytime education* lies more to the left, with a much higher share of non participants (39%). About 8% of the children participate 1–10 hours per week, 13% 11–20 hours, 17% 21–30 hours, 16% 31–40 hours and 7% over 40 hours per week. The curve resembles that of professional work of unskilled mothers aged 25–64.

The curve of education by *grandparents* is slightly lower than for the group 3–12 years: 43% of the children never stays with their grandparents, 28% spend 1–10 hours per week with them, 14% 11–20 hours, 9% 21–30 hours and only 4% more than 30 hours per week.

Around 88% does not participate in *other outside activities*, 10% of the children spends 1–10 hours per week and only 1% more than 20 hours per week

Summary

A positive finding from a pedagogical perspective is that only a small share of the children stay (too) few or (too) many hours per week in total external education and in formal external daytime education. Another positive aspect is that both total external education and formal external daytime education show sufficient diversity and equality in the number of hours per week. Only among children younger than 3 years, the share with (too) few hours per week is still quite high. Therefore, the lower participation of this group deserves sufficient attention in future policy.

3.6 Average number of hours per day of the week in external education

Figure 11 shows the number of hours per day of the week and for an average day of a whole week (total) in total external education, formal external daytime education, external education by grandparents and other external activities. Above are the graphs for all children in the sample, below the separate graphs for participating children. The figures for children aged 0–12 years are at the left side, those for children 0–2 years at the right side. We use the age groups 3–12 years and 0–2 years again because the differences by age are not visible in these figures.

Children 3–12 years

Children aged 0–12 years stay on average $5\frac{1}{2}$ hours per day in *total external education*, 4 hours in formal external daytime education, $\frac{3}{4}$ hour with their grandparents and $\frac{3}{4}$ hour in other external activities. On weekends, external education is limited to approximately 1 hour per day, almost evenly split between staying with the grandparents and participating in other external activities. The curve of formal external daytime education has the same shape, but on a lower level, with an average of 4 hours per week. Formal external daytime education is practically not attended in weekends. On Tuesday children aged 3–12 years stay almost 8 hours in external education, with $6\frac{3}{4}$ hours in formal daytime education, followed by Monday, Thursday and Friday. The small differences between the four weekdays may have to do with the different opening hours of schools and the varying number of hours of professional labour of (one of) the parents.

Wednesday clearly shows a lower number of hours in total external education, mainly because of the lower number of hours in formal external daytime education, due to the school free afternoon. This is partly offset by a higher number of hours with the grandparents and in others outside activities.

Children 0–2 years

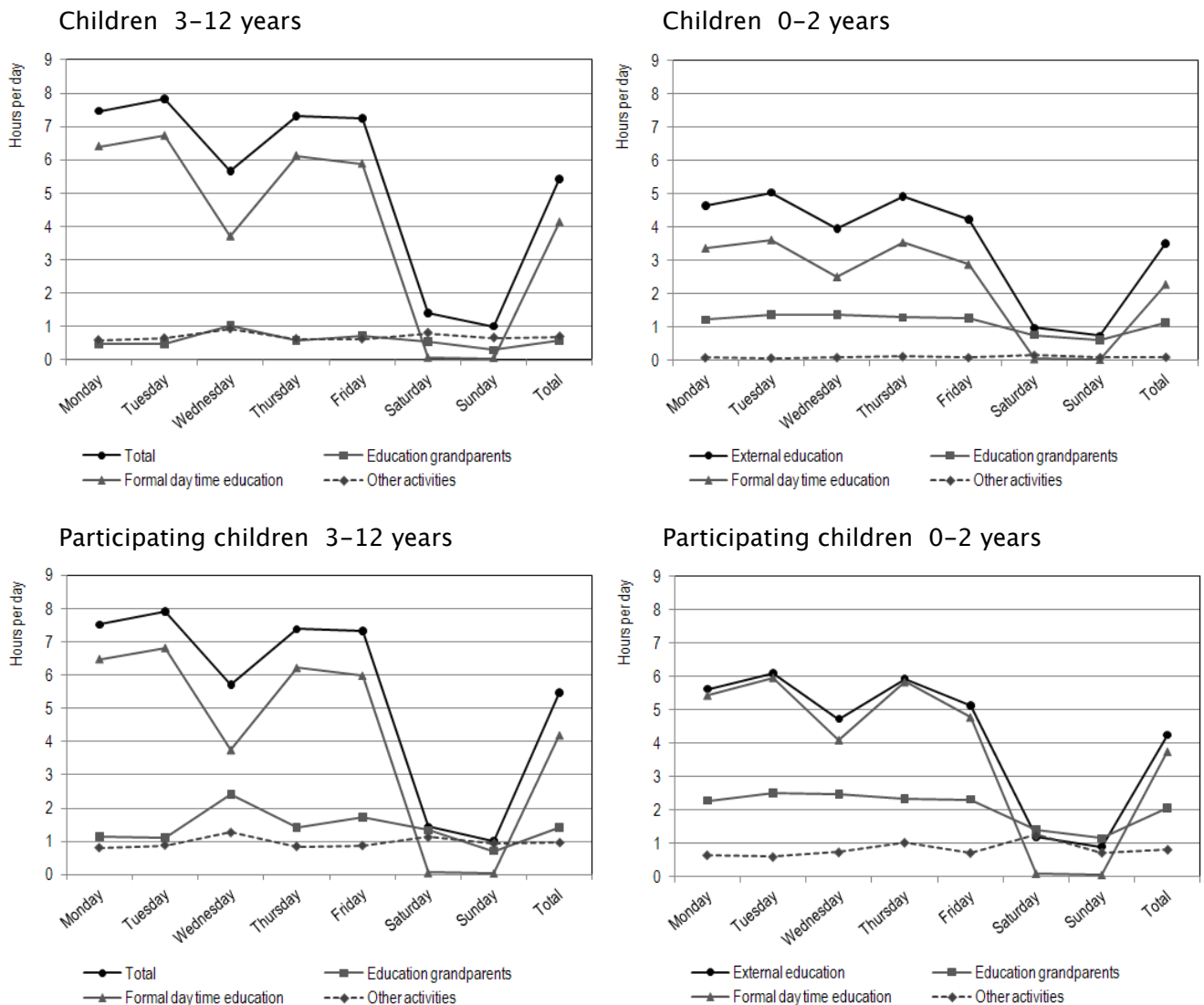
Children of 0–2 years spend on average $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours per day in total external education, nearly $2\frac{1}{4}$ hours in formal external daytime education, 1 hour with the grandparents and only 5–10 minutes in other outside activities.

In weekends they stay almost 1 hour per day in external education, especially with the grandparents. Formal external daytime education shows hardly any participation in weekends.

From Monday till Friday, the number of hours per day with grandparents is significantly larger than for the group 0–12 years.

On Tuesday the youngest children stay on average 5 hours in external education, with almost 3 hours in formal daytime education, followed by Thursday and Monday. On Wednesday and Friday, the total external education is limited to about four hours, with fewer hours in formal external daytime education and a somewhat more time with the grandparents.

Figure 11 Hours per day of the week children (3-12 years and 0-2 years) spend on total external education, formal external daytime education, external education by grandparents and other external activities, by age



Source: FFCS-2005, CSB, University of Antwerp

Participating children 3-12 years

The curves of total external education and formal external daytime education are almost the same as for the whole group because almost all children participate at least half an hour per week. The number of hours with grandparents and in other external activities is significantly higher. For grandparents we notice the significantly higher number of hours on Wednesday, as a partial compensation of the lower amount of formal daytime education.

Participating children 0-2 years

For this group the differences are even larger since the participation rate is much lower for all types of external education. From Monday to Friday, the total number of hours of external education per day is approximately one hour larger than for the whole group. On weekends, the difference is very limited.

The curve of formal external daytime education is much higher, except on Saturday and Sunday, mainly because of the lower participation rate. The curve for week days is almost similar to that of total external education. So most participating children combine formal daytime education with education by grandparents and/or participating in other outside activities.

The curves of staying with the grandparents and participating in other outside activities are significantly higher than for the whole group. Here we notice a fairly equal number of hours during the week days.

Summary

We see for the group of 3–12 years that children spend very few hours in external education during the weekend, and then mainly with grandparents or in other external activities. Participation in formal external daytime education hardly occurs during the weekend. From Monday to Friday, the average number of hours per day in external education is quite high, with the highest number on Tuesday and the lowest on Wednesday due to the free afternoon.

For participating children aged 3–12 the same pattern occurs from Monday to Friday for total external education and formal daytime education, with a slightly higher average number of hours.

For all children aged 0–2 years we notice the same pattern as for children of 3–12 years, but with a lower average. For participating children aged 0–2 years, the curve of formal daytime education of children is largely similar to that of total external education.

Staying with grandparents is fairly evenly spread over the seven days of the week, with a slightly more time on Wednesday afternoon and in the weekend. Participation in other external events is also equally distributed over the days of the week.

3.7 Distribution of children for the number of hours per day in external education

Subsequently Figure 12 shows the percentage distribution of children (Y axis) according to the number of hours (X-axis) spent on total external education, formal external daytime education, education by grandparents and other external activities on an average weekday (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday) and Wednesday. No separate figures are shown for the weekend because the percentage of children spending more than 3 hours per day on the four categories is very low.

The indicator shows the gradual differences in number of hours within the two age groups, from zero or very few hours per day on the left to more than 10 hours per day on the right.

As in Figures 10 and 11, we present the age groups 3–12 years and 0–2 years, because the differences in age are not visible. The left graphs left show children of 3–12 years, the right graphs children of 0–2 years. Above are the charts for an average weekday (Monday–Friday), below for an average Wednesday.

Children 3–12 years - weekday

The curve of total external education on a weekday is an asymmetric bell curve with only 1% non-participating children, 6% participating 1–4 hours per day, 14% 5–6 hours, 32% 7–8 hours, 36% 9–10 hours and nearly 12% more than 10 hours per day.

The curve of formal external daytime education is narrower and lies more to the left: only 4% of the children with less than 3 hours per day, 18% with 3–5 hours, 76% with 6–9 hours and 1% with more than 9 hours. The group of 3–5 hours per day concerns younger children who stay only half a day in formal external daytime education, due to the pedagogical choice of the parents and/or the part-time job of a parent.

The curve of education by grandparents shows about 69% non participants, 22% of the children with 1–2 hours per day and 9% with more than 2 hours per day.

The curves of other external activities indicates 42% non participants, 41% with 1 hour per day, 12% with 2 hours and only 5% with more than 2 hours per day.

Children 0–2 years - weekday

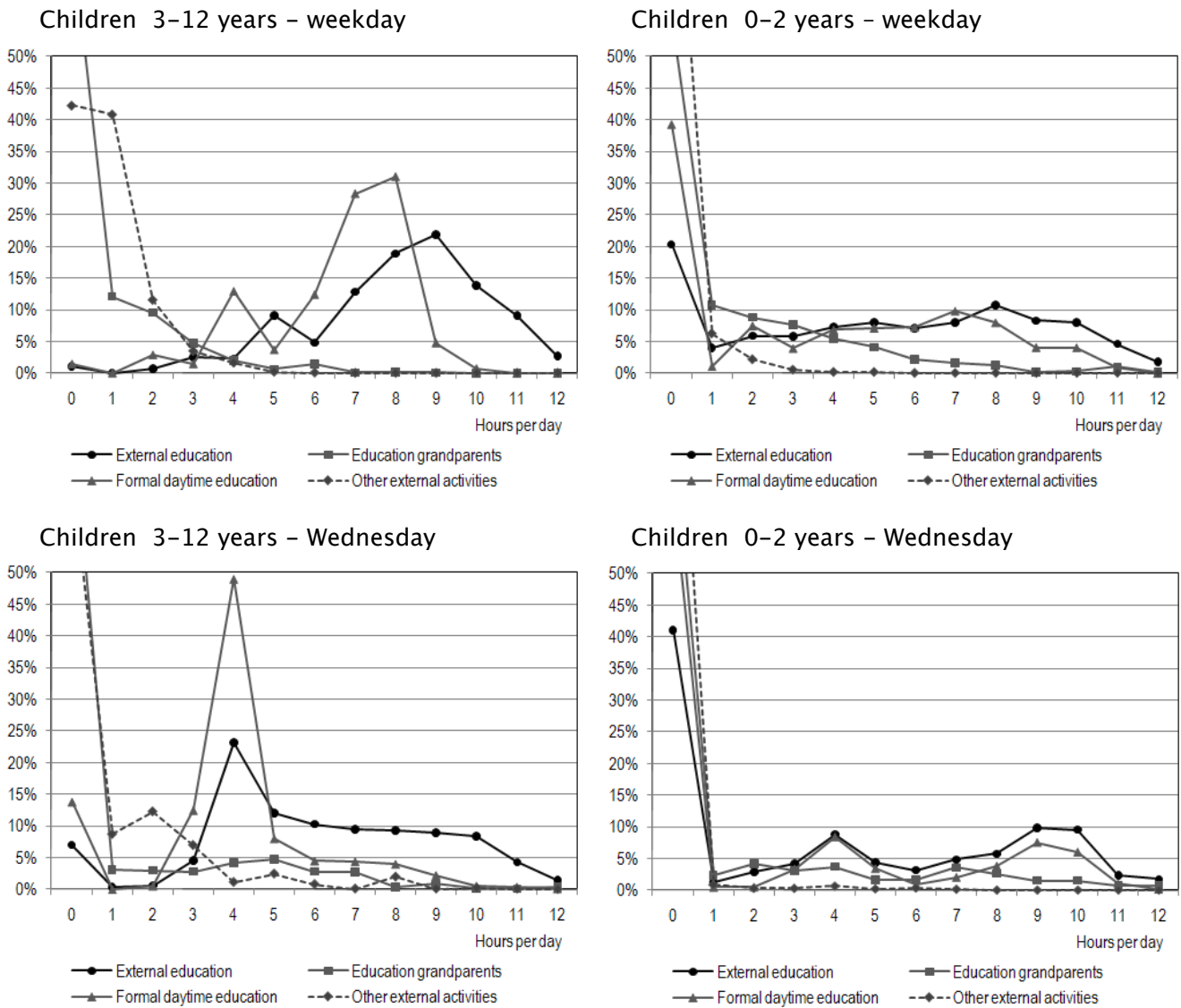
For children aged 0–2 years the curve of total external education shows 20% non participants and is then very flat, with 24% participating 1–4 hours per day, 14% 5–6 hours, 19% 7–8 hours, 15% 9–10 hours and 7% more than 10 hours per day.

The curve of formal external daytime education has almost the same shape, but with 40% non participating children and less children with more than 7 hours per day.

The curve of education by grandparents shows almost 60% non participants, 18% with 1–2 hours per day, 12% with 3–4 hours, 7% with 5–6 hours and only 3% with more than 6 hours per day.

The curve of other external activities has 91% non participants, 6% with 1 hours per day and only 3% with more than 1 hour per day.

Figure 12 Distribution of children (3-12 years and 0-2 years) for the number of hours on an average weekday (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday) and Wednesday in total external education, formal external daytime education, education by grandparents and other external activities



Source: FFCS-2005, CSB, University of Antwerp

Children 3–12 years - Wednesday

The curve of total external education on a Wednesday is a low asymmetric curve, with 8% non-participating children, 50% spending 3–6 hours per day in external education, 28% 7–9 hours and 14% more than 9 hours per day.

The curve of formal external daytime education is a narrow bell-curve, with 14% not participating children, 70% spending 3–5 hours a day, 8% 6–7 hours and 8% more than 7 hours per day. The effect of the free afternoon is very visible.

The curve of education by grandparents shows 75% of non participants and a small percentage of children for the different numbers of hours per day.

The curve of other external activities has 66% non participants, 21% with 1–2 hours per day, 8% with 3–4 hours and 5% with more than 4 hours.

Children 0–2 years - Wednesday

The curve of total external education on a Wednesday has 41% non-participating children, 24% spending 2–6 hours per day, 35% 7–11 hours per day.

The curve of formal external daytime education has the same shape but with more not participating children, and smaller percentages for the different numbers of hours.

The curve of education by grandparents shows 72% of non participants and a small percentage of children for the different numbers of hours per day.

The curve of other activities has 97% non participants and only 3% with 1 or more hours per day.

Summary

In line with the division of time per week in Figure 10, we can confirm the positive hypothesis that only a very small percentage spends (too) few or (too) many hours per day in total external education and in formal external daytime education. In addition, a fairly high level of diversity and equality occurs for the participation in external education and formal external daytime education during the weekdays.

3.8 Evolution of the participation rate in external education during an average day

Finally, Figure 13 shows the evolution of the participation rate of Flemish children (3–12 years and 0–2 years) on an average weekday (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday) and Wednesday for education by parents, children's personal time, formal external daytime education, education by grandparents and other external activities. Because the differences by age are neither visible in these figures, we show these age groups again.

The figure shows the extent to which the children participate in external education during or outside normal daytime hours (between 8 am and 5 pm). The underlying idea is that (too) many hours in external education outside normal daytime hours is unfavourable for the daily life and well-being of children, assuming that most young parents are professionally active at that time.

Children 3–12 years – weekday

The similarities and differences with the youngest children are clear. Almost all children sleep from 11 pm until 5:30 in the morning, followed by parental education.

From 6 in the morning parental education starts, with a very strong increase to 67% at 7:30 am. That share then falls significantly and remains quite low till 4 pm, with the additional lunch break at home. From 3 pm the percentage increases again to 85% between 6:30 and 7:30 pm and then drops rapidly to a minimum at 10 pm.

Participation in formal external daytime education begins at 7 in the morning and rapidly increases to 85% at 9 am. It remains constant until about 12 am, but it drops then to 70% because of lunch at home for a number of children. Participation rises again to nearly 84% at 2 pm. From 3 pm, participation drastically decreases to about 1% at 4 pm. In short, the opening hours of primary schools are very clear, with a margin of pre-school care. Almost all formal daytime education occurs between 8 in the morning and 4 in the afternoon.

Staying with their grandparents is much more spread during the day but it is also more limited than for the youngest children. We stress the slightly higher participation from 12 at noon to 5 pm, probably because a small group of children does not go home but to the grandparents.

Participation in other external activities is especially visible between 4 pm and 8 pm but runs out till 11 at night. It is a wider margin than for children aged 0–2 years.

Children 3–12 years – Wednesday

The main difference with an average weekday is the very small participation in formal external education in the afternoon and the higher share of parental education, education by grandparents and other external activities.

Children 0–2 years – weekday

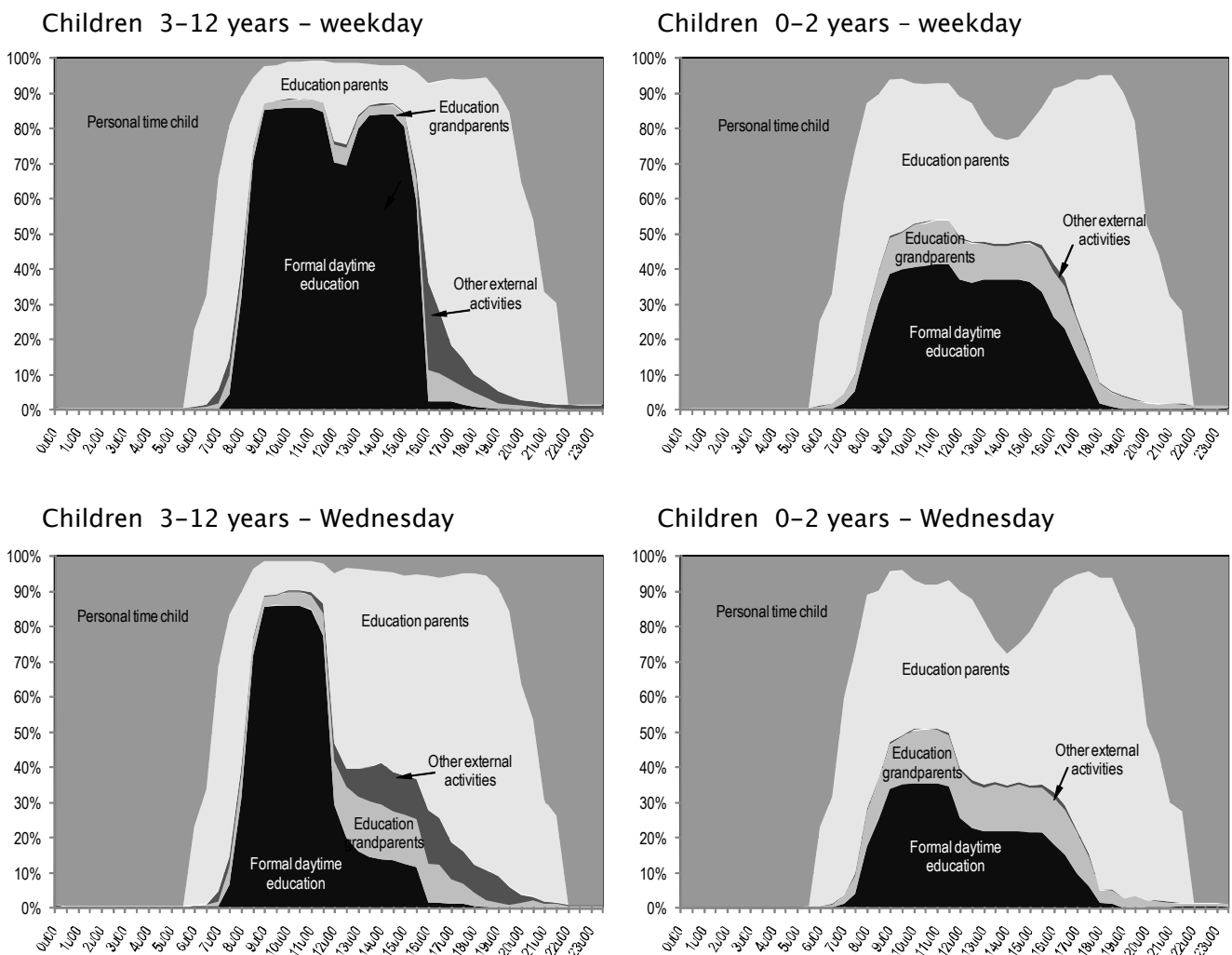
The figure again shows the generally lower participation in external education among children of 0–2 years, spread between 8 am and 7 pm. From 11 in the evening until 5:30 in the morning almost all children sleep (personal time children). During the day, a small percentage of personal time remains, which increases in the afternoon, mainly for afternoon resting.

From 6:00 in the morning parental education starts and sharply increases to 60% at 8 am. That percentage decreases first but then remains quite high until 4 pm, to rise again to 90% between 4 and 8 pm and finally drops to almost zero at 10 in the evening.

Participation in formal external daytime educations begins very slightly at 7 in the morning but increases rapidly to almost 40% at 9 am, and remains constant until about 12 o' clock. Then it is

constant at 36% till 3 pm and decreases to 1 % at 6 pm. In short, before 7 in the morning and after 6 in the afternoon less than 1% of the youngest children stay in formal external daytime education. We observe a broader time range during the day than for children aged 3–12 years, mainly due to the more flexible opening hours in day care centres and minder families than in basic schools. Staying with grandparents is much more spread throughout the day because some children stay longer in the evening and/or pass the night with them. It starts very limited at 7 in the morning and increases to 11% at 9 am. Then it remains constant at 12% until about 5 pm and finally drops to less than 1% at 10 in the evening. Participation in other external activities is very limited and hardly visible on the figure, in contrast with children aged 3–12 years.

Figure 13 Evolution of the participation rate of Flemish children (3-12 years and 0-2 years) on an average weekday (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday) and Wednesday in different forms of internal and external education



Source: FFCS-2005, CSB, University of Antwerp

Children 0-2 years - Wednesday

The main difference with an average weekday is the smaller participation in formal external education in the afternoon (and even in the morning), compensated by the higher share of parental education and education by grandparents. However, the difference with an average weekday are smaller than for children aged 3–12 years. Other external activities are neither visible on a Wednesday.

Summary

As assumed, almost all children aged 0–12 years stay in formal external education between 8 in the morning and 5 in the afternoon, which can certainly not be called extreme early or extreme late hours. Staying with grandparents and participating in other outside activities starts a little earlier and runs out to 10 in evening for a small group.

4 Main results and policy perspectives

4.1 Main results of the research

The empirical analysis of external education was presented by means of seven complementary indicators or models, which are similar to those of the division of time of adults. The results of the study largely support the assumptions which were formulated in line with the conceptual approach and with the historical evolution of external education in Flanders.

Participation rate of children in external education by age

As expected, the participation rate of Flemish children of 0–12 years in the total external education and in formal external daytime education is high to very high. The participation rate of the youngest children (0–12 months) is very low but rises quickly with age and is almost maximal for children older than 3 years. On the one hand, this is compatible with the idea that a sufficiently high participation rate is useful when (formal) external education is seen as a positive contribution to the personal development of children and to the combination of professional and family life of parents. On the other hand, controlling for professional participation of the parents, educational level of the mother and family income, the different approach to (formal) external education for children aged 3–12 years and children aged 0–2 years still existing in Flanders, is clearly visible.

The participation in education by grandparents is much lower, because they are not available for all children (as a combination of actual presence, possibility and willingness to offer care). It is fairly logical that the youngest children show the highest participation rate.

The participation in other external activities is very low for the youngest children, but it strongly rises with age, to 80% for children of 6 years and older. This means however that still 20% of the children aged 6–12 years do not participate in other external activities (out of school child care, in activities in youth organisations, sporting clubs, artistic associations etc.).

Average number of hours per week in the family and in external education by age

Next, the figures largely confirm the assumption that the *total number of hours per week* in external education remains relatively small in comparison with the total time within the family. The number of hours in external education therefore is not a threat for the daily life and personal development of most children in their family context. Or in positive terms: when external education is seen as an important support and enrichment of the education at home and as an important facility for the combination of professional and family life of parents, a sufficient number of hours per week is favourable and desirable. But when controlling for the same three social variables, the different approach to external education in Flanders for children of 0–2 years and of 3–12 years becomes visible again.

Average number of hours per week in different forms of external education by age

In addition, the average number of hours per week in external education is fairly high among the whole group of 0–12 years, but still with large differences between the group of 0–2 years and that of 3–12 years. Moreover, there is a strong increase during the first months and years of life. This also applies to formal daytime education, albeit with a lower number of hours per week. The children spend much less time with their grandparents and that number decreases with age. The number of hours in other external activities is very small, especially among the youngest children.

For participating children, differences for age are only visible among children younger than 9 months. For older children, the total number of hours in external education is largely similar to the number of working hours of men between 25 and 64 years old. With 29 hours a week, formal external daytime education represents almost 65% of the total external education.

Distribution of children according to the number of hours per week in external education

A positive pedagogical observation is that only a small percentage of the children stay (too) few or (too) many hours per week in total external education and in formal external daytime education.

Moreover, both total external education and formal external daytime education show sufficient diversity and equality in the number of hours per week for children aged 3–12 years. The share with (too) few hours per week is still quite high among children younger than 3 years. The lower participation of this group, therefore, deserves sufficient policy attention in the future.

Average number of hours per day of the week in external education

Following the hypothesis, children of 3–12 years spend very few hours in external education during the weekend, and then mainly with grandparents or in other external activities. Participation in formal external daytime education hardly occurs during the weekend. From Monday to Friday, the average number of hours per day in external education is quite high, with the highest number on Tuesday and the lowest on Wednesday due to the free afternoon. For participating children aged 3–12, the same pattern occurs from Monday to Friday for total external education and formal daytime education, with a slightly higher average number of hours.

For all children aged 0–2 years we notice the same pattern as for children of 3–12 years, but with a lower average. For participating children aged 0–2 years, the curve of formal daytime education of children is largely similar to that of total external education.

Staying with grandparents is fairly evenly spread over the seven days of the week, with slightly more time on Wednesday afternoon and in the weekend. Participation in other external events is also equally distributed over the days of the week.

Distribution of children according to the number of hours per day in external education

In line with the division of time per week, we can confirm the positive hypothesis that only a very small percentage spends (too) few or (too) many hours per day in total external education and in formal external daytime education. In addition, a fairly high level of diversity and equality occurs for the participation in external education and formal external daytime education.

Evolution of the participation rate in external education during an average day

As assumed, almost all children aged 0–12 years stay in formal external education between 7:30 in the morning and 7 in the afternoon, so certainly not at extreme early or extreme late hours. Staying with grandparents and participating in other outside activities starts a little earlier and runs out to 10 in evening for a very small group.

4.2 Policy perspectives

This paper mainly wants to demonstrate that the participation of children in external education, as an important part of their daily life, can be presented in an insightful and understandable way by means of some complementary indicators. The combination of indicators offers a good basis for the policy discussion on the future development of external education.

As mentioned before, the available data, the empirical analysis and the presentation in this paper is far from complete and has to be continued and expanded, in order to create a permanent empirical basis for future policy debate and policy making. Therefore we want to end this paper with two major policy perspectives. The first one concerns the need for adequate complementary datasytems of activities of or services for children and adults, at the demand and supply side. The second perspective refers to the use of complementary basic indicators for the development of policy models for the future, as a basis for the policy debate.

4.2.1 Investing in complementary datasytems of activities of children and adults, at the demand and supply side

Firstly, in line with the empirical analysis based on time use data in this paper, it is very important to periodically realise a broad survey on the daily life of children and adults, within their family context, including a sufficiently detailed time use registration. Such a survey offers the data for a broad and differentiated picture of (the evolution of) the daily life of children and adults. It also allows focusing on specific activities, for instance the different forms of external education of children, as a central part of their daily life and as major public services. These data gathered at the ‘demand side’ are the basis for calculating the basic indicators which can offer a broad, differentiated empirical picture for all major activities. This picture can be an empirical frame of reference for indicators of specific societal services based on data gathered by the different organisations at the ‘supply side’.

Secondly, in line with the latter thought, it is necessary and useful to develop an adequate measurement system for all suppliers of the different forms of external education, as societal services for children and parents (Van Dongen, 2004, 2009b). Such a system requires adequate registration of the basic aspects of the activities and exchange processes of all suppliers (micro level), in order to create a set of basic indicators that can be used for the management and policy process on different levels of society (from micro to macro level). These indicators express the actual state of democratisation of the services (balance between basic values freedom, equality, solidarity and efficiency), starting from the basic characteristics of the organisations, the quality levels and quantitative unit of the service and the target groups.

- Availability: number of output units per person of the target group;
- Participation: share of users in the target group;
- Size of use: number of output units per user;
- Evaluation of the services by the users;
- Occupancy rate: share of the used output units in proportion to the total available output units;
- Productivity: number of output units per input unit, or more specific per unit of personell, material and financial input;
- Financial efficiency: total costs and revenues, costs and revenues per output unit
 - Costs of personnel, materials, infrastructure, financial means, ...
 - Revenues: contribution of users/clients, subsidies, financial revenues, sponsoring, ...

These indicators can be used to compare and manage the different sorts of services. They serve as a quantitative outline for the broad evaluation on different levels: in which direction and to what extent should these indicators change in the light of certain policy choices?

The basic data for these indicators have to be collected on the level of separate organisations or even sub-organisations. For this purpose it is necessary to combine an adequate system of analytical accounting with an instrument for registering the basic physical aspects of the production processes (especially the availability and actual use of the services) and the products (quality characteristics).

The development and implementation of such datasystems takes a long time and requires a coherent approach and a sustained effort from all actors involved. In a first stage it is advisable to develop a few prototypes for some sectors by means of case studies, starting from the existing datasystem and management approach.

4.2.2 Policy models for further democratisation of external education

Departing from the historical development of external education, the actual situation as presented by means of several basic indicators and the normative concept of democratisation, it is possible to develop relevant policy models for the future. These models are comparable with the policy models of professional labour of adults presented during the past decade (Van Dongen, 2009a).

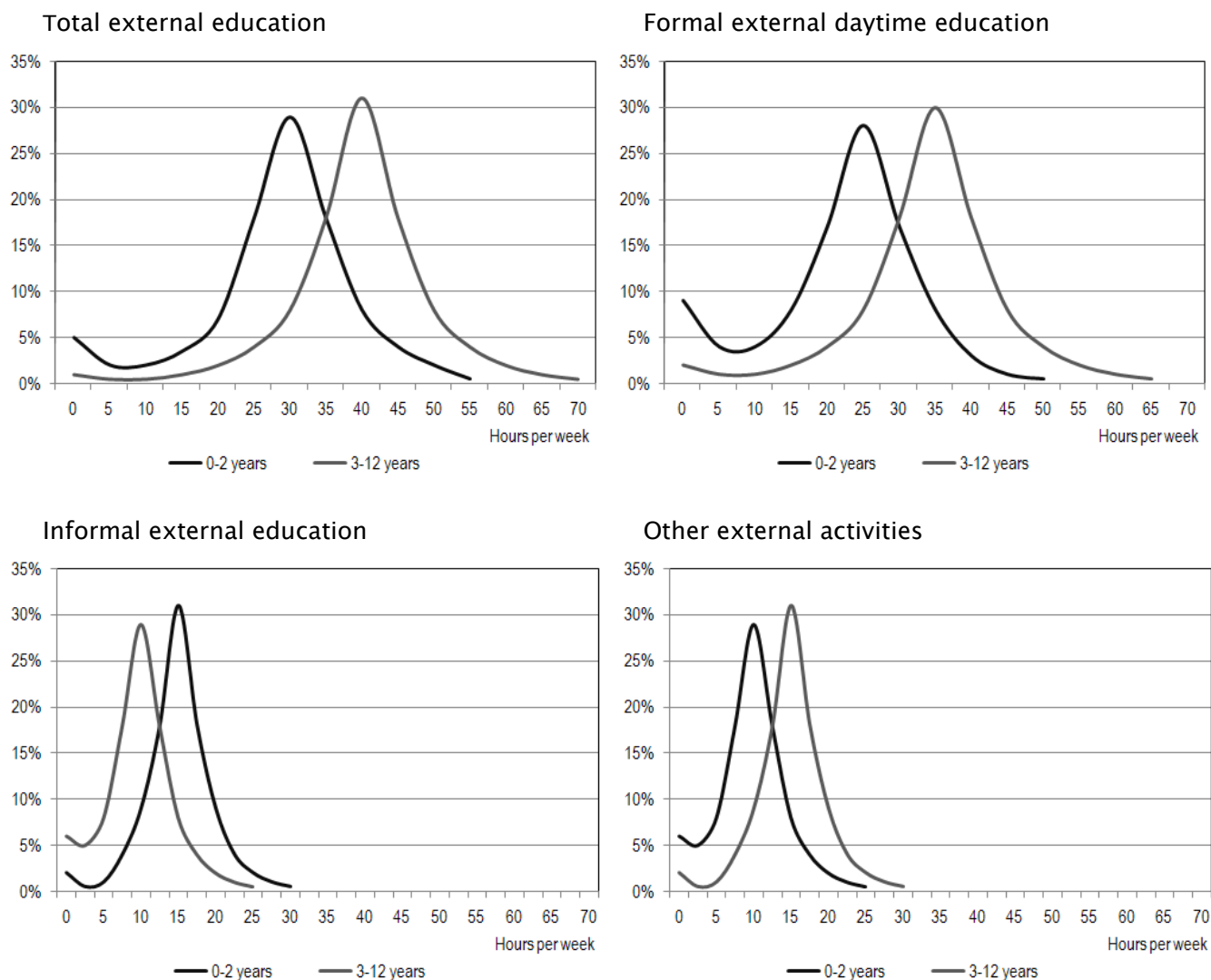
Following the actual division of time in external education (Figure 10), Figure 14 presents a possible future model for total external education, formal external daytime education, informal external education and other external activities. Each model shows a normative distribution (Y-axis) for the age groups 0–2 years and 3–12 years, according to the number of hours per week (X-axis). We use the broader category 'informal external education', including education by grandparents, family members, friends and neighbours. So we emphasise that such informal external education is to a certain extent available for all children, even when no grandparents are available.

The models express a high level of democratisation of external education in general and of the different forms in particular. All curves are symmetric bell curves expressing a rather high level of equality among the children to be realised in the future, in a gradual way. They rely on the basic idea that participating sufficient hours per week in these activities is positive and desirable for the personal development of children, as an enrichment of the education at home. The curve implies that only a small group of children would not participate in (the different forms of) external education. For formal external daytime education this counts from the age of 3 to 6 months, due to the generalised maternal leave and the additional parental leave increasingly being used.

At the same time, all children/parents have sufficient degrees of freedom for the different forms to determine the number of hours per week and per day, the timing during the week and the day and the organisations providing the service.

Logically, this model implies a high degree of solidarity, to realise the desirable degree of equality and freedom in participation. This means that the personal contribution for external daytime education is sufficiently low and the same for all children younger than 12 years. Finally, given these basic choices, the model demands a sufficient level of efficiency in terms of means and benefits, referring to all personal, social, material and financial aspects of the process.

Figure 14 Normative future models for the division the number of hours per week of children (0-2 years and 3-12 years) in total external education, formal external daytime education, education by grandparents and other external activities



The graph of *total external education* says that for children aged 3–12 years the desirable curve is very similar to the actual one (Figure 10), around an average of 40 hours per week. For children aged 0–2 years, the future curve largely differs from the actual one and implies a fairly large increase of participation during the next decades. The curve lies more to the right because of the smaller number of hours for children younger than 6 months.

The graph of *formal external daytime education* largely has the same shape but lies more to the left, due to the lower number of hours per week. Again, the percentage of non participants is very low in the group 3–12 years. The percentage of non participating children aged 0–2 years, however, is larger than that of total external education, since most children of 0–3 months will never stay in formal external daytime education.

The realisation of the future model of both categories demands no major policy change for the age group 3–12 years. For the group of 0–2 years, however, substantial policy changes are necessary with respect to both the supply/availability of external education and the actual demand/use of it.

The future curves of *informal external education* (mostly by grandparents) are small and symmetric, expressing the low number of hours per week and a smaller variation. In line with the actual situation, the curve of the youngest children lies more to the right because of the higher number of hours. At the same time, the share of non participants is somewhat larger in the age group 3–12 years. Finally, the curves of *other external activities* are the inversion of that of informal external education: the curve of the youngest children lies more to the left with a lower number of hours and a higher percentage of non participants, which is compatible with the actual division of hours. Given the large differences with the actual participation, the realisation of these two future models demands rather strong policy measures for both age groups, both at the supply and demand side.

Of course, other future models can be designed, expressing other combinations of the basic values, for instance a ‘stronger’ model with smaller curves lying more to the right and a ‘weaker’ model with broader curves lying more to the left. The main goal of the models is to offer inspiration for the policy debate, not to postulate a one and only future policy path to be followed.

In that perspective, the models can be used to discuss and evaluate the new decree of the Flemish government on pre-school child care, which mainly concerns formal daytime education and additional child care (before and after opening hours of school, during holidays and periods of illness) (Kabinet van Vlaams minister van Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Gezin, 2010). Although (the realisation of) the decree is a major step forwards in the democratisation process, we have the general impression that it is inspired or oriented by a ‘weaker’ model of democratisation than the one presented in Figure 14.

At the ‘stronger’ side, we notice the ambition of the Flemish government that within a period of 5 years all families with a need for formal pre-school child care are able to find a decent, accessible and affordable place. The basic pillar of the new decree is the ‘right to external child care’ for all children in need of childcare. In addition, parents will be free to choose the forms of external education and the providing organisations. External child care (among other facilities) must offer parents the possibility to harmonise their professional and family life but it also contributes to an optimal educative transition of children to the toddler school. Sufficient attention must go to the availability and accessibility of the provisions for vulnerable families in order to support their participation. Finally, all suppliers will meet the same educative, financial and organisational conditions.

At the ‘weaker’ side, the decree does not really start from the basic idea that spending sufficient hours per week in external education is positive and desirable for the personal development of (almost) all children, as an enrichment of the education at home. The dominant motive is still the need for child care from the perspective of the daily combination of professional and family life of the parents. In line with this basic finality, the decree emphasises the free choice of parents to determine whether or not their young children will participate in (formal) external daytime education.

Untill now, it is not completely clear which policy plan will eventually be proposed by the Flemish government and approved by the Flemish parliament.

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