



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Santiago Office
Regional Bureau for Education in
Latin America and the Caribbean

REGIONAL STRATEGY ON TEACHERS

State of the Art and Policy Guidelines on the Training and Professional Development of Early Childhood Teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean





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1 Executive Summary

This document presents the state of the art with regard to policies for the training and professional development of early childhood teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean and a set of guidelines for public policy-making in that regard. The study was conducted within the framework of the Regional Strategy on Teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean, which, in turn, is part of the global UNESCO Teachers for Education for All (EFA) initiative.

Sixteen countries – Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela – participated in this study in various ways.

The document is divided into 12 chapters, including this executive summary.

The Introduction presents the study as an attempt to identify broad trends in the development of early childhood education (ECE) in the region, situating it in the context of the debate on the quality of education at this level, education as a birthright and the challenges of ECE as a profession.

The chapter “Methodology” describes the working method used for this study, which was developed by the Regional Strategy’s Technical Secretariat and is based on secondary data: consultants’ reports on seven countries, national discussion group meetings, international seminars at which draft documents were discussed with key stakeholders of the participating countries and a survey conducted in some of those countries.

The chapter “Overview of tensions” identifies several of these thematic areas, which represent different positions with regard to ECE, and problems to be considered in developing policies in that regard.

The next five chapters present key factors in viewing ECE as a modern profession. Each chapter analyses the evidence gathered by the participating countries and summarizes the international debate on the issue. It also identifies critical issues with a view to progress in that area.

The chapter “Context” describes, for each country, the system of early childhood education in which teachers at this level work, focusing on the institutions, compulsory nature, official curricula, care programmes and coverage of the system. A critical issue in that regard is the need to move beyond the view of ECE as a set of successful programmes and towards the development of a system that operates on the basis of consistent, coordinated institutions.

The chapter “Sociodemographic Characteristics” provides a breakdown of early childhood teachers by, among other things, gender, geographic distribution and

membership in organizations, linking those factors with the challenges to their increased professionalism. A critical issue is the significant imbalance in the distribution of the ECE workforce and the extreme fragmentation of this occupational group, which must be addressed in order to increase their professionalism.

The chapter “Initial Training of Early Childhood Teachers” analyses three key aspects of this process in the countries that participated in the study: the professional profiles reflected in training, the regulations governing initial training programmes and the initial training curriculum. Critical issues on this area are the lack of selectivity in admission to initial training, the wide variety of initial training curricula, the institutional weaknesses of training institutes and the training of teachers at the secondary level.

The chapter “Continuing Professional Development of Early Childhood Teachers” analyses examples taken from the participating countries with a focus on the legislation that supports these teachers and the characteristics of continuing professional development programmes. Other critical issues identified are insufficient state regulation, fragmentation of opportunities for additional training and poorly systematized information on continuing professional development.

The chapters “Working Conditions” and “Professional Career” of early childhood teachers analyse their working conditions, professional career and performance evaluation in the participating countries. They also identify job insecurity, fragmented professional careers and inadequate performance evaluations as critical issues.

The chapter “Guidelines for the Development of Policies for Early Childhood Teachers” proposes general criteria for the development of public policies for early childhood teachers based on the critical issues identified in the previous chapters.

The document ends with a chapter on “Conclusions” and a section for “Bibliographic References”, which is comprised of publications referenced in the document including national reports and the survey conducted national discussion groups organized for this study.

Lastly, an “Annex” includes the bibliographic references contained in the national reports of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago, which are not included in the previous chapter.

2 Introduction

This document presents the state of the art in respect to policies for early childhood teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean, including a set of guidelines for public policy-making in that regard. It was prepared by the specialists, Marcela Pardo¹ and Cynthia Adlerstein,² under the aegis of the Technical Secretariat of the Regional Strategy on Teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean³ at the Centre for Studies on Education Policy and Practice (CEPPE) within the framework of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO) Regional Strategy on Teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean, which, in turn, is part of the global UNESCO Teachers for Education for All (EFA) initiative.

Over the past 30 years, early childhood teachers' training and professional development have become a focus of government policy throughout the world due to the research showing their close link to the quality of ECE, and thus to societies' rising expectations for the education of young children.

At the same time, ECE has come to be viewed as a key public good and as the first level of the education system (OECD, 2006; UNESCO, 2007) due to its establishment as a birth right at the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Declaration on Education for All (United Nations, 1989; EFA Forum Secretariat, 1990). In addition, UNESCO has promoted the development of high quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes that facilitate not only preparation for school, but holistic early childhood development. Recognizing the lack of universally accepted criteria for defining high quality education, UNESCO emphasizes, among other things, the training and working conditions of ECCE professionals (UNESCO, 2007).

This study seeks to demonstrate that the training and professional development of early childhood teachers is a complex issue by analysing the various responses to the challenges of ECE in the region and, based on that comparison, proposing new guidelines for public policy in this area.

Far from calling for homogenization, this document recognizes and welcomes the significant social, cultural and policy diversity in ECE in the region. It attempts to identify broad trends in the development of early childhood teaching by preserving the richness of these frameworks and pathways and, in so doing, to move forward on common paths that will strengthen the profession.

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3 Methodology and Conceptual Framework

The study conducted for this project was based on a working method developed for the OREALC/UNESCO Regional Strategy on Teachers, which sought to make a critical and participatory contribution to the discussion of new policy criteria for early childhood teachers.

The study is based exclusively on secondary data provided by the countries that participated in the study. These data were produced through complementary strategies that included the preparation of national reports by specialists from seven countries: Daniel Brailovsky, Professor of Teacher Training at the Higher Institute for Educators Sara Eccleston Early Education, and Faculty Member and Researcher at FLACSO, for Argentina (Brailovsky, 2015); Beatriz Abuchaim, Researcher at the Carlos Chagas Foundation, for Brazil (Abuchaim, 2015); Nidya Buitrago, Consultant for the Direction of Participation and Inter-institutional Relations at the Department of Education in Bogotá, for Colombia (Buitrago, 2015); Marcela Pardo, Associate Researcher at the Center for Advanced Research in Education at University of Chile; and Cynthia Adlerstein, Assistant Professor and researcher and at the Faculty of Education of Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, for Chile (Pardo and Adlerstein, 2015); Georgina Quintanilla, General Director of Normal and Continuing Teacher Education, for Mexico (Quintanilla, 2015); Silvia Ochoa, President of the EIRL Well-Being Consulting Services for Peru (Ochoa, 2015); and Ann Thornhill Professor at the University of West Indies and Managing Director at the University of West Indies-Family Development and Children's Research Centre, for Trinidad y Tobago (Thornhill, 2015).

In addition, observations and contributions on the draft document of the study were made by national discussion groups, which were organized for that purpose and included relevant stakeholders in the field from all of these countries (with the exception of Trinidad and Tobago), besides Guatemala (Argentina, National Discussion Group, 2015; Brazil, National Discussion Group, 2015; Chile, National Discussion Group, 2015; Colombia, National Discussion Group, 2015; Guatemala, National Discussion Group, 2015; Mexico, National Discussion Group, 2015; Peru, National Discussion Group, 2015).

Information on the other participating countries was gathered through a survey developed specifically for this study with replies submitted by the education authorities of Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Venezuela (Costa Rica, 2015; Cuba, 2015; the Dominican Republic, 2015; El Salvador, 2015; Guatemala, 2015; Honduras, 2015; Nicaragua, 2015; Panama, 2015; and Venezuela, 2015).

Furthermore, two international seminars were held in order to analyse the progress of this work. The first of these was held on May 4 and 5, 2015 in Panama City and

attended by representatives of the ministries of education, academics and trade union organizations of Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. The second was held on June 22 and 23, 2015 in São Paulo, Brazil and attended by teachers and representatives of the ministries of education, some training institutions and teachers of 22 countries in the region, who commented on and enriched this document.

In order to provide insight into the situation of the 16 countries that participated in the study, the data gathered were analysed in light of the international debate on early childhood teachers. On this point, it should be noted that many of the sources referenced are from Anglophone countries; far fewer are by Latin American authors because less academic literature on the subject has been produced in our region.

With regard to the style of the document, the sources cited in each of the seven aforementioned national reports are not referenced in the body of this document, although the reports themselves are cited; these sources are, however, included in an annex at the end of this document. To the extent possible, this document retains the original wording of the national reports in order to accurately reflect the positions expressed therein.

In light of the variety of terms used to describe the profession in the region, the words “early childhood teachers” have been used as an internationally-recognized generic term.

It is important to keep in mind that this study focuses on teachers trained at the post-secondary level (at universities or university-level institutes) or at secondary-level teacher training schools. There are two reasons for this decision. First, scientific research has strongly demonstrated that early childhood education is most effective when provided by teachers with specialized professional training, reinforcing the value of the training. Second, there is very little information on non-professional teachers at this level (ranging from community mothers who have not completed their basic education to teachers with a two-year specialized post-secondary degree) anywhere in the world, including Latin America and the Caribbean. By focusing on early childhood teachers, the authors do not underestimate the importance of non-professional teachers; on the contrary, they recognize that these teachers are essential to the proper functioning of ECE (Musick & Scott, 2000; Ryan & Whitebook, 2013) and that a study devoted exclusively to them is needed. The authors also suggest that, by their very nature, these teachers face particular challenges and should thus be dealt with separately in public policy.

The conceptual framework of the analysis carried out in this study is based on the belief that high quality ECE requires more than initial training for teachers of children under age 6. Professional development for ECE teachers should be similar to that of all teachers: it must be ongoing and provide targeted support for the specific needs of the teacher throughout their career. Thus, capacity-building for early childhood teachers is the result of a training process that includes initial and continuing training, beginning with their entry into the profession and finishing at the end of their career. Moreover, effective professional development does not depend solely on the skills of each individual teacher; it must be sustained over time at various levels: individual (teachers' knowledge,

practices and values); institutional (the characteristics of training programmes); inter-institutional (the links between training institutions); and governance (the legal and institutional framework surrounding the early childhood system). Together, these levels produce a system for training competent teachers (Urban et al., 2011).

4 Overview of Tensions Concerning Early Childhood Education in Latin America and the Caribbean

This chapter identifies a number of tensions in the analysis of policies for the training and professional development of early childhood teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean. These tensions emerged during the preparation of this study in the form of comments on the draft document by the national discussion groups of seven countries and at the technical meeting of Central American countries, held in Panama City.

A common characteristic of these tensions is that they reflect major international debates on ECE or on education in general by drawing attention to various historical attitudes and traditions that lead to different positions, some of them difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile.

Thus, while UNESCO's approach over the past ten years has been to propose guidelines for high quality initial training, professional career for teachers in a variety of educational contexts and compulsory policies for initial and continuing training and hiring (UNESCO, 2007), the national groups' submissions reveal significant tensions. Discussion of the draft document in the participating countries showed that they had different educational environments and policy agendas; it also demonstrated the vehemence with which each country's stakeholders defended their own positions when identifying and prioritizing the problems and challenges that they had encountered in early childhood teaching.

It must therefore be made clear that the thoughts on critical issues and the guidelines proposed are not an attempt to ignore the specific tensions and situations of each country. On the contrary, while the study focuses on problems and challenges that are common to the region as a whole, they could only be identified through the historical, political and cultural beliefs that each national group brought to the table. The document first draws attention to these differences and tensions and then attempts to place them in context by recognizing that they determine each country's response to the issue of teaching. At the same time, as stated above, the document seeks to identify common problems and, in particular, guidelines for the development of targeted policies to address the principal issues and problems raised by early childhood teaching in the region.

The analysis of tensions in ECE is organized into thematic sections, each of which presents the views expressed by the countries that participated in the study.

4.1 Disagreements on Basic Concepts and the Need to Explain Assumptions

The working language of early childhood teachers (their technical language) is a social construct that carries considerable historical and political baggage. Owing to differences in the understanding of basic concepts such as “childhood”, “teachers” and “quality”, these words are not neutral; they represent ideologies, positions and perceptions as to what early childhood education and teachers are and should be (Cannella, 1997; Da Costa, 2007; Dahlberg et al., 2005). In that regard, most of the participating countries (Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Guatemala, Peru, Mexico and Brazil) argued strongly that the document was ambiguous and did not provide an epistemological analysis of these issues.

Using various examples, they showed how this linguistic ambiguity could reproduce teaching models that were qualified as “dominant”, “patriarchal” or “modernist” or took a technocratic approach to quality. Thus, one of the most urgent demands made of this document, and of states themselves when setting policies for early childhood teachers, was that they clarify the positions underlying these concepts. As Peru’s national discussion group stated, the lack of an explicit philosophical concept of what children are has an impact on training, curricula and the educational services rendered to society.

This document uses the definition of “early childhood” adopted by UNESCO and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) as proposed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child: the period from conception through birth and up to age 8 (UNICEF, 2004). However, as each of the participating countries states, it is understood that “[c]hildhood is more than just the time before a person is considered an adult. [...] [It] refers to the state and condition of a child’s life: to the quality of those years” (UNICEF, 2014, pp. 5). As the national discussion groups and international studies have stated, children’s immaturity at this stage may be a biological fact of life, but the way that we understand and give meaning to that fact is a cultural phenomenon (Cannella, 2001; Diaz-Soto & Power, 2005; James & Prout, 1997; MacNaughton, 2005).

This understanding of childhood has clear implications for the development of teachers since children’s knowledge and learning are produced, day by day, through the language used by teachers and children; the work ethic; routines, rituals, procedures and expectations; and everything teachers do in their daily classroom activities with students (Da Costa, 2007, pp. 19). As Quintanilla states, speaking of Mexico, teaching is closely related to attitudes toward childhood; countries with a narrow view of children have no concept of social return. She therefore considers that if the notion of “children” is expanded to include all aspects of life, the value of teachers in society will implicitly be increased and this, in turn, will result in substantial changes in their function in the field of education (p. 11).

The increasing focus on young children in public policy agendas and the progressive recognition of children as subjects of rights are undeniable. It would therefore appear that the tension to be resolved is between the static, universal definitions used in the countries’ official documents and the development of a shared understanding of how

teachers assess and create an environment in which children can fully learn and grow. In line with the views expressed by UNESCO, UNICEF and the Organisation of Ibero-American States (OEI), this document favours criteria that promote a policy agenda and intersectoral policies based on a common understanding of the meaning of “children” and “human development”.

4.2 *Homogeneous Education Versus Education for Diversity*

Various international organizations have recognized that, over the past ten years, Latin America has begun to recognize its own multi-ethnic, multiracial and multicultural nature (CEPAL, 2007; UNESCO, 2014b). The relationship between the region’s disparities is slowly emerging as a concern and is being incorporated into the academic, social and political agenda. This new context is expressed, for example, in new laws and constitutional reforms that recognize the rights of indigenous peoples and in education reforms designed to strengthen intercultural bilingual education. In early childhood education as well, a climate has developed that is conducive to citizens’ demands and proposals for ensuring social inclusion and respect for human rights.

Recognition of the diversity of the peoples, cultures and languages of the region is closely linked to the need for relevance in strengthening early childhood teaching. However, most of the participants in this study were somewhat resistant to the identification of common characteristics and similar policy agendas. The national discussion groups of countries such as Argentina, Colombia and Peru consider that in revealing broad regional trends, the document is describing generalities and seeking homogenization. They advise caution in making comparisons with developing countries and stress the need to consider the specific characteristics of Latin American contexts in determining any criteria for improvement.

While Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico and Nicaragua do not object to the search for a few common criteria for the region, they advocate for recognition of the importance of education, preservation of diversity and raising of awareness in that regard. According to Mexico’s national discussion group, it must be emphasized that teacher training should be based on respect for human rights, gender equity, education for diversity and inclusive classrooms and schools in an effort to raise awareness and promote these values (pp. 17).

For over five years, UNESCO has recognized that “[i]n many countries, ECCE staff are under-qualified or insufficiently educated to ensure high quality care and education in a variety of contexts and social groups, especially in non-conventional or alternative modalities” (UNESCO, 2010). This inability perpetuates the exclusion of cultural minorities living in the region and undermines the right to quality education. In that context, Chile’s national discussion group calls for the recognition of certain essential minimum conditions in order to ensure equity for all teachers and for young children.

Addressing the tension between diversity and homogenization is an invitation to begin to view global and local contexts as complementary (UNESCO, 2000). The countries in the region are still characterized by disadvantages that hinder the learning and development

of children and teachers, including pockets of poverty in marginalized urban areas and remote rural regions, ethnic minorities and socially ostracized persons with disabilities (UNICEF, 2014). It must be recognized that the predicament of these various cultural groups is not merely a local problem (for each of them); it is also a sign of overall relationships that require a broader perspective than that of the community or the nation state.

Here, a comparative analysis can preserve non-conventional sources of knowledge and facilitate a move towards international cooperation and agreement to change established processes and structures that undermine young children's right to education and to a full life. Colombia's national discussion group emphasizes the need to set and implement policies that recognize what has been developed through dialogue in the various countries. This will mean giving adequate consideration to the need for a balance between uniform requirements and diverse situations: neither a standard that homogenizes, determines or prescribes nor a generalization that ignores context (p. 8).

4.3 *Appropriate Teachers: Professional Teachers Versus Educational Workers*

The question of who should teach young children is one which raises tensions between participating countries and that therefore requires this document to take a clear position on the issue. The reports submitted by Argentina, Chile, Peru and Mexico present two interpretations of ECE, viewing teachers as either education workers or education professionals. The other countries' reports follow one or the other of those interpretations.

Argentina's national discussion group views teachers as education workers and considers that teaching has a dual nature: it is both collective, since education is not limited to the classroom and the school but is linked to all aspects of life in society, and productive in the sense of creative work (p. 34). According to this view, instructors, educators, technicians and teachers who provide training and endeavour to provide the children in their care with an enabling environment for learning may properly be called teachers. As education workers, early childhood teachers are viewed in light of the demands arising from their collective struggle (for decent working conditions, social status, decision-making power and labour rights). There is a sense of challenging Government-sponsored technocratic practices. According to Tedesco and Tenti, this approach views the profession as a militant workers' collective (2002). As Peru's national discussion group states, from this perspective, teacher training requires a search for methods and strategies that treat initial education teachers as subjects of rights through both reassessment and politicization.

For those who view teaching as a profession, the nature of teachers' work requires them to perform highly specialized tasks and to have intellectual and technical skills that are specific to their position and are acquired at specific times and in specific places. According to Argentina's national discussion group, teaching is a profession that focuses specifically on instruction, understood as a conscious and socially mediated activity that transmits culture and develops students' potential and abilities; this does

not necessarily mean that it does not constitute work (p.35). This interpretation, which is also in line with the standards of international organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), includes only teachers trained at the post-secondary level. Understandably, it excludes the many educators and community workers who are currently teaching without having received such training. For this reason, and particularly in the countries with the greatest number of non-conventional or non-formal programmes, ECE workers feel that their work is not valued. Countries such as Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala call for a broader interpretation of their teachers.

In the country reports, these approaches are closely linked to the distinction between early childhood care (ECC) and ECE. In programmes that focus on education, most of the educators are professional teachers; in care-centred programmes, other social stakeholders predominate.

An analysis of the reports shows that early childhood teachers face a tension that is specific to the age of post-modern teaching: "...teachers deal with a diverse and complex clientele, in conditions of increasing moral uncertainty, where many methods of approach are possible, and where more and more social groups have an influence and a say". To this respect, the author suggests that whether this postmodern age will see exciting and positive new partnerships being created with groups and institutions beyond the school, and teachers learning to work effectively, openly and authoritatively with those partners in a broad social movement that protects and advances their professionalism, or whether it will witness the de-professionalism of teaching as teachers crumble under multiple pressures, intensified work demands, reduced opportunities to learn from colleagues, and enervating discourses of derision, is something that is still to be decided (Hargreaves, 1996, pp. 34).

This document views early childhood teachers as professionals. It focuses specifically on teachers who work with young children and have received specialized training at the secondary or post-secondary level. This position is based on the strong conviction that the empowerment and independence of the teaching profession is rooted in a common knowledge base that is highly specialized, established and legitimized by its members through a participatory process. Thus, it takes the approach recommended by Colombia's national discussion group, which, with regard to quality standards, states that in such highly diverse countries, it is essential to better recognize contexts and their needs in deciding who is a teacher (p. 8). Argentina's national discussion group notes that these interests need not conflict; its experience with National Teacher Parity and Jorge Huergo's "people's education" approach⁴ suggest that they can be integrated if teaching is defined as the profession, work or craft of instruction.

The challenge that this tension creates lies in recognizing that higher education is essential for early education teachers. This will unquestionably entail a movement from standardizing and homogenizing professionalization policies to policies for the certification of teachers to policies that take the diversity of teachers into account and give them equal access to development opportunities (Blanco, 2012).

⁴ For a better understanding of this comparison, Argentina's national group refers the reader to: http://perio.unlp.edu.ar/catedras/system/files/huergo-jorge_lo-que-articula-lo-educativo.pdf.

4.4 *Quality Versus Coverage: a False Dichotomy to Overcome*

Over the past ten years, the countries in the region have been making a great effort to expand coverage (as is clear from the number of new enrolments in every age group and the annual increase in the enrolment rate). While this obviously constitutes significant progress that improves children's access to education, it is essential to understand that such efforts alone will not achieve quality or equity. There is broad recognition among the participating countries that further improvement within a framework of equity and social justice will require the simultaneous development and implementation of policies that focus specifically on quality. However, despite the consensus on this idea in the region, two tensions arise in practice.

On the one hand, the national discussion groups of countries such as Argentina, Chile and Colombia call for an explanation of what is meant by "quality" in ECE. Argentina's and Chile's reports follow the definition proposed by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2007) and take a rights-based approach in which individuals must be able to reach their full potential in every area through socially relevant learning and educational experience suited to the needs, characteristics and context of their environment. This approach recognizes five key aspects of quality: relevance, pertinence, equity, effectiveness and efficiency. On the other hand, the national discussion groups of countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru argue for a definition developed through discussion with educational institutions, policy-makers and teachers.

Regardless of the importance that countries attach to quality, they recognize that there is considerable tension between quality and expanded coverage in ECE. According to Ochoa (p. 2), the focus should be on the quality of the educational services currently offered. It is not enough to expand coverage or increase investment; it is also necessary to set clear goals and improve the quality of education. This is important because teachers are often called upon to improve quality in situations where their efforts are undermined by expanded coverage: too few teachers are assigned to large groups of students or the number of teachers is insufficient to the needs of mass education. Most of the countries report, for example, that while enrolment in early childhood education has increased in rural regions, the proportion of unqualified and/or uncertified teachers is extremely high in these areas and the difference in the number of children per qualified teacher in public versus private schools was a factor that could undermine the quality of the education provided.

The position taken in this document is consistent with that of the countries: the tension between expanded coverage and improved quality is a false dichotomy. Instead, the proposal is to build the capacities of early childhood teachers using criteria that promote an agenda and policies based on growth *with* quality, bearing in mind that the latter requires specific material and symbolic conditions so that coverage can actually ensure enjoyment of the right to education. According to Peralta, expanding coverage in the sector while addressing quality issues seriously through agreed, documented and ongoing efforts that can survive changes of government appears to be the remaining task of our time (Peralta, 2012).

4.5 A Common Knowledge Base Versus Curriculum Diversity in Initial Training

Over the past 30 years, members of the field have begun to discuss the knowledge that is required of early childhood teachers. Generally speaking, this discussion has focused on two approaches. The first, which has deeper historical roots, stresses that all training institutions should cover the entire age range (traditionally birth to age 6) and include a variety of curriculum models specific to ECE (Montessori and High Scope, among others), each of which has a different emphasis reflecting its philosophy. More recently, this approach has included an emphasis on special, intercultural and multilingual education. Thus, it advocates for diversity in initial training curricula, viewing it as a strategy for providing an appropriate education to all types of children.

The second approach, which reflects a more recent concern, emphasizes that early childhood teachers should identify, agree on and adopt a knowledge base (in other words, a lowest common denominator) that is specific to their specialized occupation and distinguishes it from other occupations that also focus on the care of young children. Although, according to some writers, this knowledge base is still being developed, it should include a theoretical framework relevant to the work of classroom teachers as an essential condition for increasing their professionalism. This approach views the great diversity of initial training programmes with concern, seeing it as evidence of a lack of specificity in the profile of preschool teachers (Bowman et al., 2000).

Along those lines, Peru's national discussion group considers that, in order for training to be relevant, it has to be tailored to the different contexts in which early childhood teachers must work. As examples, they mention urban and rural areas, cultural diversity and formal and non-formal models, among others.

According to recent studies, in principle, these two approaches should be viewed as complementary rather than incompatible since proper training should represent an effort to incorporate both a basic platform of common knowledge and skills and opportunities to address the diversity of young children (Bowman et al., 2000).

4.6 Top Down Standards Versus Participatory Public Agreements

Since the late 1990s, as part of the broader global trend towards regulation of university education and of teaching in general, standards for the initial training of early childhood teachers have begun to be established in Latin America. This has led to a fierce debate on the use of this mechanism to improve the quality of training.

Various writers have criticized standards, stating that they are a bureaucratic response to complex pedagogical problems; that top-down policies ignore an essential component of quality improvement, stakeholder participation; and that they promote uniformity at the expense of diversity in approaches to teacher training (Casassus, 2009, 2010). In particular, standards for ECE have been criticized as a government mandate that limits

the knowledge base relevant to teachers at this level of education, undermining their professionalism (Fromberg, 2003).

This is the position taken by Argentina's national discussion group with regard to this study's proposal to introduce standards as a way of improving the initial training of early childhood teachers. The group objects to the establishment and use of across-the-board admission and graduation standards and considers that a focus on the moments of "entry into" and "exit from" training is to the detriment of the transmission processes that should occupy the intervening period.

The position taken in this study – that standards instruments are important – maintains that they play a key role in the development of public and valid establishment of the knowledge and skills that all professional teachers should possess. Such an instrument would provide important safeguards for the profession as well as guidance concerning the responsibilities of teacher training institutions. It is important to note that the original meaning of "standard" is not "measurement" or "homogenization", but "flag", in other words, an identifying marker and compass point for the knowledge base and ideology (identity) of a profession (Centre of Study for Policies and Practices in Education, 2013; Danielson, 2010; Shulman, 2004). From the policy perspective, it is essential that standards be set by agreement with the profession: the process of developing good standards should include teachers, through their organizations, and establish the knowledge and skills that teachers must have (Ingvarson, 2002). According to this view, standards instruments, once established, have a high potential for creating synergy and consistency between teacher training and teaching policies, including the development of criteria for evaluating teachers' performance. Moreover, it has been said that standards can promote the professional image of early childhood teachers by establishing a knowledge base and specialized skills for the profession (Miller, 2008b).

4.7 Performance Evaluation as a Training or Monitoring Mechanism

Performance evaluation for early childhood teachers is a very recent issue. Historically, state regulation of the profession has been minimal but over the past 20 years, it has clearly increased in both developing and developed countries and has become comparable to the evaluation of teachers at other grade levels as a mechanism for improving the quality of education (Buell and Peters, 2003). For example, accountability is a key element of ECE in England (Her Majesty's Government, 2004).

In order to properly understand the debate on performance evaluation, the two conflicting goals it is centred on, monitoring versus professional responsibility, must be considered. The monitoring argument maintains that schools, and particularly teachers' performance, have tended to be lightly regulated and that performance evaluations address this problem through increased central monitoring.

Argentina's and Mexico's national discussion groups, which view performance evaluations as a form of monitoring, have serious reservations about this accountability mechanism. Argentina's national discussion group stresses that evaluations should focus on training

rather than accountability and sees no value in economic incentives for performance. Mexico's national discussion group is strongly opposed to performance evaluations for teachers, viewing them as an inspection mechanism rather than a means to academic improvement; in its report, the group adds that the implementation of performance evaluations in Mexico has ignored practice as an essential component of teaching, focusing instead on administrative knowledge, education administration and the current curriculum. Both groups also consider these evaluations to be a cookie-cutter approach that fails to take contexts and the diversification of education services into account by using appropriate instruments and methods.

The professional responsibility argument maintains that accountability encourages a sense of moral obligation by promoting and requiring the joint commitment of teachers, education authorities and society to a common goal. According to its proponents, accountability mechanisms for early childhood teachers that entail measurement, incentives and penalties based on standards and performance requirements – which many countries, particularly the Anglophone ones, have adopted – have been heavily criticized for failing to meet their purpose of increasing institutional achievement and public trust (Moss, 2009).

Teaching evaluations in the field of ECE have met with opposition from those who accuse them of subverting teachers' professionalism (Osgood, 2006). Tempering these views, some ECE specialists acknowledge the importance of accountability in general, including performance evaluations, under an interpretation of professionalism that provides opportunities for cooperation between different interest groups (Oberhuemer, 2005). Similarly, some have argued that accountability in teaching should be viewed from the perspective of responsibility rather than monitoring since the latter is merely contractual and legal in nature whereas the former is a moral concept that generates and requires links between and commitments shared by all parties concerned (Fielding, 2001). For example, early childhood teachers themselves have welcomed pedagogical documentation⁵ as a form of democratic or public accountability that may help to strengthen public trust by emphasizing the importance of taking personal responsibility and the value of participation, deliberation and collective judgement (Alcock, 2000; Grieshaber & Hatch, 2003; Moss, 2009).

⁵ *Pedagogical documentation is both a content and a process that allows for serious, methodical and democratic discussion of teaching by both teachers and other members of the education community (including, among others, children, their families, other teachers and decision-makers) (Dahlberg et al., 2005).*

5 Early Childhood Teachers in Context

While there are many models for the education of young children, there is a growing body of scientific knowledge and policy consensus on its importance to society. At the international level, although countries' education systems may have had different origins (health, social welfare or education as such), these basic traditions began to converge into comprehensive ECC in the mid-nineteenth century (Korintus & Moss, 2004; Rojas, 2010). As will be seen below, during this process, different terms for ECE have been used in Latin America, depending on the age of the children and the goals pursued; these include *educación inicial*, *educación parvularia* (most commonly), *educación infantil*, *educación temprana*, *educación de primera infancia*, *educación preescolar*, *educación pre-básica* and *educación pre-primaria*. In this study, it has been decided to use *educación para la primera infancia* (early childhood education) as a generic term for this level of education, which covers children from birth to age 6.

Over the past 15 years, growing attention has been paid to ECE in the region. While countries' institutional models vary, the state's role in the provision, regulation and training of its workforce has been progressively institutionalized. In most of these countries, education laws and stataal regulation now recognizes ECE as the first level of the education system and the state's responsibility in that regard, although with different degrees of involvement.

The increased and growing importance that states attach to early childhood education is not limited to Latin America and the Caribbean. A comparative study of European countries (Oberhuemer et al., 2010) shows the same trend and similar sociodemographic, political and economic factors. Changes in the family structure, in addition to the number of working mothers on the rise, mass migration and an increasingly diverse population (which includes the population of children) and a growing public awareness of social return obtained from investment in ECE (Carneiro & Heckman, 2003; Heckman, 2011), have been accompanied by increased demand for non-parental care and attention.

In addition, many studies in various fields (such as post-structuralist sociology, critical pedagogy, cultural psychology, anthropology and child historiography) explain the way in which these policies and sociocultural processes influence images of children (James & Prout, 1997) and therefore expectations of schools and teachers (Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg et al., 2005; Penn, 2000). According to Oberhuemer, Schreyer & Neuman (2010), the professional status of early childhood teachers is inseparable from the contexts in which they work in that both situate and create different models for ECE. Moreover, there is a growing consensus among countries with regard to expectations and requirements for the development of education systems and teachers that focus on young children.

As will be seen below, both in Latin America and the Caribbean and in developed countries, ECE has made it increasingly clear that children are subjects of rights; that

their institutions must provide comprehensive teaching and care; and that ECE is complex and requires highly specialized teachers (Pardo, 2012). Although the cultural, social and political differences between these countries are well known and inevitably complicate analysis, it is interesting to note that the concepts of children and ECE embodied in their legislation are quite similar. All of the Latin American countries studied maintain that children are subjects of rights and that education begins at birth; some, such as Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Peru, even consider that it begins at conception.

There is also a great similarity in the goals of ECE and the belief that children should be the ultimate beneficiaries of politics, and of education policies. Thus, the core competencies of early childhood teachers are clearly pedagogical, incorporating care and teaching into work that is devoted to the instruction and holistic development of children. This attitude of the profession is based on a strong moral foundation that focuses on the training and sociocultural inclusion of young children and their families or, in the distinctive expression used in Nicaragua, the “restoration of children’s rights”. Some countries specify this focus by defining the beneficiaries in their legislation: vulnerable and disadvantaged children (the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago); children from different cultures, indigenous peoples, rural groups and black people (Brazil); and mothers before and after childbirth (Guatemala).

Despite the recognition of ECE as the first level of the education system, which is understood as a process of lifelong learning in Latin America, there are significant differences in the form given to this educational and professional approach. Several countries’ national discussion groups (Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Mexico) state that these concepts of children and education have not been sufficiently translated into specific policies and practices.

For a summary of these views, see Table 1.

Table 1: Approaches to Early Childhood Education in Latin America and the Caribbean

Country	Age range	Goals of early childhood education ⁶	How children are viewed	Beneficiaries ⁷
Argentina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote children's holistic learning and development. • Facilitate participatory, inclusive and preventive teaching.⁸ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjects of rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children
Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistic development: care and education are inseparable. • Ensure children's inclusion and enjoyment of the right to education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjects of rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children • All families
Chile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide relevant, meaningful instruction with a view to holistic development and advancement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjects of rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's families
Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure children's holistic development by taking their characteristics and environment into account • Provide an enriching environment through learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active subjects, owners of their own development and valid stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families • Young children

⁶ Summary based on the national reports. The original language of the relevant authors and legislation has been retained. [Translator's note: this statement applies to the Spanish text of the document.]

⁷ The beneficiaries in question are those established and described in domestic law.

⁸ Argentina's national discussion group points out that National Education Act lists nine ECE goals which, for reasons of length, cannot be reproduced in full in this table. The table reflects a summary provided by the national discussion group.

Costa Rica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfill children's potential, promote their interests and meet their needs through an integrated teaching approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjects of rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children
Cuba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help all children to reach their full potential from birth to age 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjects of rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families • Children
Dominican Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive care of children from birth to age 5, their families and their communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children (with a focus on the most socially vulnerable) • Children's families and communities
Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conception to age 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure children's holistic development and assist families with a view to the optimal education of their children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjects of rights from conception onwards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children • Families and mothers before and after childbirth
Honduras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote children's growth and holistic capacity-building so that they can fully adapt to school and the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjects of rights in the process of adapting to their schools and communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children
Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage meaningful learning with a view to holistic development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals in an ongoing process of human development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children
Nicaragua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conception to age 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore children's rights through comprehensive care provided by their mothers • Encourage human development through a shared effort by families, communities, society, the government and municipalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjects of rights from conception onwards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children • Mothers

Peru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full, holistic child development as opposed to a focus on preschool education and preparation for primary school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjects of rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children • Parents and the community as sources of opportunity and providers of the necessary conditions for child development
Trinidad and Tobago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide each child with equitable access to learning and life skills development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable and disadvantaged children
Venezuela	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to children's education and holistic development as subjects of rights and guarantees in light of their interests, potential and social and cultural environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjects of rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children • Families

► Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of data provided by the countries that participated in this study

5.1 Institutional Architecture for Early Childhood Education

Although ECE came into being in the late nineteenth century in Latin America and the Caribbean, its institution-building is a more recent process that developed during the second half of the twentieth century. The progressive development of ECE institutions in the region has been justified by two main arguments, regardless of the political organizations of the country in question. First, it is important to comply the Convention on the Rights of the Child, by guaranteeing young children's inalienable right to education. This aspect of institution-building is evidenced by the promulgation of national legislation and the establishment of government bodies that embody this role of guarantor and make ECE a priority in the care and protection of young children. This process began in the early 1990s in some Latin American countries, such as Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador, and in the mid-2000s in others, such as Trinidad and Tobago, Peru, Argentina, Uruguay, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Chile, where it was associated with extensive education reforms and expanded coverage.

The second argument, which led to the consolidation of ECE institutions in the regions, was the countries' need to pursue human development and close the social divide. The nation states of the region saw institution-building at this level of education as a powerful tool that could compensate for inequality by its significant and far-reaching impact,

particularly on children from low socio-economic groups (Carneiro & Heckman, 2003). In that regard, all national education laws and regulations seek to ensure the holistic development of children with priority given to the marginalized, poor and vulnerable among them.

Even in Latin American and Caribbean countries with different political and institutional systems, the tendency has been to defend ECE as a right enjoyed by all children and to view teachers and educators as guarantors of that right. Both federal states (Argentina, Brazil and Mexico) and countries with a single institutional framework (Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru) have a common policy agenda for ECE, establishing it as the first level of the education system and of a lifelong learning process.

It should be noted that the states' different institutional characteristics lead to differences in their policy-making and in the issues that they face in implementing their policy agendas for teachers. For example, in Argentina, a federal democracy (Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (BID), 2010, p. 14), each of the 24 administrative units controls its own education system and takes decisions in light of its local characteristics, bearing in mind the national guidelines. This institutional model has an impact on, among other things, policy implementation strategies and time frames for solving problems at all levels of government (Nation, provinces, municipal districts), which occasionally are mutually contradictory, carry out actions uncoordinatedly, or are not articulated as stated by the Argentina's National Discussion Group (pp. 14).

The effort to achieve comprehensiveness, policy coherence and administrative efficiency in ECE institution-building has given rise to various administrative management models. International research has shown that there are two types of administrative structures: the unified model and the mixed model (OECD, 2001). Rather than advocating one or the other, this study will describe the advantages and disadvantages of each of them and call for internal consistency in whichever of them is selected for implementation.

With the unified model, administration is centralized in a public body. With this structure, responsibility for ECE and ECE policy lies with a ministry or department of, for example, education, social affairs or children and family affairs. This model has the advantage of facilitating consistency in policy design and improving administration of the budget, alignment of goals and regulation of child education services. In Europe, countries such as England, Ireland, Spain and Sweden use a unified education administration model. Others, such as Denmark and Finland, use such a model under the administrative umbrella of social affairs while Norway does so under the Ministry of Children and Equality.

Brazil is a clear example of a unified institutional model. The Ministry of Education has sole responsibility for children's education; other assistance and health programmes are not considered child education programmes. Community units are part of the education system and are regulated by the Ministry of Education and the municipal education departments. Thus, despite the administrative decentralization of institutions (federal, state, municipal and so on), under a unified model overall responsibility for early childhood education always lies with a single governing body.

Trinidad and Tobago is attempting to move towards this institutional model. While ECE in this country is completely non-formal, there has been progress in formalizing and unifying the system since 2007. Although schools may be public, private or religious, the Early Childcare Care and Education (ECCE) Division in the Ministry of Education sets policies for and regulates education at this level.

In countries with unified institutions, this model also includes the provision of services, social assistance, child protection and ECE. These countries usually have state bodies and education centres that are responsible not only for teaching, but also for services in areas such as, among others, health care, food and family assistance. For this reason, international studies have recognized that under a unified institutional model, coordination of activities at the local level (in education centres) produces better results and there is a clear and shared approach to comprehensive care. It must be acknowledged that in many countries, implementation of a unified model has required the creation of a new state institution or body, whether within or in addition to the existing ministries (OECD, 2006). For example, Chile established a new Secretariat for Childhood Education, the Office of the President in Colombia established an Intersectoral Committee on Early Childhood, and Trinidad and Tobago established ECC and ECE institutions through its Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Division. It is therefore recognized that the main disadvantage of the unified model is that it increases bureaucracy and thus diverts resources to cover administrative costs (OECD, 2001a; Pacheco et al., 2005).

The divided institutional model is the one most often found in Latin America (Argentina, Colombia and Peru, among others) and the OECD countries (Australia, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United States). With this model, responsibility for ECCE is divided among and coordinated by various administrative bodies, such as ministries of social welfare, health and education. The divided model essentially follows an age-based system whereby the Ministry of Education is responsible for the preschool, pre-primary or transitional level (age 3-4 and above) and the Ministry of Social Welfare or the Ministry of Families, Adolescents and Children for services that provide assistance and care to children below that age. Examples of this institutional model include Guatemala, where responsibility is divided between the Secretariat for Social Welfare in the Office of the President (from birth to age 4) and the Ministry of Education (pre-primary school, ages 4 to 6); Honduras, where the Education Office in the State Secretariat of Education is responsible for children aged 4 to 5 and the Sectoral Secretariat of Social Development in the Secretariat of Health for the care of children from birth to age 5.

Another Latin American country that is making progress using a divided model for this age group is Peru. The government recently established the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion, which is responsible for social policy in the country and for setting and implementing policies and strategies for reducing poverty and vulnerability. Priority has been given to young children from birth to age 3 by establishing the Cradle Plus Programme (based on the country's well-known Wawa Wasi Programme). This policy focused on building the skills and promoting the development of children under 3 by providing parents in extremely poor rural areas with training in the care and nurturing of children (Guerrero et al., 2012, p. 24). Overall responsibility for the education of children aged 4 to 6, whether or not they are enrolled in school, lies with the Ministry of Education.

Peru's experience shows the challenge posed by the intersectoral coordination that a divided institutional model requires. As the country's national discussion group (p. 29) notes, while there has been progress in intersectoral coordination, there are multiple contradictions between different philosophies and procedures due to the fact that the ECC systems do not operate under a ministry, and teachers are not prepared for intersectoral management.

Mexico is one example of a divided institutional model that was expressly designed and organized as a combined system in which education is provided by the formal and non-formal education sectors, public and private schools, professional organizations and community groups. Although this stage of children's education is based on a national study plan (in use since 2011 and coordinated with the other two levels of basic education) and involves essentially children aged 3 to 6, 30 per cent of ECE is provided through other types of institutions. The divided model has allowed Mexico to make progress through a system that includes various sectors, stakeholders and advocates in order to meet the needs of a diverse group of students at this stage of their lives. Despite the public policy and social initiatives of several federal government departments, this model faces many challenges, particularly that of integrating into a single institution the provision of child care to different age groups; the challenges are considerably greater and more complex for children from birth to age 3 than for those in preschool.

In Latin America, the divided institutional model may also take the form of a decentralized administration, which has the advantage of using resources more efficiently by placing services at intermediate administrative levels, such as provinces and municipalities; they receive funding in various areas (education, health, social welfare, etc.) and are better able to allocate them. Unlike the unified model, which tends to make progress through increased class size and redistribution policies, the divided model focuses on policies that promote diversity and recognition. Therefore, divided institutional models are successful in diversifying institutional structures and instruction and coordinating intersectoral initiatives in order to respond effectively to the needs and specific interests of the country's people. However, they also face the challenge of striking a balance between decision-making at the local level and the need for national standards to ensure access and quality for all (OECD, 2001).

According to Buitrago, while Colombia describes itself as a country with a unified institutional model, its policy-making and intersectoral initiatives appear to offer an excellent example of the divided model. Comprehensive ECC is ensured through intense intersectoral efforts centred on the National Development Plan 2011-2014 (Act No. 1450 (2011)). The Plan covers institutional aspects of the Comprehensive Early Childhood Care Policy, which is part of the National Family Welfare System and is understood to include all stakeholders, coordinating bodies and relations between them in order to fully protect children and adolescents and support families at the national, departmental, district and municipal levels. In that connection, the Intersectoral Committee on Early Childhood Care provides each geographical entity (departments and municipalities) with the necessary tools so that they can meet their responsibility to provide young children with comprehensive care. This tool, known as the Comprehensive Care Package, is becoming the primary mechanism for analysis and institutional response through projects and services offered throughout the country.

An intersectoral approach is generally the critical factor in the success of divided institutional models because it allows for the development of strong linkages that ensure consistency in the relevant policies. Its primary advantage is greater flexibility in setting intersectoral and multidisciplinary goals, without burdening the administrative machinery with a body specifically created for that purpose. However, the absence of such a body makes it more difficult to administer the budget and complicates resource allocation and regulatory functions. The most common criticism of the divided model is that it leads to overlapping mandates and parallel efforts by ministries of health, education and social affairs with respect to the same set of children; service systems may have different regulations and delivery criteria that ultimately lead to a lack of consistency in matters relating to children and families.

Latin America is characterized by a wide range of institutional models that is closer to the divided model. However, these institutions are sometimes the result not of deliberate policy-making but of social and political processes that occurred at different points in time and eventually led to an assortment of coexisting early childhood systems. Fragmented institutional models outnumber those developed using the divided model and those with a view to intersectoral coordination. This is the case in Guatemala, where, according to the national discussion group, the institutional model is divided in so far as care is provided by the Ministry of Education, the Secretariat for Social Welfare in the Office of the President, the First Lady's Secretariat for Social Welfare and many other institutions, organizations and bodies; there is no governing body to guide and supervise ECC (p. 19).

In most of the region, the relevant institutions are headquartered in specific divisions or departments of ministries of education and are then decentralized to the federal, regional, provincial and municipal levels (depending on the country's geopolitical system). At the same time, this model coexists and/or is coordinated with other institutions that provide ECE and operate under various public services (health, social security, civil registration, judicial protection) or have heavy private sector involvement through foundations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and religious groups (see Table 2).

Table 2: Institutional Models for Early Childhood Education in Latin America and the Caribbean

Country	Legislation regulating early childhood education	Name given to this level of education	Institutional model
Argentina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Education Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Education (<i>Educación inicial</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divided
Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil Education Guidelines and Framework Act Statute of the Child and Adolescent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Childhood Education (<i>Educação infantil</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unified

Chile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Education Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Education (<i>Educación parvularia</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unified
Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Education Act 115 (1994) • Children's and Adolescents' Act; article 29 establishes initial education as an inalienable early childhood right. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Education (<i>Educación inicial</i>) • Preschool Education (<i>Educación preescolar</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unified
Costa Rica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Education Act (1957) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool Education (<i>Educación preescolar</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divided
Cuba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution of the Republic of Cuba • General Nationalized and Free Education Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool Education (<i>Educación preescolar</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unified
Dominican Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Education Act (66-97) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Education (<i>Educación inicial, pre-primario</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unified
El Salvador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood Education (<i>Educación para la primera infancia</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no information
Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Education Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Education (<i>Educación inicial</i>) • Preschool Education (<i>Educación pre-primaria</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divided
Honduras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Education Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Education (<i>Educación parvularia</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divided
México	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Education Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Education (<i>Educación inicial</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divided
Nicaragua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua • General Education Act (Act No. 582) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood Education (<i>Educación temprana</i>) birth to age 3 • Preschool Education (<i>Educación inicial</i>) (age 3 to 5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divided

Peru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Education Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Education (<i>Educación inicial</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divided
Trinidad and Tobago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Act (a chapter of the Laws of the Republic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood care and education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unified
Uruguay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Education Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood Education (<i>Educación en la primera infancia e inicial</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no information
Venezuela	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Organization Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Education (<i>Educación inicial</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no information

► *Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of data provided by the countries that participated in this study and information available from international databases*

Lastly, it should be reiterated that the consistency and sustainability of any institutional model depends not only on the structure and type of organization selected, but on how society views these institutions and teachers and the political, social and cultural importance attached to them.

5.2 Compulsory Early Childhood Education

The increasing involvement of Latin American states in the regulation and provision of ECE has raised the question of whether it should be compulsory. On the one hand, the region's lawmakers agree that the state has a duty to educate young children. From that perspective, making education compulsory provides a mechanism for ensuring universal access to the system. These countries recognize that states have a binding obligation to ensure that all children have genuine educational opportunities. According to Argentina's national discussion group, this responsibility requires states to give priority to investment in and funding for that sector and to plan and implement its short, medium and long-term expansion in terms of coverage and forward-looking approaches to democratic growth and equality.

Another issue is whether ECE is compulsory for families; in other words, whether they are required to send children under six to school. Like developing countries, states in the region have very different policies in this regard. While the European countries tend to make ECE optional and to delay the age of compulsory attendance (Oberhuemer et al., 2010), the Latin American countries tend to make formal education compulsory from age 4 on (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3: Minimum Age of Compulsory Education in European Countries

Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Ireland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cyprus England Scotland Wales United Kingdom Malta Netherlands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Austria Belgium Czech Republic Denmark France Germany Greece Hungary Ireland Italy Luxembourg Portugal Romania Slovakia Slovenia Spain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bulgaria Estonia Finland Latvia Lithuania Poland Sweden

► Source: (Oberhuemer et al., 2010: 482).

Studies show that the European tendency to make formal education compulsory is closely linked to the age of the children and the transition to and preparation for school (Oberhuemer et al., 2010). Through this mechanism, education systems have sought to ensure children's coordinated transition to school, hence the terms "preschool", "pre-primary", "zero class", "entry-level class" and "transitional level". Interestingly, research has demonstrated that this institution-building process expands professional teaching to include early childhood teachers.

An overview of Latin America and the Caribbean shows clear differences in comparison with the OECD countries. Of the 18 countries studied for this purpose (see Table 4), only Cuba, Nicaragua and Trinidad and Tobago make ECE optional. In the other countries that were analysed from the region, it is compulsory for one or two years, most commonly, from the ages of 4 to 6. Mexico and Peru have expanded compulsory attendance to include 3-year-olds and in Venezuela, ECE is compulsory for all children from birth to age six.

Table 4: Compulsory Early Childhood Education in Latin American and Caribbean Countries

Country	Age range	Age of optional/ compulsory attendance ⁹
Argentina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day care: 45 days to age 2 • Preschool: age 3 to 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 3: optional • Age 4 to 6: compulsory
Bolivia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE : birth to age 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 4: optional • Age 5 to 6: compulsory
Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE : birth to age 5 • Day care: birth to age 3 • Preschool: age 4 to 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 3: optional • Age 4 to 5: compulsory
Chile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day care: 84 days to age 1 • Mid-level: age 2 to 3 • Transition: age 4 to 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 4: optional • Age 5 to 6: compulsory
Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE: birth to age 6 • Preschool: age 3 to 6 • Pre-kindergarten: age 3 • Kindergarten: age 4 • Transition: age 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE: optional • Age 3 to 6 (preschool): optional • Prekindergarten: optional • Kindergarten: optional • Transition: compulsory
Costa Rica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother to child level: birth to age 4 • Kindergarten/Interactive II*: age 4 to 5 • Preparatory/Transition: age 5 to 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 4: optional • Age 4 years 3 months to age 6: compulsory
Cuba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE: birth to age 5 • Level 1: birth to age 1 • Level 2: age 1 to 2 • Level 3: age 3 to 4 • 4th level: age 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 5: optional • Age 6 (first year of primary school): compulsory
Dominican Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Early Childhood Care Plan: “Quisqueya begins with you” • ECE (pre-primary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 4: optional • Age 5: compulsory
El Salvador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE: conception to age 3 • Preschool: age 4 to 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 6: compulsory

⁹ All the countries studied recognize that early childhood education is the first level of the education system and that the state is therefore responsible for providing it. This column shows whether families are required to send their children to school; in other words, it indicates the age at which their attendance is optional or compulsory for their parents and/or guardians.

Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE: birth to age 4 • Preschool: age 4 to 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 4: optional • Age 4 to 6: compulsory
Honduras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE: birth to age 5 (non-formal) • Preschool age 4 to 5 (formal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 4: optional • Age 5: compulsory
Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE: birth to age 3 • Preschool education: age 3 to 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 3: optional • Age 3 to 5: compulsory
Nicaragua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE: birth to age 3 (non-formal) • Preschool: age 3 to 5 (regular and community) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 5: optional • Age 6 (primary school): compulsory
Panama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE: birth to age 3 • Nursery school, level 1: birth to age 2 • Nursery school, level 2: age 2 to 4 • Preschool (regular): age 4 to 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 4: optional • Age 5: compulsory
Peru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE: birth to age 6 • Day care: birth to age 2 • Preschool: age 3 to 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 2: optional • Age 3: compulsory
Trinidad and Tobago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE: birth to age 8 • Nursery or day care: birth to age 2 • Early childhood care and education centres: age 3 to 4 • Primary school grades, Infant 1 and Infant 2: age 5 to 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 6: optional
Uruguay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private preschool: birth to age 6 • Public preschool: age 3 to 6 • Level 1: age 3 to 4 • Level 2: age 4 to 5 • Level 3: age 5 to 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 4: optional • Age 5: compulsory
Venezuela	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE: birth to age 6 • Nursery school: birth to age 3 • Preschool: age 3 to 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to age 6: compulsory

► Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of data provided by the countries that participated in this study and information contained in international databases.

It should be noted that there is not necessarily a positive correlation between this tendency to make ECE compulsory and coverage. In other words, the countries (both developed and Latin American) that require up to three years of ECE are not those with the most coverage; on the contrary, countries such as Cuba, France, Ireland, Belgium and Finland have achieved universal education for children aged 3 to 6 while making attendance completely optional. Europe's experience also shows that when some countries, such as Wales, instituted compulsory education for the age group immediately preceding school, attendance became virtually universal (Oberhuemer et al., 2010).

An examination of policies for optional education in European Union (EU) countries shows a significant increase in enrolment in formal education; the age at which children begin their education is falling steadily. From 2000 to 2009, EU enrolment rates rose by 15.3 per cent for children under 3, 7 per cent for 4-year-olds and 6.3 per cent for children under 5 (Llorent, 2013) for a total of 77, 90 and 94 per cent, respectively, in 2009. The most striking ECE enrolment trend is that formal education begins at a significantly younger age now than it did 20 years ago. In OECD and EU countries, more than three quarters of 4-year-olds (84 and 89 per cent, respectively) are enrolled in school and in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Spain and Sweden, where compulsory education begins at age 6, over 90 per cent of children under 3 are enrolled in formal education.

This evidence raises the question of the meaning of "compulsory" education and the social value that families attribute to education at this stage of life. Apparently, children's enrolment at this level is more closely correlated to other variables: private care provided by non-formal and/or family support networks (Barco, 2014); the leave system for parents and guardians (Korintus & Moss, 2004); the increasing flexibility of working hours; and stereotypes about child rearing and care that have given a misleading impression of the work of early childhood teachers (Da Costa, 2007). In that connection, it should be noted that the movement towards universal, compulsory ECE is also a product of sociocultural resignification.

Several Latin America and Caribbean countries recognize the challenge of raising families' awareness of the importance of ECE and early childhood teachers. According to Peru's national discussion group, misconceptions about initial education must be corrected; many parents believe that its primary purpose is to teach children to read and understand basic mathematics. In general, families hope that their children will be placed in classrooms with the best students, not those who learn more slowly, and teachers must be ready to better address these demands and pressures (p. 4). Studies conducted in Chile also reveal families' beliefs and expectations regarding children and non-parental care as a substitute for school. According to the 2011 National Socio-economic Survey, families give the following reasons for not sending their children to school: they believe that it is unnecessary because they have someone to provide in-home child care (76 per cent); they consider that the child is not old enough to attend school (10.6 per cent); or they lack confidence in the care that the child would receive at school (3.7 per cent) (Barco, 2014).

5.3 The Existence of an Official Curriculum

Historically, the development of model ECE curricula in Latin America has been a difficult process owing to the region's complex social and cultural history and to the different education policies and emphases, not all of them progressive or consistent that have been proposed. Nonetheless, there has been a gradual movement towards overly technocratic, naive or allegedly neutral approaches to curriculum development and to more binding or critical positions that have shed light on the relationships of power, dependency, reproduction and/or social change that curricula invariably entail (Peralta, 2010).

Thus, a review of early childhood systems in the region shows that curricula have been redesigned to reflect a view of children as active learners and their teachers as part of a process of ongoing pedagogical development. Both of these views stem from a strong trend in enhanced focus on early learning and an underlying criticism of traditional philosophies of education that ignore play-based learning and holistic development experiences. On the contrary, as Brailovsky notes with regard to Argentina, this trend has different goals and origins that are more closely associated with a process that challenges some of the assumptions on which traditional education has been based (Brailovsky, 2008, p. 174). See Table 5.10¹⁰

Table 5: Early Childhood Education Curricula in Latin American and Caribbean Countries

Country	Official early childhood education curriculum	Date of the most recent update	Applicable stage of early childhood education
Argentina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core learning priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2004 (with updates in each administrative unit for 2012, 2013 and 2014)¹⁰ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicable nationwide for all ECE
Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National ECE curriculum guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First stage of basic education, focusing on holistic development until age 6

¹⁰ The report submitted by Argentina's national group states that the core learning priorities for 2004, mentioned in this table, are those of the most recent national update. Most administrative units have updated their curricula (some of them in 2014 and many others in recent years) because the responsibility for producing documents lies not with the central administration, but with the local units. At the federal level, curricula are developed at regional seminars based on the national guidelines.

Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical guidelines for ECE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covers children from birth to age 6 although, to date, there are no implementing regulations for these guidelines
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decree No. 2247 on preschool education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1996 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covers children aged 3 to 6 and conceived as an ongoing process of pedagogical development and research with a view to coordination with basic education
Chile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic curriculum for ECE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2001 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum framework for the entire level of education (from birth to age 5)
Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official ECE curriculum: 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National core curriculum for ECE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied nationwide for children from birth to age 4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National core curriculum for preschool education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2005 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied nationwide for children aged 4 to 6
Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool education programme (PEP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2004-2005 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal education for children aged 3 to 5
Peru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Curriculum Design (DCN) for regular basic education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1996 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covers levels I and II with a focus on skills-based learning; compulsory throughout the education system
Trinidad and Tobago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2006 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compulsory for all state schools and schools that receive state assistance

► Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of data provided by the countries that participated in this study and information contained in international databases.

It is interesting to note that these curricula imply a new meaning of the profession in two ways: by structuring teaching and defining the socioeducational role of early childhood teachers.

- **Curricula have organizing and structuring functions**

In other words, curricula do not simply establish what children must learn; they also introduce certain teaching methodologies. They provide criteria, guidelines and methodological strategies for the practice of child pedagogy (e.g. play-based and in the interests of children; inclusive and culturally relevant; shapers of challenging environments and experiences).

Countries such as Argentina, Chile and Peru embody this position in their curricula and implement it in all the contexts, modalities and levels of ECE. In addition, Quantanilla reports that Mexico's preschool curriculum includes community schools with minor adjustments in class structure, suggestions on ways in which community teachers can adapt teaching programmes to the situation of indigenous and migrant children, as well as monitoring and evaluation instruments (p. 13).

- **Curricula give teachers a role that requires and/or assumes complex professional knowledge**

These curricula require highly qualified teachers. There is a tendency to give them socioeducational roles that include research, evaluation, and curriculum design and so on. For example, in Mexico, the general objective is to strengthen teachers as promoters of the educational process by setting up education scenarios that allow them to acquire certain competencies. In Chile, the basic curriculum for preschool education also highlights the role of the teacher as mediator and requires teachers to design, implement and evaluate curricula as ongoing researchers in the field and to energize educational communities (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 15).

In endeavouring to develop ECE curricula, the countries in the region have encountered problems with implementation and ownership. While it is recognized that these curricula have been updated in the light of new knowledge in the field and brought into line with contemporary and international curriculum trends, it has proved quite difficult to introduce them at the classroom level. On the one hand, some curricula do not include legal regulatory mechanisms to ensure their proper use or implementation. The decentralized nature of some systems, whether federal (such as those of Argentina, Brazil and Mexico) or municipal (such as that of Chile), assigns responsibility for curriculum management to the country's various administrative units (as Brailovsky and Abuchaim have reported for Argentina and Brazil, respectively) in the absence of national evaluation and/or monitoring systems. The situation is similar in Trinidad and Tobago, which has a smaller education system with non-formal institutions operating under the Ministry of Education. The introduction of the National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Guide in 2006 was accompanied by capacity-building workshops for teachers and supplemented with the establishment of a team of supervisors in the Ministry; eight years later, the Government has no information on its outcome, functioning or impact on teaching practice.

Moreover, curriculum frameworks and guides are typically built around broad guidelines rather than describing the operational mechanisms that could facilitate their implementation in practice. Brazil, Chile and Peru report that the broad, flexible and non-prescriptive design of these curricula do not always provide all the guidance needed for classroom teaching and that teachers tend to make limited use of them (Universidad Diego Portales, 2010). Furthermore, Ochoa notes that in Peru, these curricula are not useful for planning and evaluation because they emphasize improvisation.

The third issue raised by the existence of national curricula is the split between levels and modalities (enrolled/unenrolled or formal/non-formal). In countries with divided and/or mixed institutional models, higher priority is given to the implementation and regulation of curriculum guidelines for the period immediately preceding primary school. This is seen from the national reports of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica and Mexico; policy-making, standard-setting and the allocation of public resources focus more on the levels closest to compulsory basic education and less on ECE or day care, which is optional. According to Buitrago, this difference in focus and in the allocation of responsibility for teaching is a sign that ECE is not part of preschool, nor is preschool equivalent to ECE. That distinction should be emphasized as a background for understanding an important fact: that the goal is not only to create order and consistency within the education system, but also to train teachers in light of the country's recent decision to provide ECE that promotes human development through an integrated approach rather than simply as preparation for school (p. 14).

5.4 *Child Care Programmes and Funding for Early Childhood Education*

ECE offers a wide range of care models. Interestingly, while political and academic positions on the issue are quite consistent (in so far as they are rights-based and stress the importance of such education for human development), significant differences in its conceptual and programmatic implementation emerge at the international level. This trend is not limited to Latin America and the Caribbean or to developing countries; it is also found in the more developed and, generally speaking, the OECD countries (OECD, 2014a; UNICEF, 2014). For this reason, international organizations and academic bodies that have conducted comparative studies in this area have found it difficult to distinguish between assistance (child care) programmes and education programmes as such. These experts believe that the distinction should be made through comparative studies since they influence policy-making and funding decisions.

International researchers have agreed on criteria for distinguishing between assistance and education in ECC programmes using variables such as the person responsible for the programme (qualification), the place in which the service is provided (institution) and the age of the beneficiaries (age groups). Using these criteria, international organizations have identified three types of early childhood programmes: (1) those that are solely educational and, in general, operate under the policy and technical auspices of a ministry of education; and (2) those that provide care and social assistance, which are typically administered by social development, welfare and/or family affairs ministries or services. For both the purely educational and the clearly assistance-oriented, it is easy

to set up a valid data collection system. However, there is a third type of programme, known as “integrated”, in which assistance and education are provided by a single service, making it extremely difficult to isolate each component when reporting data. The OECD reports that over half of its member countries cannot (in practice) distinguish between these aspects of their integrated programmes and have decided to provide all data under the category “education”.

An overview of the Latin America and Caribbean countries reviewed shows similarities to the EU and OECD countries; the data on ECC programmes include the aforementioned three modalities and there is a clear distinction between purely educational programmes and assistance or integrated ones. The problem in analysing the data stems from the fact that, in general, the education and assistance components are less clearly identified in the breakdown of expenses and staff qualifications. Therefore, the Latin American countries (like the developed countries) face the challenge of improving their statistics systems for ECE (OECD, 2014b). See Table 6.

Table 6: Types of Early Childhood Care Programmes

Country	Early childhood care programmes		
	Education	Care or community-based	Integrated
Argentina	x	x	x
Brazil	x	no information	no information
Chile	x	x	-
Colombia	x	x	x
Costa Rica	x	x	x
Cuba	x	x	x
Mexico	x	x	x
Peru	x	x	x
Trinidad and Tobago	x	x	no information
Venezuela	x	x	no information

► *Source: Prepared by the authors based on data provided by the countries that participated in this study*

The data provided by countries in the region show significant similarities with regard to progress in implementing the various ECE programmes and to persistent problems that perpetuate inequality in matters affecting families and children. Generally speaking, these trends reflect the age of the children, the qualifications of those who implement the programmes in the different countries and the contribution (financial, policy-making and technical) of governments. The issue is not limited to progress and setbacks; in many cases, it takes the form of tensions or dichotomies that states will need to address over time.

5.4.1 *Strengthening of the Education Component Versus Schoolification of Early Childhood Education*

The countries generally agree on the need to strengthen policies and increase funding for the education component of programmes for children under age 6. There is social and legal recognition of the educational value of these programmes for human development and the countries have strengthened that component through investment and regulation. As Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, Mexico and Peru explain, the tension on this issue stems from the fact that policies, regulations and public resources focus more on preschool as the first level of compulsory basic education and less on initial education (birth to age 3), which is not compulsory; in many countries, initial education is still non-formal. In Chile, for example, the formal model predominates, accounting for 97.7 per cent of enrolment at this level of education, while non-conventional education – nearly all of that provided by the National Association of Preschools and the Integra Foundation – accounts for a mere 2.3 per cent (Ministry of Education, 2013).

This situation is not limited to Latin America and the Caribbean; the EU countries also tend to strengthen transitional, pre-primary and preschool programmes in order to facilitate the transition to school (Oberhuemer et al., 2010; OECD, 2014b).

The national reports of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Peru show that these countries are making a great effort to strengthen the education component of their ECC programmes, but they also reveal problems at the implementation level. Generally speaking, their education programmes include a wide variety of institutional models, administrative units and regulatory systems, a fact that hinders comprehensive policy-making, policy evaluation and the gathering of accurate data. And because these different modalities allow for a variety of teacher profiles and organizational systems, quality standards for teaching are also varied; this makes it more difficult to provide all of a country's children with the same quality of education. Ultimately, although programmes have become broader and more inclusive, the data reveal persistent inequality that can be seen from a breakdown of attendance rates by socio-economic bracket, ethnicity, race and location.

The variety of programmes and excessive focus on the age group that is transitioning to school (age 4 to 6) causes gaps in the attention paid and care given to children under 3, despite the importance of the first years of life for human development. These gaps result

in a wide range of private sector assistance, community and/or alternative education programmes that are extremely difficult to regulate. In Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua and Trinidad and Tobago, many ECC and preschool services and programmes are offered and operated by individual NGOs, religious groups, corporations or foundations. In addition, although there are no statistics on the matter, it is generally known that non-formal in-home day care centres that operate without trained teachers, with minimum infrastructures and operating conditions and without state funding are extremely common in areas with high poverty rates and insufficient public investment.

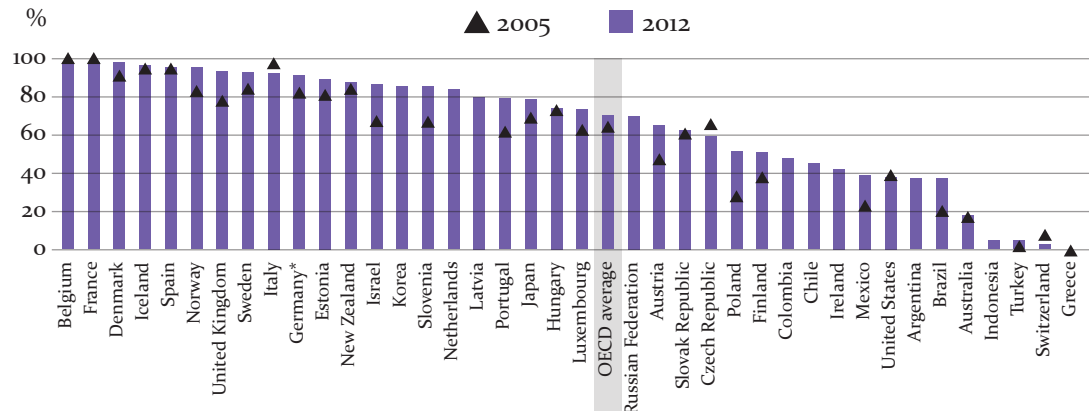
Colombia provides one example of this process of strengthening integrated (education/care) programmes in the region; it has made a significant effort to improve ECC, which formerly operated under the Colombian Family Welfare Institute through non-conventional community-based programmes. While some of these programmes are still in operation, their number has declined considerably since the 2011 launch of the country's From Zero to Forever strategy, which seeks to promote and ensure the holistic development of children under 6 through a unified intersectoral approach. Buitrago's report states that by adopting this new policy agenda for ECE, Colombia is emphasizing the importance of comprehensive care for child development and, within that framework, is consolidating the various care programmes offered into three: Family, Community and Institutional. These were operated by the Ministry until 2012 and served as examples for the current modalities of early education. At present, under the mandate established in the Development Plan (2010-2014), the Colombian Family Welfare Institute is once again responsible for all types of ECC. Institutions and communities play a role in this process as do existing families. Since 2012, this has entailed a progressive transition from a multitude of ECC programmes to a more standardized system with clear, mutually agreed upon quality criteria for the provision of comprehensive care to young children.

All of the national discussion groups mentioned the need for studies, monitoring systems, evaluation and official catalogues of existing services and programmes. Like the OECD (OECD, 2014b) and other international bodies, they all recognize that the quantity and quality of the early childhood development programmes currently in operation must be assessed. The main problem is that many of these programmes are sponsored by NGOs or civil society and are not subject to independent evaluation that would provide a clear picture of their impact (Mexicanos Primero, 2014, p. 99-102).

5.5 *Population Enrolled in Early Childhood Education*

The main consequence of the increase in public financing for ECE programmes is that children begin formal education at an earlier age, significantly younger than 20 years ago. Over 75 per cent of 4-year-olds in the OECD countries and 89 per cent in the EU countries are enrolled in school. In Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Great Britain, over 90 per cent of 3-year-olds are enrolled in formal education (see Chart 1).

Chart 1: Enrolment in Early Childhood Education at Age 3 in OECD Countries (2005 y 2012)



*Year of reference 2006 instead of 2005.

► **Source:** (OECD, 2014b: p.318)

An overview of Latin America and the Caribbean shows that the greatest achievement with regard to ECE is, in fact, the expansion of enrolment and coverage of children from birth to age 6 in recent decades. However, the data reported by countries provide clear proof that these rates are highest for children who are approaching their first enrolment in school (5-year-olds) and lower for children under age 4. In some Latin American countries, such as Argentina and Chile, enrolment is already universal (higher than 95 per cent) for 5-year-olds. While other countries, such as Brazil, Mexico and Peru, have not achieved universal access, their enrolment rates for this age group are higher than 70 per cent and policies for sustained increase are in place.

Progress in the coverage of children transitioning to school has challenged countries in the region to focus their efforts on children under 4, an age group which, in many countries (Costa Rica, Colombia, and Trinidad and Tobago), is covered totally or partially by non-formal education provided by family welfare and/or social development services. In recent years, countries' national and local policies in that regard have tended to focus on covering children from birth to age 4. Pardo and Adlerstein give the example of Chile, where the enrolment rate for children under 6 was 20.9 per cent in 1990 and is now 49.1 per cent after a sustained effort by the various governments that has drawn international recognition.

In addition to the increase in net enrolment rates for this age group, it is interesting to note that the trend in Latin America is towards expanded coverage of the poorest children. Even in the few countries, such as Costa Rica, where the net enrolment rate for 4- and 5-year olds has risen by less than 4 per cent over the past five years, this outcome is a step in the right direction since it is accompanied by a reduction in access gaps for children from homes in which the environment is less conducive to education.

Nevertheless, there are still significant inequalities in expanded coverage in Latin America. These reflect not only age groups, but also income, race and the geographic area in which the child lives. International organizations such as UNICEF (UNICEF, 2015) believe that this pattern of education tends to reproduce countries' social and historical social exclusion mechanisms: being poor, black or a member of an indigenous people or living in a rural area tends to hinder access to the education system and/or high quality education. Abuchaim reports that Brazil's enrolment rate has risen unevenly; white children from the wealthiest 25 per cent of the country's population are more likely to attend early childhood schools than mixed-race and black children from the poorest 25 per cent. In 2012, for example, 44 per cent of children from birth to age 3 in the former group (close to the 50 per cent target set in the National Education Plan), but only 16 per cent of children in the latter group, were enrolled in ECE.

In Mexico, 8.6 per cent of children are enrolled in indigenous peoples' schools, where intercultural bilingual education is provided; 1.4 per cent in child development centres; and 3.4 per cent in community preschools, which operate under the National Educational Development Council, a decentralized agency of the Secretariat of Public Education, in rural communities with fewer than 500 inhabitants. This combined 13.4 per cent of enrolled children also have the highest percentage of uncertified teachers, the poorest infrastructures and equipment and the shortest school day. As in Brazil, being a member of an indigenous people and living in a rural area are factors that hinder access to good schools.

In Argentina, some large local administrative units have expanded coverage to include young children in all age groups by moving towards privatization; this benefits units and population groups at a higher socio-economic level (Gamallo, 2011; Vior & Rodríguez, 2012). A typical example of this process is Buenos Aires, where, according to Brailovsky, over half of the students are enrolled in private schools and there is a strong trend towards privatization.

While Peru is one country that has continued the pattern of expansion with a focus on the poorest children aged 5 to 6, girls and rural children have faced barriers to access. According to the national report, 4.6 per cent of children from birth to age 2, as compared with 78.6 per cent of those aged 3 to 6, are enrolled in the education system. It is interesting to note that this increase in coverage was achieved precisely through public schools, girls' enrolment (although boys account for the majority of young children) and a focus on rural areas. The coverage rate was 72.6 in 2011 and 78.6 in 2013, a net increase of 6.1 percentage points over a three-year period. This progress has been far greater in rural areas where the "Together" social programme is in operation; coverage increased by 12.3 percentage points between 2011 and 2013.

It should be emphasized that the region has made undeniable progress in ECE over the past 30 years, as seen from the increase in enrolment and the adoption of regulatory legislation. Nevertheless, inequality of opportunity for children has been far from eliminated; most children have no access to education centres, particularly those that care for children under age 3, while others end up in institutions that do not meet minimum quality standards. As will be seen below, early childhood teachers face similar problems: inequities in the regulations governing their professional career, low salaries and job insecurity are barriers to their advancement.

According to the Global Education Digest 2014 (UNESCO, 2014a), increasing access to preschool programmes that facilitate better preparation for school life and investing resources in the quality of ECE as a means to satisfactory early learning are two ways of preventing grade repetition and dropping out. In other words, the goal of increased enrolment is not merely to ensure access, but to increase the chances of scholastic achievement and human development.

5.6 Critical Issues Concerning Early Childhood Teachers

5.6.1 Funding for Early Childhood Education Programmes: Public or Private?

UNESCO (2004) has generally recognized that budget allocation for ECE is modest as compared with other levels of the education system and that resource mobilization is, in fact, the major problem that states face in their efforts to expand and improve the quality of care and education at this level. This task is particularly difficult in developing countries, where less importance may be attached to ECC than to other urgent priorities, such as universal primary education.

Countries' investment in ECE varies widely. According to the international organizations, these differences reflect each country's per capita income, the importance that its society attaches to this level of education and the criteria that the country uses to define it (UNESCO, 2004). For example, the more developed OECD countries consider that ECE should be provided in regulated establishments with qualified teachers and a student-teacher ratio no higher than 15:1. However, compliance with these standards is costly and they are neither relevant nor effective in the Latin America and Caribbean countries, which rely on community child care services staffed by local mothers with only a few months of training.

Sustained public financing for ECE programmes is critical to the aforementioned growth in quality (Clifford, 2012; OECD, 2014b). Adequate funding makes it possible to recruit suitable staffs that are capable of encouraging the cognitive, social and emotional development of children enrolled in those programmes. Sufficient, timely funding also allows for adequate investment in the infrastructures and equipment that provide needed support for effective learning environments. According to OECD and UNESCO studies (OECD, 2013a, 2013b, 2014b; UNESCO, 2004) in countries that do not allocate sufficient financing to ensure coverage and quality in ECE programmes, parents have less trust in the education system; families prefer to send their children to private establishments, which increases household spending, or to find ways for children to be cared for in the home, which tends to keep women from working and increases the risk of older children dropping out in order to care for their younger siblings.

An international study has shown that public spending on ECE is channelled primarily to public institutions although some countries also provide varying degrees of support for private education. In the OECD countries, the average public sector expenditure per child is almost double the private sector expenditure (US\$6,460 and US\$3,618 per

year, respectively). Countries such as Chile, Mexico and Colombia have similar spending patterns, although private schools receive more funding in Colombia. The available information shows that, overall, public financing in the European countries is greater and better established than in the Latin American and Caribbean countries. Nevertheless, an overview of the countries in the region that were reviewed shows a significant (and growing) trend towards public financing of ECE programmes. In countries such as Chile and Mexico, over 80 per cent of the enrolment is funded from public resources as compared with 74 per cent in Argentina and only 54 per cent in Colombia (OECD, 2014b, p. 244).

However, with regard to the average annual expenditure per child, there are significant differences among countries in the region: US\$5,083 in Chile, US\$2,568 in Mexico and US \$1,301 in Colombia. These numbers fall well below those of the OECD countries, where annual expenditure per child is US\$7,428 on average and over US\$10,000 in Denmark, New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America (OECD, 2014b, p. 226).

In percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), the expenditure is 0.8 per cent in Chile, 0.7 per cent in Argentina, 0.6 per cent in Mexico and 0.5 per cent in Colombia as compared with an average of 0.6 per cent in the OECD countries (OECD, 2014b).

It is important to know who is paying for ECE. In addition to government funding, countries receive considerable support from parents (in the form of fees), international agencies, private providers and NGOs (contributions in cash or in kind). International bodies such as the OECD, UNICEF and UNESCO itself have shown that, unlike primary education, ECE is rarely free. Governments are willing to accept this shared payment regime even though the strategy may place an excessive burden on parents, who are often required not only to pay tuition, but also to cover the cost of uniforms, books and supplies. It is essential to have statistics on the question of who pays for ECE and on the relative contributions of the government, parents, non-profit organizations (international organizations and NGOs) and private sector stakeholders.

The data provided by countries show that ECE receives more funding from private sources than primary, secondary and post-secondary education (in both developed and developing countries). As might be expected, the percentage of private financing varies significantly from one country to another, from less than 10 per cent in Chile (comparable to countries such as Belgium and Sweden) to over 25 per cent in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Peru (comparable to Australia, Spain and the United States). As in the European OECD countries, free, publicly financed education programmes are available to all children aged 3 to 6. A comparative analysis shows that education is a fully protected constitutional right for children in this age group (OECD, 2014b).

Studies have concluded that ECE needs a source of sustained financing in order to ensure the continued operation of not merely a series of education programmes, but an education system for young children (Clifford, 2012; Stebbins, 2012). This requires both society's understanding of this system as an inalienable right of children and the capacity to produce data on the processes, outcomes and impacts of such financing.

Clearly, the Latin American and Caribbean countries have made great progress in this understanding, but much remains to be done with regard to the informed coordination of systems. One notable example is Brazil, which, since 2007, has had in place a Primary Education and Teacher Development Fund (FUNDEF) (UNESCO, 2004).

As research has shown, ECE cost estimation is a new area of expertise that came into being in the early 2000s (Brodsky, 2012) and has led to extensive discussion of models and subjects of economic evaluation. Efforts to achieve informed and sustainable financing for ECE will probably overlap with cost estimates and although the two processes may have points in common, they entail different methodologies. Whatever funding approach is taken at the outset, the challenge will be to base the analysis models used in decision-making on two key principles: (1) the estimated costs and financing mechanisms must correspond to an early childhood system that is comprehensive and includes all children (not merely one sector of the population); (2) the estimated costs and financing mechanisms must ensure high quality programmes and services (not the bare minimum); and (3) the researchers and research must show how these costs and financing mechanisms will help to develop an integrated system of ECCE (Brodsky, 2012). It is essential to establish that, while financing mechanisms may represent significant progress in resource redistribution policy, they do not necessarily ensure enjoyment of the right to education.

5.6.2 Prevalence of a Collection of Programmes rather than a System of Early Childhood Education

Although the region has made significant progress with regard to the state's role in the regulation and provision of ECE, it is still characterized by fragmented institutional models and legislation that, while well-intentioned, is irrelevant to the situation. There is no question that the Latin American and Caribbean countries have moved forward; their policy agendas, at least, have paid increasing attention to the promotion of ECE and to the state's direct involvement in its regulation and provision. The data collected shows that, generally speaking, this level of education is taken into account in government initiatives and some state body is responsible for its administration and financing. However, international bodies and research show that priority should be given to policies aimed at the development of a holistic, integrated and strategic early childhood system (UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UNESCO-UIS, 2011).

A review of international experience with ECC and research on its impact demonstrate that no single programme or service is a panacea for the promotion of child development (Oberhuemer et al., 2010; OECD, 2011; Stebbens, 2012). Many activities with different scopes and modalities provide opportunities for policy implementation appropriate to the situation of each country. The common challenge faced by the Latin American and Caribbean countries is to develop a policy agenda for a transition from targeted projects or collections of education programmes and provider institutions to an early childhood system (Clifford, 2012; Stebbins, 2012).

Studies have defined an "early childhood system" as a process that transforms all those involved in the provision of service into an integrated, coherent whole (Stebbins, 2012).

The implementation of such systems can improve quality of service, maximize learning and maintain responsibility for public and private resource utilization. The author suggests that the process of developing these systems requires, at a minimum, strategic planning, coordination, leadership development, technical assistance and monitoring.

Stebbins' proposal for the development of an early childhood system is relevant to the needs felt by Latin American countries, all of which mention these issues in one form or another as policy-making challenges that they have faced. According to a document produced by Costa Rica's Ministry of Education, the success of this process requires setting quality standards and establishing monitoring programmes that help to improve the quality and impact of these initiatives. Above all, their selection must be based on the demonstrated effectiveness of strategies and on a real commitment to their sustained implementation. The cost of early childhood care programmes must be calculated not in terms of their actual cost, but over the long term since they have proven benefits as a return on investment (Costa Rica, 2012, p. 92).

6 Sociodemographic Characteristics of Early Childhood Teachers

The available studies on the profile of teachers in the region reveals a number of characteristics that warrant special attention when considering education policies. On the one hand, most early childhood teachers are women and they are younger than those of developed countries; this is clearly a consequence of rapidly increasing enrolment over the past few years. Recent evidence also suggests that they come from families that are, relatively speaking, more culturally and economically deprived and economically vulnerable than workers in other professional and technical fields (Vaillant, 2004).

6.1 *Feminization of the Workforce and Professionalism*

One characteristic of ECE specialists in the countries studied is the feminization of the profession. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there are far more female than male teachers at this level of education: virtually 100 per cent in some countries (such as Chile and Trinidad and Tobago, where 99 per cent of teachers are women). It should be noted that women are also in the majority at other levels of the education system (primary and secondary school). The number of male teachers increases proportionately at the higher levels of education, where they generally account for a third of the workforce.

The national discussion groups of some of the countries reviewed – Argentina, Chile and Peru – attribute this feminization to the male chauvinism of Latin American culture. Peru's national discussion group states that feminization is a problem that must be addressed not only in training programmes, but also through discussion of existing cultural stereotypes and prejudices in Latin America, such as the chauvinist attitude that men should not look after children. Chile's national discussion group also recognizes that the male chauvinist culture predominates among Latin America and Caribbean fathers, mothers and guardians, who believe that children are at greater risk of sexual abuse if their teachers are men (p. 5).

The feminization of teaching is not limited to the region. As UNESCO (UNESCO, 2015a) has noted, the problem has been widely recognized throughout the world and, since the 1960s, steps have been taken to address it. In the European countries, for example, the shortage of men in the field of ECCE is acknowledged but, unlike Latin America, the region has seen considerable debate on the topic for over 20 years (Korintus & Moss, 2004; Peeters, 2013) and various policy and technical measures, adopted with a view to dismantling the gender-based professional model, are producing a more heterogeneous workforce (Cameron, 2006).

In line with this European trend, some countries in the region (Argentina, Colombia and Chile), through their respective national discussion groups, have recognized the need to counter these assumptions (Faure, 1958; Montecinos, 1996) and to provide occasions for discussion and awareness-raising in that regard. Those who call for combating gender stereotypes use various arguments: (1) the presence of men in schools and child care centres serves as an example for parents by demonstrating that childhood education is not limited to women; (2) ECE is habitually burdened with stereotypes about women that do a disservice to fathers; male teachers empathize with them and keep them actively involved in their children's education; (3) teaching teams that include both men and women allow for reciprocity in professional training with regard to teaching practices; and (4) the presence of male teachers facilitates progress towards gender parity in other professions and in daily life (Cameron & Moss, 2007; Peeters & Eeckhout, 2003; Peeters, 2013).

The situation in Latin America and the Caribbean today is similar to that of Europe in the late 1980s: in Belgium, men accounted for 0.55 per cent of the workforce or one out of every 200 teachers (similar to Chile and Trinidad and Tobago today). In countries such as Finland, Spain, Sweden and Great Britain, 2 to 4 per cent of teachers and caregivers were men, making teaching the field with the highest percentage of women in those countries (similar to Brazil, Mexico and Peru today). The reports of the countries reviewed describe this situation without criticizing it or mentioning policies designed to change it. It should be noted that Guatemala has recently begun to include men in the country's ECE training programmes, specifically in the intercultural and intercultural-bilingual early childhood teacher training institutes. This strategy has not yet had an impact on gender parity although these schools are decentralized in remote parts of the country and, in many cases, provide the only opportunity for professional advancement in the area (see Table 7).

In the 1990s, however, various European initiatives were launched in order to establish a gender-neutral professional model (Cameron et al., 1999b; Jensen, 1998; Meleaday & Broadhead, 2002; Peeters, 2013). To that end, various networks of early childhood workers, academics, researchers and policy-makers were developed in order to advocate for and publicize a gender-sensitive model for the profession. This social and professional movement is now credited with increasing the percentage of European men in ECE.

Table 7: Percentage of Female Teachers in Seven of the Countries Reviewed, by Level of Education, Based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)

Country	Early childhood education	Primary education	Lower secondary education	Upper secondary education
	ISCED level 0 ¹¹	ISCED level 1	ISCED level 2	ISCED level 3
	Female teachers (%)	Female teachers (%)	Female teachers (%)	Female teachers (%)
Argentina	95 ¹²	80	65	65
Brazil	97	91	73	62
Chile	99	78 (includes teachers at ISCED levels 1 and 2)		55
Colombia	-	78	-	50
Mexico	97	66	50	44
Peru	97	65	-	44
Trinidad and Tobago	99	79	N/A	65

► *Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of data provided by the countries that participated in this study (UNESCO-OREALC, 2013).*

In addition to the job insecurity associated with fields in which women predominate (ECLAC-FAO-UN Women-UNDP-ILO, 2013), two factors should be considered when developing policies aimed at reducing the percentage of female early childhood teachers in the region. First, research has shown that the men who enter this profession are, as a rule, not highly trained. Miller (Miller, 2008a) states that efforts to increase the number of male teachers have been most successful in countries such as Scotland,

¹¹ ISCED level 0 corresponds to the pre-primary level under UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). ISCED belongs to the United Nations International Family of Economic and Social Classifications, which are applied in statistics worldwide with the purpose of assembling, compiling and analysing cross-nationally comparable data. ISCED is the reference classification for organizing education programmes and related qualifications by education levels and fields. ISCED is a product of international agreement and adopted formally by the General Conference of UNESCO Member States.

¹² This information, provided by Argentina's national discussion group, is based on data from the 2004 census.

where specialized training is not required. In 2012, the country launched a recruitment campaign entitled Men in Childcare, through which 1,500 poorly qualified teachers were hired and trained, increasing the number of male teachers by 4 per cent (Spence, 2012). Second, only an image or identity that is based on thorough, extensive professional training and a complex knowledge base can counter the stigma associated with the role of “mother” in working with children (Cameron & Moss, 2007; Peeters, 2007). However, research has shown that this increasing professionalism is not reflected in the number of men who enter the field. Although attention has been drawn to the importance and complexity of the profession, the masculinity and sexuality of male teachers are still called into question (by suspecting them of being gay or child abusers) (Farquhar et al., 2006; Simpson, 2005).

In raising the issue of “defeminization”, this document does not simply propose that men should be included in the workforce, but rather that sexist stereotypes and the assumption that women belong in the classroom should be viewed critically. According to Argentina’s national discussion group, this problem in the teaching profession can be solved not by increasing the number of male kindergarten teachers, but by providing opportunities for discussion and awareness raising on these issues during initial and continuing training (p. 4).

Both the experience of Europe and the position taken by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2007) highlight the importance of challenging the feminization of ECE. In order to achieve greater gender parity among early childhood teachers, the professional model based on the idea of teachers as substitute mothers (Cameron et al., 1999b; Dahlberg et al., 2005) should be called into question and awareness raised that both men and women must be beneficiaries of and collaborators in ECE (UNESCO, 2015a). To that end, the Latin American and Caribbean countries will need to view the professionalism of teachers through ongoing training as a highly complex task grounded in multiple gender identities and in ongoing debate and dialogue. Experience and accumulated knowledge show that such a profound change can only be achieved if the new professional model is introduced during initial teacher training, reinforced through professional networks of male teachers who are already working in the education system, and encouraged by hiring men as classroom teachers and administrators (Cremer & Krabel, 2010; Mannaert, 2006; Rolfe, 2005).

6.2 Geographic Areas in Which Early Childhood Teachers Work

According to the information gathered, most teachers at this level work in urban areas, which have the largest number of initial education institutions and inhabitants.

This concentration of teachers in urban areas is a pattern found in most Latin American and Caribbean countries; as Table 8 shows, that percentage is 90 per cent in Chile and Brazil, an average of 80 per cent in other countries and 62 per cent in Venezuela. This may be explained by the fact that most children live in urban areas and most educational institutions are located there.

Table 8: Distribution of Early Childhood Teachers by Geographic Area in Six Countries¹³

Country	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
Brazil	88	12
Chile	90,3	9,7
Colombia	84 Early Education 76 preschool	16 Early Education 24 preschool
Mexico	81,3	18,7
Peru	79	21
Venezuela	62	38

► **Source:** Prepared by the authors on the basis of data provided by the countries that participated in this study.

Although, as in other Latin America and the Caribbean countries, the majority of Peru's teachers (79 per cent) work in urban areas, the country reports that the number of early education teachers has grown most rapidly in rural areas with an increase of 107 per cent over the past five years. However, Ochoa states that in Peru, non-formal programmes serve rural areas with less qualified community teachers and caregivers; this has an impact on the quality of service (provided to the poorest children (p. 17). According to Quintanilla, the situation in Mexico is quite different: the majority of teachers with a high school diploma work in rural public schools with a single teacher; in other public schools, fewer than 3.6 per cent of teachers have a high school diploma.

While the reports of most of the countries reviewed do not explain why teachers are concentrated in urban areas, Vaillant (2004) attributes the phenomenon to the fact that length of service is a key requirement for promotion and the basis for assigning positions. In most Latin American countries, the teachers with the most experience, and therefore the highest ratings and the highest rank in the hierarchy, are given priority in choosing where they wish to work. Thus, the more experienced teachers are concentrated in the schools that most teachers prefer – those located in central urban areas, which have the fewest social problems and where the children are from privileged social sectors – while schools and non-conventional programmes in poor rural areas with at-risk children are left with teachers who, because they are less experienced and less qualified, cannot choose where to work.

In Ochoa's opinion, Peru is an example of this situation, described above by Vaillant (2004) for each region, the Regional Directorate of Education (DRE) announces the number of early childhood teachers appointed that year and the surpluses. Most teachers refuse appointment to rural areas because they themselves are from urban

¹³ In preparing this table, the authors were unable to obtain information from the other countries considered in the study.

areas even though, according to the Office of the Quality Improvement Circle and the Ministry of Education's records of expenditure, there is a surplus of teachers there. In the Cajamarca region, for example, until 2011 most teachers refused to work in rural areas, preferring to take administrative positions in the Regional Directorate of Education (DRE). As stated above, rural areas are served by non-formal programmes with less qualified community teachers and caregivers; this has an impact on the quality of service provided to the poorest children (p. 17).

Thus, the challenge for countries in the region is to consider mechanisms for achieving an equitable distribution of early childhood teachers. It is urgent to develop measures for assigning better-qualified and higher-rated teachers to the areas most in need of high quality services in order to compensate for inequality and extreme poverty. As the International Labour Organization (ILO) has stated, a key public policy challenge is to reduce the professional isolation of teachers in rural areas (ILO, 2012).

6.3 Age of Early Childhood Teachers

There is a significant difference between the ages of early childhood teachers who work with children from birth to age 3 and age 4 to 6. Both in the OECD countries and in Latin America and the Caribbean, the younger children have teachers who are younger, less experienced and less qualified while the older children tend to have teachers who are more qualified, more experienced and older. The average age of teachers at this level is 37 in Argentina, Brazil and Colombia and 40 in Chile and Mexico (see Table 9).

Table 9: Average Age of Early Childhood Teachers in Five Countries¹⁴

Country	Average age
Argentina	37
Brazil	37
Chile	41
Colombia	36
Mexico	40

► **Source:** Prepared by the authors based on data provided by the countries that participated in this study.

According to Pardo and Adlerstein, although the average age of teachers is higher in Chile than in other Latin American countries for which information is available, it is important to note that this average has fallen gradually over the past 10 years with the addition of over 12,000 recent graduates in ECE; 43 per cent of teachers have fewer than 10 years of service and only 10 per cent have been teaching for more than 30 years.

¹⁴ In preparing this table, the authors were unable to obtain information from the other countries that participated in the study.

In Argentina, there is a notable age difference between public and private school teachers. The majority of private school teachers are between 25 and 29 years of age, followed by those aged 30 to 34. Together, these two groups account for almost half of all teachers in this sector. The average age of public school teachers is higher with the majority aged 35 to 39 and the second largest group aged 40 to 44. This prevalence of young, inexperienced teachers in the private sector, as compared to the older, more experienced teachers in the public sector, reflects the different working conditions and regulations of the two systems. Presumably many teachers begin their careers in the private sector, where hiring is more direct, there are fewer requirements and the working conditions are less favourable, and then move to the public sector if they are able to do so.

This pattern of young private sector teachers and older public sector teachers is followed in Peru. Public sector early childhood teachers are governed by the Education Reform Act (2012), which applies to all public school teachers at all levels. Job security is high for this career path with many teachers continuing to work until they reach the retirement age of 65. Thus, early childhood teachers in the public sector have longer careers. The situation is different in the private sector, where priority is given to hiring young teachers because of the physical effort required by ECE; job turnover is rapid and employment contracts are renewed annually.

As Table 10 shows, except in Trinidad and Tobago, where virtually all teachers are employed by private schools, most teachers work in public schools. In nearly all of the countries reviewed, about two thirds of the workforce is employed by the public sector. This is logical; since most children from birth to age 6 are enrolled in these countries' public schools, the majority of teachers are also public sector employees. This means that the ratio of public to private school teachers is consistent with the proportion of students in each of the two sectors.

Table 10: Percentage of Early Childhood Teachers in Public And Private Schools, by Country

Country	Public (%)	Private (%)
Argentina	64.5	35.5
Brazil	68	32
Chile*	85	15
Cuba	100	0
Peru	57	43
Trinidad and Tobago	2	98
Venezuela	20	80

* The term "public schools" also includes private schools that receive state funding; "private schools" are those that receive no state funding in any form.

► **Source: Prepared by the authors based on data provided by the countries that participated in this study.**

6.4 Level of Certification of Early Childhood Teachers

In most of the countries studied, the current education legislation requires teachers to have a professional qualification in order to work in the field of ECE. According to Abuchaim, in Brazil, one of the countries that provided data that can be used to calculate the percentage of early childhood teachers who are certified, early childhood teachers are required only to have a diploma from a secondary-level teacher training school; no specialization is required. Nevertheless, 62 per cent of the country's preschool teachers and 59 per cent of its early education teachers have a professional diploma and of those, 92 per cent have attended undergraduate university courses.

Colombia is one of the countries with the lowest percentage of qualified teachers: only 19 per cent have a professional diploma for early education. This is explained by the fact that the requirements for teaching at this level are different; the quality standards for comprehensive ECC include vocational teachers, who account for 32 per cent of teachers. In addition, 59 per cent of the country's preschool teachers have a professional qualification, the lowest percentage of any of the Latin American and Caribbean countries considered in this study.

As seen from Table 11, the percentage of teachers with a professional qualification is high – over 75 per cent – in most of the countries. Particularly noteworthy are Cuba and Trinidad and Tobago (100 per cent) and Chile (99 per cent). However, a comparison between early childhood teachers and teachers at other levels of education shows that the former are less well educated, younger and more likely to come from disadvantaged social groups (poor, black, indigenous, etc.) and, although they work longer hours, are less well paid. In addition, according to Peru's national discussion group, early childhood teachers are underemployed; many teachers with university degrees are working as aides or assistants (p. 7).

Table 11: Percentage of Early Childhood Teachers with a Professional Qualification¹⁵

Country	Professional qualification (%)
Argentina	90.1
Brazil	60
Chile	99
Colombia	19 Early Education 59 Preschool Education
Costa Rica	79
Cuba	100
Mexico	84.5
Peru	76,9
Trinidad and Tobago	100
Venezuela	95

► Source: Prepared by the authors based on data provided by the countries that participated in this study

6.5 Professional Organizations and Trade Unions in the Sector

It is now widely recognized that members of labour unions, professional associations or equivalent organizations are more likely to provide high quality ECE because they are better paid, have better working conditions and receive professional support. These institutions may also play an important role in training and policy-making.

Six of the countries that participated in this study provided information on early childhood teachers' unions. Unfortunately, none of the countries keeps detailed statistics on the percentage of teachers who are members of these organizations, their impact on public policy-making or the problems most often encountered by teachers in each country.

According to the available information, these organizations have, relatively speaking, more influence on policy in Argentina, Brazil and Peru. In Argentina, however, Brailovsky

¹⁵ It is important to note that the percentage shown in the table reflects the proportion of early childhood teachers with a professional qualification or post-secondary education. This percentage does not mean that the teachers in question are working directly with children in a classroom. While there is little information on that point, the experts believe that many of these professional teachers occupy administrative, management or supervisory posts outside the classroom and do not work directly with children.

has found no mention of early childhood teachers' unions. The existing trade unions are widely dispersed, different from one another and organizationally complex. Early childhood teachers are members of various national trade unions and of many organizations at the secondary and post-secondary levels, which often have more influence on policy than their institutional status would suggest. For example, it is interesting to note that in Buenos Aires, several trade unions are involved in the annual salary negotiations and each province has at least one such union; this suggests that they have considerable impact on policy-making. Early childhood teachers have two organizations of their own: the National Union of Early Childhood Teachers' Associations, which endeavours to increase the professionalism of teaching and to disseminate innovative pedagogical methods and experience and the basic values of early childhood teaching philosophies, such as play-based and student-centred learning and artistic expression; and the World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP), which promotes initial education and the expansion of its services and content.

According to Ochoa, several Peruvian trade unions with different objectives include early childhood teachers. The Single Trade Union of Peruvian Education Workers (SUTEP) has few such teachers among its members; it has the right to strike and to negotiate with the education authorities. The Peruvian Teachers' Union seeks to increase the status of the teaching profession, raise public awareness of its value, improve the quality of education and promote the country's development. The Management Committee of the Education Workers' Assistance and Encouragement Fund offers many services such as loans, health care, a recreation centre, funerals with wakes, a cultural centre and insurance. Lastly, the Teachers' Pension Fund efficiently and transparently manages member contributions to provide them with a decent pension and disability and life insurance after retirement.

As Abuchaim notes, Brazil has many teachers' unions although their exact number is unknown. The National Confederation of Education Workers has 48 affiliates. Generally speaking, early childhood teachers belong to the same trade unions as primary school teachers. Larger cities have several trade unions. The power wielded by these organizations is evidenced by the fact that teachers' salaries and professional careers are taken into consideration in policy discussions on public financing for education.

According to Buitrago, Colombia's associations include private kindergartens and early childhood schools not only as members, but as an information network. However, there are no data on the number of early education teachers who are members of associations, organizations or similar groups. The primary representative associations for preschool teachers are the Colombian Teachers' Federation (FECODE), its national affiliates and the Bogotá Teachers' Association.

Thornhill reports that in Trinidad and Tobago, there is only one teachers' union: the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association. Because it is not part of the formal education system, it is not authorized to negotiate on labour issues; moreover, the salaries of school principals are set and non-negotiable. It does, however, address issues relating to working conditions.

According to Pardo and Adlerstein, early childhood teachers in Chile belong to various trade unions, some of them national (the Early Childhood Teachers' Union and the

Chilean Teachers' Union, which covers all teachers) and others that are associated with specific public sector institutions (the two staff associations of the National Board of Kindergartens). Unfortunately, these organizations have little political power and have had minimal impact on policies affecting early childhood education in general and early education teachers in particular.

A comparison of the situation in the region with that of the European countries shows, for example, that the percentage of teachers who join trade unions in Europe varies significantly from one country to another (from about 80 per cent in Denmark and Sweden to less than 20 per cent in Spain). There are also differences in their bargaining power; in the Netherlands, for example, teachers' unions are in a strong negotiating position and their agreements apply to workers whereas English unions are weak and collective bargaining is not well established (Cameron & Moss, 2007).

6.6 Critical issues concerning early childhood teachers' sociodemographic characteristics

6.6.1 Workforce Distribution Imbalances

These countries are facing the challenge of not only recruiting good early childhood teachers, but achieving a better balance in the profile and distribution of the workforce in order to meet growing needs and improve the quality of their teachers. Some of the difficult issues to be addressed are the need for gender equity in the profession, the distribution of trained and untrained teachers in rural and urban areas, the recognition of ethnic and linguistic diversity balanced with the desire for common standards, and the tension between age and experience.

The predominance of women among early childhood teachers is not exclusive to the Latin American and Caribbean countries, but it is taken for granted in the region. Studies have shown the importance of taking a critical look at this imbalance with a view to equity and to equal learning opportunity for students. Assumptions about the role of women and girls in the classroom tend to perpetuate bias with regard to children's learning and development.

In the countries studied, the level of teacher certification varies inequitably, depending on the part of the country in which they work, their age and their professional development. Clearly, non-formal services and programmes, which generally work with younger children and are located in rural areas, have fewer qualified teachers (usually trained community workers and vocational early education teachers). Even in countries such as Chile, Cuba and Trinidad and Tobago, where almost all teachers have professional qualifications, doubts arise as to the quality of the training required for teacher certification and its value for student achievement.

Increasing the professionalism of the ECE workforce is an inescapable challenge for policy-makers in the Latin America and Caribbean countries. In order to dismantle gender barriers, it is essential to introduce specific requirements for the teaching profession in order to counter its association with mothers and caregivers. As Europe's experience has

shown, standards, networks, procedures and institutions that require early childhood teachers to acquire a body of scientific (not merely technical) knowledge may attract men to this profession, currently dominated by women, and dispel doubts about its epistemological and scientific quality (Cameron, 2006; Cameron & Moss, 2007). It is to be hoped that this will lead to the increased involvement of fathers, democratize teachers' working conditions, create a new professional identity based on more than one gender identity and provide children with new and enriching learning opportunities (Cannella, 1997).

6.6.2 *Low Level of Trade Union Membership among Early Childhood Teachers*

The few international studies of early childhood teachers' organizations show that few of these teachers are members of professional organizations or teachers' unions. With the exception of New Zealand's union, which has a significant impact on policy-making in the country, most of these groups have little influence (Dalli, 2010). It has been said that in most countries, the lack of coordination among early childhood teachers as a profession hinders efforts to build a consistent early childhood system (Goffin, 2012).

One interpretation of this international pattern is that early childhood teachers' failure to organize is, in part, a consequence of their significant fragmentation as a group owing to the many forms that this type of education takes. This has led to numerous labour complaints and an equally wide variety of channels for lodging them. The situation is also a result of the lack of esprit de corps among early childhood teachers, who have no common understanding of the purpose of their work (Goffin, 2012). It has also been suggested that these teachers have not organized because – unlike, for example, politicians, academics and employers – they have traditionally had little interest in policy issues affecting them (Ailwood, 2007). It has been said that in order to overcome the last of these problems, broad, strong leadership in the field must be developed in order to unify early childhood teachers as an organized profession capable of making its own demands (Goffin, 2013). These proposals seem relevant to the countries considered here in light of the low percentage of membership in professional organizations and teachers' unions among early childhood teachers.

7 Initial Training of Early Childhood Teachers

It is now widely recognized that the work of educating young children in an institutional context is highly complex; the traditional view that the primary requirement is women's maternal nature and that few skills are needed is falling by the wayside, replaced by a gradual understanding of the importance of specialized training for early childhood teachers. As a result, many countries throughout the world are pursuing policies that promote the initial and continuing training of teachers at this level (Rust & Burcham, 2013).

This trend is based on evidence of the correlation between specialized professional training and child development. Specifically, teachers with four years of post-secondary education tend to be more aware of children's individual characteristics and better able to provide them with an enriching experience (Barnett, 2003, 2011; Fukkink & Lont, 2007).

Clearly, the mere possession of credentials does not imply better pedagogical practice, which depends on the quality of the training programme. Unfortunately, because there have been few studies on the initial training of early childhood teachers, there is little evidence in that regard although some general lessons have been learnt. Moreover, it is difficult to develop a high quality programme, which requires the coordination of many different factors such as programme content, composition of the teaching faculty, institutional context and legal regulations (Hyson et al., 2013).

This chapter describes the initial training provided to early childhood teachers in the region, noting at the outset that the participating countries in this study provided little information in that regard. The chapter is divided into four sections: the first describes the various teaching profiles that emerge from initial training programmes; the second covers the regulations governing these programmes; the third examines their curricula and the fourth identifies critical issues on the initial training of early childhood teachers based on an analysis of the countries that participated in this study.

7.1 *Types of Initial Teacher Training*

An analysis of the initial training of early childhood teachers in the countries studied shows considerable variation in professional profiles with regard to level of training required, types of training institution and terminology. Table 12 provides an overview of this situation, which is examined in detail below.

Table 12: Overview of Early Childhood Teaching in Latin American and Caribbean Countries

Country	Term used to describe the profession	Level of training required	Training institution
Argentina	• <i>Profesor/a de educación inicial</i> (Early education teacher)	• Bachelor's degree in education	• Universities
		• Non-university post-secondary qualification in ECE	• Teacher training institutes
Brazil	• <i>Professora de educação básica</i> (Elementary education teacher)	• Studies at a secondary-level teacher training school	• Secondary-level teacher training schools
		• Bachelor's degree in education	• Universities • Post-secondary teacher training institutes
Chile	• <i>Educadora de párvulos</i> (Early childhood educator)	• Specialized post-secondary qualification, with or without a bachelor's degree	• Universities
		• Non-university post-secondary qualification with a specialization in early childhood education	• Teacher training institutes ¹⁶
Colombia	• <i>Maestra en educación preescolar</i> (Preschool educator)	• Bachelor's degree in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool education • Childhood education • Child pedagogy • ECE 	• Universities
		• Professional qualification in general education, without a bachelor's degree	• Universities
		• Study at a general teacher training institute	• Teacher training institutes
		• Specialized post-secondary vocational qualification	• The National Training Service, in partnership with the Colombian Family Welfare Institute

¹⁶ As explained in section 7.1.1 below, initial training for these teachers has been provided solely by universities since 2015.

Costa Rica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Docente de educación preescolar</i> (Preschool teacher) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized university qualification, with or without a bachelor's degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities
Cuba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Educadora para la educación preescolar</i> (Preschool teacher) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary school diploma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training schools
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree in education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities
Dominican Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Docente</i> (Teacher) • <i>Educadora</i> (Educator) • <i>Profesora</i> (Teacher) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized bachelor's degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University faculties of education • Teacher training universities
El Salvador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Profesora en educación inicial y parvularia</i> (Early education and kindergarten teacher) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree in education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Profesora de educación inicial y parvularia</i> (Early education and kindergarten teacher) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized university qualification, without a bachelor's degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maestra de primera infancia</i> (Early childhood educator) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized non-university post-secondary qualification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-university post-secondary institutions
Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maestra de educación preprimaria</i> (Pre-primary educator) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized secondary school diploma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training schools
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maestra de educación infantil bilingüe intercultural</i> (Bilingual and intercultural early childhood educator) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private secondary schools
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maestra de educación infantil intercultural</i> (Intercultural early childhood educator) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative institutes • National single-sex institutes
Honduras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maestra de educación prebásica</i> (Pre-primary educator) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary school diploma in education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training schools
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized bachelor's degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training institutes

Honduras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maestra de educación prebásica</i> (Pre-primary educator) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary school diploma in education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training schools
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized bachelor's degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training institutes
Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Educación infantil</i> (Early childhood education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-secondary or university bachelor's degree in ECE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training institutes under the Ministry of Education • Universities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Educación preescolar</i> (Preschool education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-secondary or university bachelor's degree in preschool education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training institutes under the Ministry of Education • The National Teacher Training University
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Estimulación temprana</i> (Early stimulation) • <i>Desarrollo integral infantil</i> (Holistic child development) • <i>Puericultura</i> (Childcare) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree in ECE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private universities
Nicaragua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maestra de educación primaria con mención en educación inicial (preescolar)</i> (Preprimary teacher, specialized in early education (preschool)) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized post-secondary qualification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training institutes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized bachelor's degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Autonomous University of Nicaragua

Panama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Profesora de educación preescolar</i> (Preschool education teacher) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree in preschool education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities
Peru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Docente o profesora de educación inicial</i> (Early education teacher) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree in ECE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-secondary qualification in ECE, without a bachelor's degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-secondary teaching institutes and schools
Trinidad and Tobago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree in Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-secondary certificate in ECE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-university post-secondary institutions
Venezuela	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Docentes de educación inicial</i> (Early childhood teacher) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized university qualification, without a bachelor's degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training universities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University-level vocational qualification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University-level institutes and colleges

► **Source:** Prepared by the authors on the basis of data provided by the countries that participated in this study

Note: In interpreting this table, it should be borne in mind that for cells in the same row that are of the same height (unsplit), there is a one-to-one relationship between the categories. In rows containing horizontally split cells, the categories in the smaller (split) cells are all subsumed within the category of the larger (unsplit) cell in the same row.

It is interesting to note that variety in the professional profiles used to describe early childhood teachers is not limited to Latin America; it is also found in other parts of the world, including Europe and the United States, and is thus a feature of the profession at the international level. In particular, these regions also provide training at both the secondary and the post-secondary level and have a variety of institutions that train early childhood teachers, depending on the level of training required (Eurydice, 2015; Maxwell & Early, 2006). However, the growing body of research on this issue shows increasingly widespread agreement that initial training should be provided by post-secondary institutions and that the training requirements should be raised to this level in order to improve the quality of ECE (Hyson et al., 2013; Oberhuemer et al., 2010).

7.1.1 *Levels of Training*

An examination of the 16 countries considered in this study shows that the level of training required of early childhood teachers varies from country to country and, in some cases, within a country. Taken as a whole, these levels include specialized non-university post-secondary training, university training without a specialization in ECE, university training with a specialization in ECE and secondary school training with a specialization in ECE.

On the one hand, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago require a university degree with a specialization in ECE. In Costa Rica, this process takes two to six years depending on the institution and whether it grants a bachelor's degree. The Dominican Republic requires a four-year bachelor's degree while Trinidad and Tobago's bachelor's programme lasts three years.

El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and Venezuela also require university or other post-secondary training with a specialization in ECE, which may or may not culminate in a bachelor's degree. In Chile, this training generally takes four years (five years in two universities) and, in the universities, culminates in a bachelor's degree. Prior to 2015, the country's initial training for early childhood teachers was provided by both universities and non-university post-secondary institutions; since then, the law has required a university degree (Chile - Contraloría General de la República, 2014). In El Salvador, training lasts from three to five years and may or may not culminate in a bachelor's degree. In Mexico, the four-year training programme culminates in a bachelor's degree. In Nicaragua, training lasts from two and a half to five years with the five-year programme culminating in a bachelor's degree. In Peru, a five-year bachelor's programme is required and in Venezuela, training is provided by universities or university-level institutes or colleges and takes five years.

Argentina requires post-secondary training with a specialization in ECE, usually provided through a four-year programme offered by non-degree-granting post-secondary institutions; a few universities also offer bachelor's degrees.

The situation is different in Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala and Honduras, where the required training is offered at both the post-secondary and the secondary levels. For example, Brazil requires either training at a secondary-level teacher training school or a four-year bachelor's degree, preferably in education; however, a few early childhood teachers have qualifications in other areas. Similarly, Colombia's requirements include training at three different levels: a non-university post-secondary vocational certificate with a specialization in education or child development; a two- or three-year degree from a post-secondary teacher training institute; a bachelor's degree with a specialization in ECE, usually earned over a period of five years; and at least one year of training in general education without a degree. Cuba requires four years of training at the secondary level or a five-year bachelor's degree with a specialization. In Guatemala, a secondary school diploma is required; since 2015, some universities have begun to offer two years of initial training in ECE, but this is not a requirement for teaching. In Honduras, the four-year initial training programme for early childhood teachers is provided by both secondary schools and universities.

Brazil, Colombia y Cuba are raising the level of training required of early childhood teachers and reducing the number of training institutions below the post-secondary level. In Brazil, teachers are now trained at the post-secondary level and there are fewer secondary school teacher training institutions. Similarly, Colombia is encouraging teachers in the so-called “transitional” tracks (non-conventional community-based programmes), known as “community mothers”, to receive post-secondary vocational training in education or child development. Cuba requires teachers who were trained at the secondary level to enrol in universities as soon as they begin to teach in the hope that all of them will earn university degrees.

In addition to the current legislation, it should be borne in mind that, during this transitional period, it is probable that in most Latin American countries, some teachers have the level of training that is currently required while others have the lower levels that were accepted when they began to teach (Diker, 2001).

The differences in the levels of training required for early childhood teaching is far from specific to Latin America and the Caribbean; they are also found in other parts of the world, including the United States and several European countries, which also have a variety of training requirements that range from short courses to master’s degrees. Studies on these countries have noted that a lack of post-secondary teacher training limits the quality of ECE programmes and, in fact, several countries have been increasing their training requirements and are beginning to require at least a four-year university degree (Hyson et al., 2013; Oberhuemer et al., 2010).

This variety of profiles is characteristic of early childhood teachers not only in Latin America, but in many countries throughout the world and has been linked to a growing understanding of the specific characteristics of this profession (Oberhuemer, 2005). It has also been linked to societies’ many different concepts of early childhood teaching, including the provision of basic care and preparation for school (Moss, 2006).

7.1.2 Training Institutions

In the 16 countries analysed, the initial training of early childhood teachers is provided by a variety of institutions owing in part, though not entirely, to differences in the level of training required.

In Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic¹⁷ and Trinidad and Tobago, initial training is offered only by universities.

As Brailovsky notes, in Argentina, there are three types of post-secondary training institutions: universities, post-secondary teacher training institutes and teacher training schools.

According to Buitrago’s report, in Colombia training is provided by three types of institutions: universities, post-secondary teacher training institutes and post-secondary

¹⁷ In the Dominican Republic, the principal public teacher training institution is the Salomé Ureña Teacher Training Institute (ISFODOSU), which is considered equivalent to a university because it grants bachelor’s degrees.

vocational training institutions. The first of these grant specialized bachelor's degrees, the second teaching degrees and the third certificates in ECE.

Quintanilla reports that in Mexico, training for early childhood teachers is provided by post-secondary teacher training institutes and universities, both of which grant bachelor's degrees in ECE.

In Guatemala, initial training is offered by institutes, private secondary schools, secondary-level teacher training schools and, since 2015, some universities.

In Honduras as well, training is provided by secondary-level teacher training schools and university-level teacher training institutes with the latter granting bachelor's degrees in preschool education. Nicaragua also offers initial training at post-secondary teacher training institutes and at universities.

In El Salvador, initial training is offered by universities and other institutes of higher education. In Venezuela, it is provided by universities that grant bachelor's degrees with a specialization in the subject, university-level teacher training institutions that grant a qualification other than a bachelor's degree, and university-level institutes and colleges that grant university-level vocational qualifications.

According to Pardo and Adlerstein and Ochoa, early childhood teacher training in Chile and Peru is provided by universities and other post-secondary institutions. The former grant bachelor's degrees in ECE and the latter grant a specialized professional qualification, but not a degree.

Abuchaim reports that in Brazil, training in early childhood teaching is provided by three types of institutions: universities and other post-secondary institutions (granting bachelor's degrees) and secondary-level teacher training schools (granting diplomas). In Cuba, the initial training for early childhood teachers is offered by two types of institutions: secondary-level teacher training schools and universities.

An interesting trend is developing in this group of countries: Brazil and Chile are attempting to limit training for early childhood teachers to universities, promoting training that culminates in a bachelor's degree. As Abuchaim notes, Brazil has endeavoured to concentrate teacher training in the universities and, as a result, post-secondary teacher training institutes are being closed or transformed into education programmes; few of them remain in operation. In Chile, under a recent legal decree, professional institutions are prohibited from offering initial teacher training programmes beyond 2015; henceforth, teacher training will be offered exclusively by universities.

The variety of institutions that provide training in ECE is also found in other parts of the world, including the United States and several European countries, depending on the level of training required. As will be seen below, studies have concluded that initial training should be provided only by post-secondary institutions with the goal of raising training standards to this level (Hyson et al., 2013).

7.1.3 Denominaciones de la profesión

Among the 16 countries studied, as well as within three of them, a variety of words for early childhood teachers are used and these do not necessarily refer to subsidiary specialities or approaches.

Nine of these countries use only one term for early childhood teachers, which is different from that of any of the other countries. They are called *profesoras de educación inicial* in Argentina; *professoras de educação básica* in Brazil; *docente de educación preescolar* in Costa Rica; *educadoras para la educación preescolar* in Cuba; *educadoras de párvulos* in Chile; *maestras de educación inicial* in Nicaragua; *docentes* or *profesoras de educación inicial* in Peru; early childhood teachers in Trinidad and Tobago; and *docentes de educación inicial* in Venezuela.

El Salvador, on the other hand, has two different terms for early childhood teachers: *maestras de primera infancia* and *profesoras de educación inicial y parvularia*. In Guatemala, they are known as *maestras de educación preprimaria*, *maestras de educación infantil intercultural* or *maestras de educación infantil bilingüe intercultural* if their training was received at the secondary level; as *profesoras de educación inicial y preprimaria* if they have a professional qualification but not a bachelor's degree; and as *licenciadas en educación inicial y preprimaria* if they received university training.

In Colombia, there are four terms for these teachers: *educadora de preescolar*, *educadora infantil*, *educadora de pedagogía infantil* and *educación para la primera infancia*. Mexico also uses different terms for specializations, depending on the age of the children: *educadora de educación infantil* (birth to age 4) and *educadora de preescolar* (age 3 to 5). The other terms used in the country correspond to differences in focus during training: *estimulación temprana* (early stimulation), *desarrollo integral infantil* (holistic child development) and *puericultura* (child care). The Dominican Republic has three terms: *docente*, *educadora* and *profesora*.

International studies have given passing consideration to the variety of terms used to describe early childhood teachers, suggesting that they may reflect different concepts of early childhood teaching as a profession (Oberhuemer et al., 2010).

7.2 Regulations Governing Initial Training

An analysis of the countries that participated in this study shows that all of them have established regulatory mechanisms for the initial training of early childhood teachers. As Table 13 shows, the establishment of admission requirements is the most commonly used regulatory mechanism in these countries. As will be seen in the following sections, the mechanisms identified tend to be limited in so far as they are not very stringent and have little impact.

Table 13: Mechanisms for Regulating the Training of Early Childhood Teachers in Latin American and Caribbean Countries

Country	Admission requirements	Accreditation	Another mechanisms
Argentina	√	x	√
Brazil	√	x	√
Colombia	√	√	x
Costa Rica	x	-	-
Chile	√	√	√
Cuba	√	-	-
El Salvador	√	-	-
Guatemala	√	-	-
Honduras	√	-	-
Mexico	√	x	x
Nicaragua	√	-	-
Panama	√	-	-
Peru	√	√	x
Dominican Republic	√	-	-
Trinidad and Tobago	√	√	x
Venezuela	x	-	x

Legend:

- √ Established as a regulatory mechanism
- x Not established as a regulatory mechanism
- No information gathered for this study

Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of data provided by the countries that participated in this study

In order to properly understand the difficulty of regulating the initial training of early childhood teachers in the region, it must be borne in mind that, historically, the field has been subject to little regulation throughout the world; only since the 1980s have comparatively higher standards and training requirements comparable to those that apply to other teachers begun to be imposed (Spodek & Saracho, 1990).

More recent studies have concluded that the quality of initial training is related to its certification through an accreditation system since this ensures that its curriculum

content and structure and institutional resources (including the composition of its teaching faculty) are adequate to provide at least a minimum level of high quality training (Bredenkamp & Goffin, 2013). Of course, the quality of initial training programmes for early childhood teachers does not depend solely on the mechanisms that regulate their structural components; institutional capacities and, specifically, the composition of faculty and the availability of teaching resources are also essential for initial training. The available evidence indicates that, generally speaking, training programmes for early childhood teachers overburden their faculty with teaching responsibilities, employ fewer full-time faculty members and have a higher student-professor ratio than other departments in the same institution. In addition, some studies suggest that these programmes' faculty members do not have sufficient expertise in the field (Hyson et al., 2013).

Unfortunately, there have been few studies on accreditation and its relationship to the quality of initial training for early childhood teachers at the international level (Hyson et al., 2013), which is the case in the countries analysed in this document. It would therefore be unwise to express strong opinions on the matter. In any event, an accreditation system that genuinely promotes quality in the initial training of early childhood teachers should be established.

In light of the absence of specific research on the regulation and training of early childhood teachers, it is useful to consider studies on the training of primary and secondary school teachers. One of these, the McKinsey Report, states that the world's best-performing school systems have made entry to teacher training highly competitive in order to attract strong candidates into the teaching profession (Barber & Mourshed, 2008).

Similarly, an analysis of mechanisms for regulating the quality of teacher training in the countries that participated in the Teacher Education and Development Study in Mathematics (TEDS-M)¹⁸ shows that the two countries with the highest scores (Taiwan Province of China and Singapore) had the most varied and rigorous systems of ensuring the quality of teacher training¹⁹ while the countries with the lowest scores (Chile and Georgia) had fewer and weaker arrangements (Ingvarson et al., 2013).

The situation of the high-performing countries in the field of education is quite different from that of Latin America, where initial teacher training is insufficiently regulated. For this reason, UNESCO has recommended that the mechanisms for entry into teaching be strengthened in the region (UNESCO-OREALC, 2013).

7.2.1 *Requisitos de ingreso*

With regard to the requirements for admission to programmes for the initial training of early childhood teachers, all of the countries except Costa Rica have admission requirements beyond completion of the previous level of study.

¹⁸ *The Teacher Education and Development Study in Mathematics (TEDS-M) was an international comparative study of primary and secondary school teachers. Its purpose was to examine how different countries had prepared their teachers to teach mathematics (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 2011).*

¹⁹ *In this study, arrangements for ensuring teacher quality were divided into three categories: recruitment and selection (including governance of recruitment, promotion of the attractiveness of teaching and selection standards); programme accreditation; and certification of graduates as ready to enter the teaching profession (Ingvarson et al., 2013).*

Argentina, Cuba, Nicaragua, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela have established requirements at the national level. Argentina has a single admission system whereby applicants for programmes for the initial training of early childhood teachers must meet three requirements: first, they must have a high school diploma; second, many of the country's administrative units require them to pass physical and psychological examinations to determine whether they meet the public health standards for teaching; and, third, they must take and pass a non-competitive introductory course. Cuba requires the completion of basic education, proper conduct and moral character, and an interview; for university training, applicants must also pass Cuba's higher education entrance examinations, which are different for graduates of secondary-level teacher training schools. Nicaragua has a two-track admission process: there are age and academic requirements for admission to the standard programme, while applicants to the practicum programme must already be teaching and meet a minimum academic requirement. Panama requires applicants to pass an entrance examination, an interview and an introductory course. Trinidad and Tobago's requirements for admission to programmes for the initial training of early childhood teachers include advanced academic training in five subjects, including mathematics, English and a subject aligned to the specific area of study chosen, or the country's Teachers' Diploma; some universities have additional requirements, such as a tertiary certificate in early childhood care and development. Venezuela has a national admission system that assesses aptitude for the profession.

In the remaining countries, the requirements vary according to the type of training institution; there are no national requirements. In Brazil, for example, applicants to programmes for the initial training of early childhood teachers are selected in two ways, depending of the type of training institution. Private institutions administer their own admission tests while public institutions may choose whether to administer their own tests or to use students' scores on the National Secondary School Examination as a selection mechanism.

In Mexico, admission to teacher training institutes – the type of institution for which information was available – requires passing an admission and placement examination with a minimum score and having a minimum grade average at the higher levels of secondary school. According to the country's national discussion group, this mechanism is insufficient since the students admitted to teacher training schools are poorly trained: they lack the linguistic and mathematical skills and general culture needed for higher education and, subsequently, for the teaching profession.

According to Buitrago, in Colombia, admission to the bachelor's degree programmes for which information is available requires proof of academic achievement as evidenced by the scores received on tests administered by the Colombian Educational Assessment Institute. In addition, public universities usually administer entrance examinations and private universities conduct group interviews.

Ochoa reports that in recent years, each of Peru's training institutions has established its own entrance requirements. Admission to teacher training institutes is regulated by

the Ministry of Education and takes two forms; the first, known as “normal admission”, involves a public competitive examination comprising three tests that assess various skills: general basic knowledge, personality (vocation for teaching) and aptitude while the second, known as “admission by waiver”, admits secondary school graduates who fall into several predefined categories.

In the Dominican Republic, admission to the teaching university – the only institution for which information is available – entails an entrance examination.

According to Pardo and Adlerstein, under Chilean law, the only requirement for admission to programmes for the initial training of early childhood teachers is a secondary school diploma. Consequently, about half of the country’s training institutions have no admission requirements while the others require a certain score on the national university entrance examination and good grades in secondary school.

In Guatemala, the national discussion group and the authorities, in their replies to the survey, report that the only requirement for admission to secondary-level teacher training schools is an interest in teaching. Applicants for university training must be teaching at the primary school level and each institution, particularly the private ones, sets its own requirements.

Honduras requires applicants to university to pass an entrance examination designed to verify that the applicant has the basic skills required for the bachelor’s programme, as well as interviews related to the field of study.

El Salvador’s requirements for admission to teacher training include a high school diploma, interviews, psychological tests and a grade on the national baccalaureate examination equal or greater to the average for entry to a bachelor’s degree programme.

Only in Brazil and Chile can the available information be used to evaluate the mechanisms for admission to ECE initial training programmes; in both countries, their selectivity is rated as low to moderate. In the case of Brazil, the data on the outcome of admissions procedures show that programmes for initial training in education are not among the more selective university programmes, as seen from the results of the national secondary school examination and the unified selection system. In Chile, the most selective institutions, which comprise only 10 per cent of all teacher training institutions, require a minimum score on the University Selection Examination (PSU); at the other extreme are the 51 per cent of the country’s teacher training institutions for which the only requirement for admission is a high school diploma.

7.2.2 Accreditation of Training Institutions

According to the available information, six of the countries analysed – Colombia, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago – have established accreditation systems for early childhood teacher training programmes.

According to Buitrago, it is striking that only Colombia requires that these programmes be accredited; the regulations governing university programmes state that they must be officially registered and certified as high quality. This register also regulates the establishment and operation of bachelor's programmes in preschool and specialized education, for which prior accreditation is required. In the case of post-secondary teacher training institutions, there is a process for verifying quality in various areas as a condition for authorizing these additional training programmes; their curricula must meet certain standards and they must implement agreements with universities and follow the programme accreditation procedures. No information on non-degree-granting and vocational training programmes was available.

Pardo and Adlerstein report that, since 1999, Chile has had a national system for verifying and improving the quality of higher education through accreditation procedures that certify a programme's operation and outcomes. However, like all teacher training programmes, those for the initial training of early childhood teachers are insufficiently regulated; accreditation is not required, which means that they may operate without being accredited. The percentage of these programmes that have been accredited since the accreditation system was introduced is low; 49 per cent have been accredited for four or more years (out of a maximum of seven). This situation is a source of concern and there is national consensus that the programmes with fewer than four years of accreditation are weak.

According to Guatemala's national discussion group, the country's only accreditation system for teacher training schools focuses on development and implementation of the national education plan without setting minimum quality standards.

Mexico's national discussion group reports that the regulations governing teacher training schools, particularly private and rural ones, do not allow for academic improvement. Thus, while accreditation systems are in place, the quality of instruction is insufficiently regulated. Differences between the teacher training offered by different institutions makes it difficult to ensure similar quality levels. As a result, the instruction provided by teacher training schools is of poor quality.

According to Ochoa, Peru's National Education Quality Evaluation, Accreditation and Certification System (approved in 2012) is being introduced. Its purpose is to evaluate and certify the quality of all university, non-university, public and private post-secondary teacher training institutions. The System will establish standards, requirements, indicators and mechanisms to ensure the quality of teacher training institutions. Unfortunately, there are no specific quality standards for the training of early childhood teachers, teaching coordinators for non-formal programmes, community teachers or initial education teachers (birth to age 3) in formal and non-formal programmes who will be working with parents.

Thornhill states that Trinidad and Tobago has a system of accreditation, established in 2004, which evaluates registered institutions and determines whether their programmes and the degrees that they grant meet the established standards.

7.2.3 *Otros mecanismos de regulación de la formación inicial*

The available information indicates that, in addition to accreditation, Argentina, Brazil and Chile have established other mechanisms to regulate the training of early childhood teachers.

According to Brailovsky, Argentina has a specific institution, the National Teacher Training Institute, which is responsible for planning and implementing sectoral policies for initial and continuing teacher training. It also handles all matters relating to the validity of qualifications, the promotion, approval and subsequent modification of curricula, and other policies as indicated in its statutes. It has also prepared recommendations on curriculum design for early childhood teachers.

Abuchaim reports that Brazil established the National Higher Education Evaluation System in 2004 in order to evaluate institutions, programmes and student performance. Its purpose is to assess the quality of higher education and to gather information to be used in regulating and supervising post-secondary institutions. To that end, the System includes a wide variety of additional instruments, such as self-evaluation and external evaluation procedures, the National Student Achievement Test, undergraduate course evaluations and a database. Within that framework, teaching programmes must be evaluated every three years through a certification process in order to verify their compliance with the regulations. This process assesses the programme's curriculum, faculty, physical premises and compliance with the applicable legislation and regulations.

According to Pardo and Adlerstein, Chile established teacher training scholarships in 2012 as an incentive for talented students to apply to initial teacher training programmes. Studies of all of these programmes, including those that specialize in ECE, show that the impact of the scholarships has been positive but limited in scope. Specifically, a review of all relevant teacher training programmes shows that the scholarships have significantly increased enrolment from the top third of the students who took the University Selection Examination (PSU) and has increased the likelihood that students who score 600 or more will opt for teacher training. However, the impact has been limited; only 40 per cent of the students in education programmes are enrolled in institutions that offer this scholarship. Moreover, another study shows that the three programmes with the most available scholarships do not offer initial training for early childhood teachers, even though the scholarship has been shown to increase the number of students with a score of over 600 on the PSU by 68 per cent.

Pardo and Adlerstein add that Chile has set standards for the initial training of teachers at various levels of education and with various areas of specialisation. The standards applicable to programmes for the initial training of early childhood teachers establish the knowledge, skills and professional aptitudes that graduates should possess so that training institutions can make adjustments, reforms or changes in their programmes in order to bring them into line with the standards. However, training institutions are not required to meet these standards, which are simply guidelines for the training of early childhood teachers.

7.3 *Initial Training Curriculum*

Examination of the participating countries in this study and specifically those for which information on the curriculum design and content of programmes for the initial training of early childhood teachers was available shows that, with the exception of Argentina and Cuba, these countries have no compulsory guidelines for training. This leads to significant variation in training institutions' programmes of study. Moreover, differences in the information received makes it difficult to carry out a detailed comparison, although it is clear that these training curricula typically include both theory and practice.

According to Abuchaim, Brazil's bachelor's programmes must follow the curriculum guidelines for initial teacher training programmes, which describe in general terms the skills expected of graduates. Programme activities include classroom, practical and theoretical/practical training at three levels: basic, in-depth and diversified with a focus on research, critical thought and the integration of theory and practice. The curriculum includes training in management, guidance and school administration, with time devoted to hands-on activities. The broad range of skills that graduates of initial teacher training programmes are expected to acquire – including teaching and specific knowledge in the areas of assessment, non-formal education, research, school administration, ethics and civics – is reflected in the proposed curriculum; in order to meet various training objectives, it ultimately breaks down knowledge into disciplines with content that is presented in very general terms and which meets few of the training needs of early childhood teachers.

According to Pardo and Adlerstein, the only legislation that governs the training curriculum in Chile is a law requiring the accreditation of training institutions and professional career systems; accreditation is not a requirement for teaching, but only for the receipt of public financing. The law sets out three training areas – general, specialized and professional/practical – but within this general framework, there is great curriculum diversity. The country has also set standards as guidelines for the initial training of early childhood teachers; these are described in the previous section. Pardo and Adlerstein also mention studies suggesting that Chile's early childhood teachers are very poorly trained: there are no clear curriculum guidelines and few common courses for the various career paths, key training issues are not addressed, teachers are not prepared to meet public policy needs and the current international debate is ignored.

Ochoa reports that in Peru, curriculum guidelines and design vary depending on whether the training institution is a university or a post-secondary teacher training institute or school. By law, universities may design their own curriculum for each area of specialization and establish their own study and research programmes as well as admission and graduation requirements for early childhood teacher training. Thus, university training programmes for these teachers may vary widely. On the other hand, post-secondary teaching training institutes and schools base their curriculum design on the Ministry of Education standards for two areas of specialization: the National Basic Curriculum Design for early childhood teachers, which includes three elements:

personal qualities, teaching skills, and social and community relations as factors and involves both classroom hours and electronic learning (e-learning) during the required period of practice teaching; and the Experimental Curriculum Design for teachers specializing in intercultural bilingual ECE, which takes the specific characteristics of intercultural children into account.

According to Buitrago, the curriculum for vocational teacher training in Colombia – the programme for which information is available – has three elements: supervised, independent and practical training. It includes units on, among other things, teaching practices, skills development for young children, health, ethics and the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). In this country, the training of early childhood teachers seeks to develop a critical and thoughtful approach to society and teaching. However, the author states that some aspects of the curriculum do not reflect teachers' experience in the field, a fact that lessens their sense of ownership and leads to an overlapping of approaches and models. It has also been noted that most of the programmes examined focus on preparation for primary school teaching, ignoring the specific characteristics of ECE and the concept of integration. Moreover, the scores on the tests administered by the Colombian Educational Assessment Institute show that, in general, students in (bachelor's) teacher training programmes perform poorly in comparison with students in other subjects.

Quintanilla mentions the 2012 curriculum for Mexico's bachelor's programme in preschool education, which is organized into five subjects: educational psychology, preparation for teaching and learning, a second language and ICTs, elective courses and practice teaching. Students must also prepare a final paper.

Guatemala's national discussion group reports that training for early childhood teachers takes many forms. The curriculum is in need of updating or adjustment, there is no coordination with training in initial and pre-primary education and issues relating to children under age 4 are not covered.

There is one exception to the general pattern in these countries: in Argentina, early childhood teacher training is based on the National Teacher Training Plan. According to Brailovsky, the country's federal system allows the individual provinces to make certain adjustments although the curriculum adopted in the province of Buenos Aires serves as a model that ensures consistency. Under this Plan, the curriculum is divided into three parts: general training, specialized training and practice teaching. Different teaching philosophies are reflected in the curricula of early childhood teacher training programmes; some see the various subjects as a way of organizing knowledge while others take a more holistic approach that considers teaching as a whole rather than breaking it down into subjects. Moreover, in the case of ECE, this debate is fuelled by the fact that the main methods used in teaching children (instruction, projects and play-based learning) expressly preclude a breakdown into subjects. A number of studies have led Brailovsky to identify a weakness of Argentina's teacher training programmes: its performance evaluation methods. According to his analysis, while the issue is under

discussion and innovative experiments are encouraged, the memorization-based and encyclopaedic methodologies that have been criticized by theoreticians are still in use. He also states that the teaching faculty of training institutions are well aware of the flaws in their curricula in terms of textbooks, abstract thinking and rigorous, thoughtful and critical use of data, as has been noted in studies on education students and research on academic aspects of training. Thus, the curriculum improvements made through a dynamic, integrated approach to teaching practices do not appear to be reflected in other aspects of academic work.

Cuba also has a single curriculum for the training of early childhood teachers, which is adapted to local contexts and to the individuals involved in the training process.

A concern shared by several countries is the challenge of ensuring that initial training takes due account of diversity in terms of age, gender, special education and the sociocultural issues most often mentioned. In other words, the challenge is to ensure that the initial training of early childhood teachers is designed to meet the education needs of all children in this age group by providing instruction in these specific areas. Peru's national discussion group states that the country has problems in that regard and, in particular, that too little is being done to identify and distinguish between the various forms of diversity (people with disabilities, members of indigenous peoples and behavioural problems).

This lack of consistency in programmes for the initial training of early childhood teachers is also seen in the United States and several European countries, where post-secondary education for these teachers differs widely in content, the importance attached to practice teaching and curriculum structure (Eurydice, 2015; Maxwell & Early, 2006). There are also significant differences in professional profiles within each country, as seen from the variety of age groups with which early childhood teachers are trained to work; Table 14 provides an overview of the professional profiles of these teachers in a representative group of European countries.²⁰

20 Oberhuemer et al. describe this variety using the following terms, which do not correspond exactly to the job titles used in each country:

- “Early childhood professional”: requires specialized post-secondary study in the education of children from birth to compulsory school entry. The age range varies widely from one country to another.
- “Pre-primary professional”: requires specialized post-secondary study in the education of children two to three years younger than the age of compulsory school entry (age 3-4 and 5-6), respectively.
- “Pre-primary and primary school professional”: requires specialized post-secondary study in education in the school system (primary school and the two to three years preceding compulsory school entry, age 3-4 and 5-6, respectively).
- “Social pedagogy professional”: requires specialized post-secondary study not only in working with young children (from birth to age 6), but also with school-age children, adolescents and, in some cases, adults. The primary focus is on learning outside of school.
- “Infant-toddler professional”: requires specialized post-secondary study in working with children in this age group and, on occasion, with older children.
- “Health/care professional”: requires specialized post-secondary study in early childhood health and care.

(Oberhuemer et al., 2010)

Table 14: Professional Profiles of Early Childhood Education in European Countries

Country	Existing professional profiles	Age group (*)
Finland	• Early childhood professional	• 0–7
	• Social pedagogy professional	• 0–6
France	• Early childhood professional	• 0–6
	• Pre-primary and primary school professional	• 2 ½–11
	• Health/care professional	• 0–3
Germany	• Social pedagogy professional	• 0–14
Holland	• Pre-primary and primary school professional	• 4–12
	• Infant-toddler professional	• 0–4
Italy	• Pre-primary school professional	• 3–6
	• Social pedagogy professional	• 0–6
	• Infant-toddler professional	• 0–3
Portugal	• Early childhood professional	• 3–6
	• Health/care professional	• 4 months–age 3
Spain	• Early childhood professional	• 0–6
	• Infant-toddler professional	• 0–3
Sweden	• Early childhood professional	• 1–8/11

► *Source: Prepared by the authors based on Oberhuemer et al., 2010*

Unfortunately, with the exception of studies that correlate the number of years of study and areas of specialization with their impact on the education of young children, there has been relatively little research into this process. Consequently, there are no specific internationally agreed curriculum guidelines and content to be used in promoting more effective teaching practices. For this reason, as Zabalza and Zabalza (2011) have noted, it is difficult to identify the optimum content of a high quality programme for the initial training of early childhood teachers. There is also a lack of consensus on skill training, as seen from the wide variety of skills that are emphasized by different experts (Bowman et al., 2000; Whitebook et al., 2009).

In any event, specialists in the field have stressed the need to identify a common core as a basic requirement for progress in strengthening early childhood teaching as a profession. In that regard, Zabalza & Zabalza (2011) propose that initial training should prepare student teachers in the areas of child psychology, curriculum content, early childhood teaching techniques, teaching as a profession and the institutions in which they will be working. Other authors have emphasized the importance of including information on curricula, subjects (language and literacy, mathematics, science, social studies and the arts) and developmental psychology (Pianta et al., 2012; Saracho & Spodek, 2013). It has also been said that training should cover issues relating to families, special education and linguistic and cultural diversity (Ray et al., 2006). Certainly, it is also generally agreed – and has been recently reaffirmed by a number of experts – that the initial training curriculum should cover the basic principles of ECE, including, among other things, holistic child development, play and interaction with families (Brooker et al., 2014; Rebello Britto et al., 2013; Saracho & Spodek, 2005).

Beyond these recommendations, there is no consensus on the breadth and depth in which these matters should be studied or on the curriculum structure (sequence of courses and relationship between theory and practice) that promotes best practices (Hyson et al., 2013).

7.4 Critical Issues Concerning Initial Training of Early Childhood Teachers

Based on the evidence set out and analysed above, the following critical issues with an impact on the quality of initial teacher training can be identified.

7.4.1 Low Academic Requirements for Admission to Initial Training

As stated in previous sections, the evidence gathered for this study suggests that most of the participating countries have low academic requirements for admission to programmes for the initial training of early childhood teachers. As a result, students who lack the requisite skills to deal with the complexity of early childhood teaching are admitted.

It should be clarified that the attributes that make applicants suited to early childhood teaching are not objectively defined and should therefore be discussed within the framework of each country's teaching profession. It is generally agreed that academic ability is essential to success at the post-secondary level, as seen from the widespread requirement of good grades or high scores on standardized tests for admission to higher education. However, it has also been stressed that applicants should demonstrate a vocation and aptitude for teaching in general and working with young children in particular (Whitebook & Ryan, 2011).

In any event, merely raising the admission requirements for initial training will not solve the problem of poorly-qualified students; attracting better candidates to early childhood

teaching will also require attracting better-qualified applicants and providing education alternatives. As will be seen below, these alternatives cannot be provided without increasing society's respect for teachers and improving their working conditions in order to make the profession more attractive.

7.4.2 Curriculum Heterogeneity

As has been discussed above, the evidence gathered for this study reveals great variety in the curricula of programmes for the initial training of early childhood teachers in several participating countries, which should be viewed with caution. There is no doubt that, if taken to the extreme, this variety could undermine the core knowledge base specific to early childhood teaching as a profession.

While the information available for the region is not conclusive, it must be emphasized that, at present, this common core of content and procedures for ensuring the quality of initial training is not being preserved and that the fundamental principles and knowledge specific to the field, and those that research has shown to be important, are considered non-negotiable. Some of the countries that participated in this study also draw attention to the lack of training on sensitive issues specific to each country, such as special education and cultural diversity.

The identification of this common core of knowledge that is essential to early childhood teaching is still a matter for international reflection and discussion and the time limits imposed by the length of initial training in a relatively unspecialized field makes it necessary to reduce or eliminate content in some areas (Whitebook et al., 2012).

It has also been said that the effort to define the profile of early childhood teachers should take into account not only the views of teachers themselves, but also society's current expectations of ECE (Oberhuemer, 2005). Clearly, these expectations are different from those of the past and include, among other things, the education of children under 4, preparation for subsequent schooling, and the inclusion of children with special needs.

7.4.3 Institutional Weaknesses

As has been noted in the previous sections of this chapter, the evidence gathered for this study reveals the weaknesses of various countries' initial early childhood teacher training institutions, which have insufficient quality control mechanisms.

Specifically, only four of the countries that participated in this study – Colombia, Chile, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago – have accreditation systems (with various degrees of robustness) for verifying the quality of initial training for early childhood teachers; the other countries have no mechanisms for publicly certifying the quality of the training provided.

In addition, certain countries attribute some of the weaknesses of early childhood teacher training to the fact that there are no early childhood teaching specialists on the

faculties of these institutions, as UNESCO has reported in the case of initial training for primary and secondary school teachers (UNESCO-OREALC, 2013). For example, Peru's national discussion group reports that the issue of the training of trainers is not addressed in the country. There is no clear information on the composition of the faculties of early childhood teacher training institutions. The group also notes the importance of considering how trainers of trainers are trained. Guatemala's national discussion group also identifies, as an issue for the initial training of early childhood teachers, the fact that faculty members have no specialist training since the only requirement for professors is a degree; specialization is not required.

Thus, the lack of a system of accreditation to guarantee at least a minimum quality of initial training for early childhood teachers weakens training institutions by depriving them of an important mechanism that could guide their work through a set of publicly agreed indicators.

In addition, the fact that members of their teaching faculties have no expertise in early childhood education further undermines training institutions by creating a gap in the training process (the extent of which cannot be determined from the available information) and a potential failure to focus on the issues relevant to this teaching specialization.

7.4.4 Secondary School Training

As noted in the previous sections of this chapter, in five countries in the region the initial training of early childhood and primary school teachers is provided at both the secondary and the post-secondary levels. This is problematic since research shows that it is graduates of four-year post-secondary programmes who have a positive impact on children at this level of education.

While there is a growing global consensus that early childhood teacher training should be provided at the post-secondary level, the high cost of this proposal makes it impractical in the short term in most parts of the world, including high-income countries (Hyson et al., 2013; Oberhuemer et al., 2010).

In this international context, it should be borne in mind that the training of early childhood teachers at the secondary level is not an anomaly specific to Latin America; rather, it should be interpreted as a reflection of the ongoing professionalization of early childhood teaching throughout the world and of its growing incorporation into the education system.

It is important to stress that advocacy for the provision of early childhood teacher training at the post-secondary level is not an effort to build an all-professional workforce; the idea is that teachers must be better trained in order to serve as leaders of teaching teams that necessarily include educators with lower teaching qualifications.

8 Continuing Professional Development of Early Childhood Teachers

There has been little international research on the continuing professional development of early childhood teachers; most of the existing studies were written by scholars from the United States or, in a few cases, Spanish-speaking countries (Observatorio Internacional de la Profesión Docente, 2015).

The outcome of these studies has shown that not all of these programmes are effective in improving teaching practice. The successful programmes have the following characteristics (Zaslow et al., 2010):

- There are specific and articulated objectives for professional development.
- Practice is an explicit focus of professional development with an emphasis on the link between knowledge and practice.
- There is collective participation of teachers from the same classrooms or schools in professional development.
- The intensity and duration of the professional development is matched to the content being conveyed.
- Educators are prepared to conduct child assessments and interpret their results as a tool for ongoing monitoring of the effects of professional development.
- The professional development is appropriate for the organizational context and aligned with standards for practice.

It has also been noted that the systems with the greatest impact are those that make opportunities for professional development available to a significant proportion of early childhood teachers, regardless of the type of school in which they work, and grant credentials that are recognized throughout the early childhood system (Hyson & Whittaker, 2012).

The available evidence shows that in the United States, continuing professional development programmes for early childhood teachers tend to offer similar quality and content and to be provided independently rather than as part of the early childhood education system (Zaslow et al., 2010).

This chapter describes the primary characteristics of professional development for early childhood teachers in the 16 countries considered for this study, bearing in mind that there is little information on this subject for the region. The chapter is divided into three sections on, respectively, the legislation that supports continuing professional

development, the wide variety of such development in the countries concerned, and critical issues on continuing professional development.

8.1 Legislation

The vast majority of the countries that participated in this study have adopted legislation that expressly supports the continuing training or professional development of early childhood teachers.

The only exceptions are Guatemala and Trinidad and Tobago, which do not have such legislation. According to Guatemala's national discussion group, there is no legal support for the continuing training of early childhood teachers; consequently, the Ministry of Education does not offer ongoing teacher training and, where it is provided, each institution may select only one representative to be trained; teachers are left to pursue their studies on their own. Thornhill reports that while Trinidad and Tobago has no such legislation, it is an offence to reject applicants who meet the entry requirements for continuing training programmes if space is available. A common feature of these two countries is the wide variety of providers, both public and private, and the limited state regulation of programme duration, modalities, content, link to professional career and quality.

Moreover, the various countries' laws differ in scope with regard to early childhood teachers, covering all teachers in Brazil and Colombia but only some in Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru.

Abuchaim reports that in Brazil, teachers' right to continuing training is established in the Education Guidelines and Foundations Act, which states that the nation, the capital city, the states and the municipalities shall promote, through cooperation, initial and continuing education, and capacity-building for teachers – including early childhood teachers – at no cost or obligation to the teachers. In addition, non-binding official guidelines stress that it is important for the states and municipalities to provide continuing education for teachers during working hours and to offer incentives, including qualifications, experience, performance, retraining and professional development. However, despite the importance attached to continuing education in the country's education policies, there are signs that policy implementation by the municipal departments of education has been problematic.

According to Buitrago, in Colombia the state is responsible for the continuing training of teachers, including early childhood teachers. Thus, this training is organized and financed by the national and regional governments. In any event, efforts must be made to strengthen institutions; coordinate with policies and plans that take a holistic approach to ECC; and ensure that training is relevant to the country's situation, the plans and programmes to which local public policy has given priority, and national planning. Colombia has also put in place regulations that provide guidance, requirements and general rules for the organization and implementation of academic and continuing teacher training and professional development programmes. Moreover, it has established

standards for the training of early childhood teachers in order to improve the quality of their initial education.

One of the countries in which the laws governing the professional development of early childhood teachers apply to only some of them is Argentina; continuing training for these teachers is regulated by the National Education Act, which states that such training is a basic requirement for professional career. In practice, public school teachers, for whom information is available, have more opportunities for initial and continuing employment if they accumulate points, which are based mainly on years of service and training courses taken. According to Brailovsky, the country has a system of incentives for teachers' continuing training or capacity-building based on points accrued through activities such as positions held; training courses taken; years of service in the profession and the position held; other cultural activities, such as participation in academic and artistic events; and publications. Training courses have a relatively high value under this system although the weight given to the various thematic areas and to teachers' training choices is not established consistently in any policy. Brailovsky adds that teacher training in Argentina is undermined by a point system that often values quantity over quality, consistency and the need for training appropriate to the specific work environment.

According to Pardo and Adlerstein, Chile has adopted a law regulating the work of teachers, including early childhood teachers, in institutions that receive state support. Although it is applicable to both public and private schools, many of its provisions apply only to the former. The law establishes that teachers, including early childhood teachers, have a right to continuing training. There is also an incentive in the form of a monetary grant paid to teachers who complete a continuing training programme. This legal benefit applies only to teachers who work with groups of 4- and 5-year-olds in public schools. While all of these incentives for the continuing training of early childhood teachers are monetary in nature, they vary according to the type of institution. Early childhood teachers in the public schools receive a grant when their successful completion of a course is recorded in the Ministry of Education's National Public Continuing Training Registry; teachers employed by the National Association of Preschools and the Integra Foundation have their own incentive system. In these institutions, continuing training is contingent on institutional priorities and on the outcome of evaluations conducted according to the National Association of Preschools Quality Management Model and the Integra Foundation Kindergarten Quality Accreditation System.

Guatemala's national discussion group reports that the Ministry of Education's regulations promote a professional development programme for teachers, which grants certification in intercultural or bilingual pre-primary education. Unfortunately, this programme does not specifically address the needs of early childhood teachers. Moreover, it is not available to all teachers and attendance is low. Teachers may also choose to enrol in the professional development programmes offered by private universities, which grant certificates and bachelor's degrees in primary and pre-primary education.

In Mexico, the state is legally required to ensure that teachers and school principals and administrators have opportunities for continuing training, retraining, professional development and cultural advancement. To that end, the education authorities and decentralized bodies offer programmes and courses which combine technical assistance

in the schools with courses, applied research and postgraduate study. This legislation applies to the preschool (age 3-5), primary, and lower and upper secondary levels of basic education, but not to initial education (from birth to age 3). In this country, as Quintanilla notes, continuing training is linked to wages and promotion. This has undermined the desire for improvement since the participants are more concerned with passing examinations than with improving their teaching practice and has led to offences such as acquiring copies of test papers in advance. At the postgraduate level, formal qualifications prevail, understood as the aim to be a researcher, but detached from the teaching practice, as well as a certain elitism that can lead to apparently unequal offers.

Ochoa reports that in Peru, professional development is both a right and an ongoing opportunity for early childhood teachers; the law establishes that all teachers are entitled to continuing training (initially and thereafter). The legislative framework that currently governs continuing teacher training applies only to public school teachers, whose training is regulated by the Ministry of Education. Continuing training follows the guidelines set out in the Education Reform Act, which establishes that in-service training shall be flexible and diversified and that a wide range of methodologies may be used, depending on the programme's goal, duration and design. According to Ochoa, the Ministry of Education has no involvement whatsoever in the teacher training offered by universities, although regulations that set priorities and national and regional policy guidelines for training are in place. It should be emphasized that many of the guidelines contained in the aforementioned documents are not being followed. In addition, the Teacher Training System, which includes early childhood teachers, establishes the mechanisms for exercising the right to training and the incentives used to encourage teachers to participate in in-service training programmes. However, the provisions relating to this training system are still in the process of implementation and changes reflecting the situation, characteristics and needs of early childhood teachers are necessary; among other things, training priorities for teachers who work with children under 3 and early childhood teachers in the non-formal system must be set.

8.2 Characteristics of Continuing Professional Development Programmes

The evidence gathered for this study shows that in most of the countries, programmes for the continuing professional development of early childhood teachers vary widely in the methodologies used and the content provided.

8.2.1 Types of Training Offered and Methodologies

In the countries analysed, there is great variety in the types of training offered and the methodological strategies for the continuing training of early childhood teachers (the type of qualification granted and the channels through which these programmes are provided). Offers range from short workshops to degree-granting programmes, the most common being shorter programmes.

Brailovsky reports that in Argentina, there are various forms of training, including b-learning modules, classroom courses and online courses. One example is the “Our School” programme, a federal initiative that provides free, universal training to all of the country’s teachers.

According to Abuchaim, in-service training for early childhood teachers in Brazil tends to be intermittent and sporadic. One study shows that several municipal education departments’ training initiatives in the area of early childhood and primary education include workshops, lectures, seminars, and classroom and distance short courses offered by the departments themselves or through contracts with universities and research or private institutions. It is important to note that ECE postgraduate courses, in the broader sense, are offered by both private and public higher education institutions. A study has shown that most municipal education departments elect to offer personal training programmes that focus on the development of each individual teacher rather than on the school’s faculty as a whole. Unfortunately, only 15 per cent of teachers in day care centres and 17 per cent of preschool teachers have attended continuing training courses specific to their level of teaching with a minimum of 40 hours of instruction.

Costa Rica offers classroom, online and mixed format courses, as well as videoconferences.

Pardo and Adlerstein report that in Chile, most degree-granting programmes for early childhood teachers are offered by universities, professional institutes and independent academic institutions. About 75 per cent of the current programmes offer a specialization in primary or secondary school education at the bachelor’s or postgraduate level; the remainder are master’s degree programmes. The non-degree-granting programmes, however, use a wide range of methodological strategies, including classroom-type courses, continuing training via educational television, local learning communities, e-learning, blended learning (b-learning) and developing a network of teaching leaders.

In Cuba, in addition to degree-granting, specialist, masters and doctoral programmes, short courses and workshops are organized.

According to Buitrago, Colombia has two types of continuing training: non-degree-granting training, retraining and continuing training, and degree- or diploma-granting postgraduate study, depending on the depth of the material taught (specialist, master’s or doctorate). The methodologies used are varied and creative and include, among other things, workshops, laboratories, discussions, textbook study, talks, commentary and projects. Several programmes include fieldwork as a complement to classroom instruction which is considered an important way of changing practices. E-learning may be used alone or as a complement to classroom instruction.

El Salvador offers a number of modalities for continuing training, including classroom instruction, e-learning, b-learning, retraining workshops, self-instruction modules, internships, continuing education and postgraduate study.

In Guatemala, the type of continuing training programme depends on the students’ level of previous training. Teachers trained at the secondary level are provided with classroom

instruction while those with university training are offered b-learning programmes. The Ministry of Education provides training to departmental coordinators, who in turn train teachers at the local level. There is also an academic programme that offers university-level training to public school teachers.

In Honduras, universities offer classroom, b-learning and e-learning programmes, including retraining workshops and self-instruction modules.

Quintanilla reports that in Mexico, the National Teacher Retraining Programme has been gradually modified and offers two types of training. One, which is available to all teachers, is designed to update them on curriculum changes over the past five years while the other provides a wide range of options in, among other things, specific areas of study, student development and diversity. Course proposals are submitted by various higher education institutions in response to a public call for proposals and are then selected through peer review. The catalogue includes both undergraduate and postgraduate courses, which, in principle, teachers select according to organizational and logistical plans developed in coordination with Mexico's states. The national discussion group reports that professional development opportunities are simple: they entail no additional costs or requirements and do not take into account differences between teachers in terms of age, experience, career stage, type of initial training or work situation. This results in programmes of differing quality which have little impact on the classroom and the students' learning experience.

Nicaragua offers classroom, e-learning and b-learning courses and retraining workshops.

Panama's course options include specialization and master's programmes organized by the Ministry of Education and offered by universities.

According to Ochoa, in-service training in Peru includes the following types of programmes: specialization (classroom instruction and e-learning over two academic semesters), a second specialization in early childhood education (classroom instruction and e-learning over four academic semesters), capacity-building (classroom instruction for periods of less than a year) and retraining (b-learning for approximately one semester, including regional workshops and virtual classrooms); e-learning via an online platform was introduced recently (in 2012). However, there are fewer programmes in initial education than in primary and secondary education. Most in-service teacher training programmes at this level are designed for teachers in formal education; there are no teacher training or in-service training programmes for teachers who work with children under 3 or in non-formal education. In addition, recent policies have promoted practice teaching, peer learning, internships and exchanges of information through education networks, distance activities and, above all, supervision.

The Dominican Republic offers a variety of continuing training programmes, including classroom instruction, e-learning, b-learning, retraining workshops, self-instruction modules, internships, undergraduate degrees, specializations, master's degrees and doctorates.

Thornhill reports that in Trinidad and Tobago, continuing training for early childhood teachers is provided in the form of workshops and, in some cases, internships according to the Ministry of Education's agenda for schools.

In Venezuela, there are degree-granting (specialization, master's degree and doctorates) and non-degree-granting (introduction, further study, retraining, continuing training and postdoctoral training) programmes. Undergraduate degrees may also be earned through continuing training. These programmes are available through classroom instruction, b-learning and e-learning. The most common methodology involves conferences on pedagogy and group training, which entails continuing or ongoing training at five-year intervals with flexibility to suit the needs of each school or learning centre.

8.2.2 *Content of Continuing Training*

The evidence gathered for this study shows that the content of continuing training for early childhood teachers varies widely.

For example, according to Brailovsky, it is difficult to describe the content of the programmes available in Argentina because they are disparate and offered by multiple providers. However, an initial analysis of state-sponsored training in Buenos Aires and Córdoba suggests that training in teaching methods is the most common; instruction is offered in areas such as resources for education in different subjects, the theory of play-based learning, the role of teachers, the organization of educational activities and meetings with parents.

Abuchaim states that in Brazil, continuing training programmes generally cover practical matters related to classroom teaching. More specifically, the available evidence indicates that the focus is on the curriculum; teachers are shown how to follow the municipal curriculum so that students will learn. As part of the National Continuing Training Network, a specialization course in ECE, introduced in 2009, focuses on specialist training for early childhood teachers who work with children in day care centres and preschools.

Pardo and Adlerstein report that the available information on the content of Chile's continuing training programmes concerns institutions registered with the Ministry of Education. This content varies according to the type of institution but tends to fall within four major areas: curriculum and teaching methods; ECE; education administration; and early childhood psychology and neuroscience.

According to Buitrago, in Colombia the content of short courses includes subjects such as children's rights; communities' practices, customs and context-based needs; and more specific issues such as basic information on child health, care and social protection: prevention, detection and notification of common early childhood diseases; emergency prevention and response; first responders; first aid; breastfeeding and supplemental feeding; food and nutrition education; prevention of violence; and promotion of proper

treatment. The subjects selected for training courses also reflect the quality standards for the two approaches to early education: prevention, detection and notification of common early childhood diseases, emergency prevention and response, first aid and breastfeeding. Teacher training also focuses on core issues for retraining and continuing training in matters relating to concepts of children and holistic early child development, the intersectoral approach and comprehensive care, recognition of diversity and the need for differentiated treatment, and seeking alternatives and innovative types of care within a public policy framework through a people-centred local approach. The Ministry of Education has developed and strengthened a National Incentives Plan for Teachers and School Administrators, which recognizes and rewards significant leadership achievement, teaching excellence, administrative excellence, research on education-related problems, and innovative projects with a local, regional or national impact. It should be noted that this plan has no implementation regulations and applies only to public school teachers at the levels established by the school system. This highlights the importance of identifying and establishing incentives to encourage the professional development of early childhood teachers.

Quintanilla states that in Mexico, continuing training programmes often focus on teaching methods in the context of current basic education plans and programmes for children aged 3 to 5; there is no effort to develop the skills of early childhood teachers. The available training covers, among other things, curriculum changes over the past five years, specific teaching methods, student development and diversity.

According to Ochoa's report, the content of Peru's in-service training programmes for public school teachers reflects the recommendations made in some studies and the priorities set out in the Good Teaching Framework. The content of early education programmes emphasizes the new approach entitled "Pathways for Learning, Cycle II: Early Education; Peru Educates in the Schools: New Ways of Learning". It also addresses issues such as teaching methods for early education; communication; mathematics; personal, social and emotional development; and intercultural bilingual early education. Early childhood teaching is also covered in training courses on ICTs, road safety, special education and environmental education. The content of training programmes for private school teachers is essentially a response to the demands of the early education labour market rather than to an analysis of the training needs of initial education teachers at the national level; the issues addressed include early stimulation, child development approaches (Waldorf, Aucouturier), teaching methodologies (Optimist, Reggio Emilia) and specific types of development (language, psychomotor, etc.).

8.3 Critical Issues Concerning Continuing Professional Development

The analysis conducted identified three critical issues on the continuing professional development of early childhood teachers: insufficient state regulation, the variety of training options and the need to systematize the available information on these programmes.

8.3.1 *Insufficient State Regulation*

The evidence gathered for this study shows that in several countries, state regulation does not suffice to promote the continuing professional development of early childhood teachers and this has led to a number of problems. Some countries do not even have specific legislation on the matter, a fact that raises doubts as to the validity of the training certificates issued and their impact on the professional career.

A second problem is the fact that although some countries have legislation in place, it covers only some early childhood teachers depending on the school for which they work or the age of the children in their care.

A third problem is the absence of a regulatory link or the presence of a merely tangential relationship between continuing professional development and professional career for early childhood teachers. This limits the opportunity for positive synergies between them that would make the professional career an incentive for participation in continuing professional development courses and make those courses an important requirement for promotion in addition to purely formal criteria.

A fourth problem is the lack of coordination between continuing teacher training and the early childhood education system as a whole in terms of the relationship between training and the issues emphasized in government policies for this level of education (for example, the introduction of a new curriculum), its complementarity with the issues that are the primary focus of initial training or its relevance to the training needs of employed teachers.

8.3.2 *Variety of Training Options*

The evidence gathered for this study shows that in the countries for which information is available, not only are there many institutions that offer continuing training programmes, but there is considerable variety in the content and the types of training offered. This is a source of concern because, owing to the lack of systematized data (as explained in the following section) on the content of these programmes, it is unclear whether their focus is thematically relevant to the development needs expressed by early childhood teachers and the areas of specialization required by local situations (i.e. intercultural bilingual education) or specific to this level of education (i.e. teaching methods such as Montessori or Reggio Emilia) or to public policy guidelines. Another source of concern is the wide variety of teaching methods used since it is not clear whether they allow the programmes' goals and the needs of early childhood teachers to be fully met.

8.3.3 *Non-Systematized data on continuing professional development*

The evidence gathered for this study suggests that several countries in the region do not keep aggregate, systematized data at the national level on programmes for the continuing professional development of early childhood teachers. This makes it difficult for teachers to take informed decisions on their continuing professional development

options since they lack information on available courses and their methodologies, length and content as well as the type of certification granted.

This also hinders the development of public policies designed to improve the available programmes for the continuing professional development of early childhood teachers since policy-makers have no information on, for example, the distribution of existing programmes, the percentage of early childhood teachers who have participated in different types of programmes, the impact that the latter have had on the participants' teaching practices and the continuing training needs expressed by teachers themselves.

In light of this lack of information, it is not surprising to find duplications and gaps in the existing programmes and that some of these programmes are of poor quality and unable to meet the continuing training needs of early childhood teachers.

9 Early Childhood Teachers' Working Conditions and Professional Career

This chapter deals with the working conditions, the professional career and, in that context, the performance evaluation of teachers as critical factors in making early childhood teaching a desirable profession that will attract future teachers and encourage them to continue to teach until they retire. To that end, in recent years these issues have become a priority in the education policies of various countries around the world, which view them as a condition for improving the quality of ECE and helping to attract and retain teachers (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2012b; Shaeffer, 2015; Sun et al., 2015).

The chapter is divided into four sections on, respectively, the working conditions of early childhood teachers in the 16 countries that participated in this study; the countries' professional career systems; their performance evaluation mechanisms; and critical issues that emerge from an analysis of ECE in the region.

9.1 Working Conditions

The little available information on the salaries and working conditions of early childhood teachers in the countries considered for this study is fragmented and does not provide an overview. Most of the data concern salaries and, in some cases, factors such as infrastructure and equipment, job security, the number of schools in which the teacher works, the ratio of children to adults and the presence of teaching assistants in the classroom. A common feature of these descriptions is the job insecurity of early childhood teachers, although this varies according to their situation.

With regard to salaries, the countries may be divided into two groups, depending on the relationship between the salaries of early childhood and primary school teachers, on the understanding that even the latter usually earn less than other professionals. In the first group of countries, early childhood teachers' salaries are equal or equivalent to those of their counterparts in primary school while in the second group, the former earn significantly less than the latter. Lastly, for two countries (El Salvador and Trinidad and Tobago), no information on salaries was available.

The countries in which early childhood teachers' salaries are equal or equivalent to those of their counterparts in primary education are Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru and Venezuela. The following paragraphs will describe the salary situation in each of these countries and present the available information on their general working conditions and, in particular, the ratio of children to adults.

Brailovsky reports that in Argentina, the salaries of early childhood teachers are equivalent to those of primary or basic education teachers. In some provinces they are poorly paid, indicating a need for improvement in teachers' entry-level salaries. With regard to working conditions, the author states that the student-teacher ratio is slightly more than 20:1. One in three teachers has a teaching assistant, known as *maestras celadoras* or *maestras auxiliares*.

According to Buitrago, the wages of Colombia's early childhood teachers are based on a hierarchy of job descriptions and a salary scale for preschool, primary school and secondary school teachers with training in learning sciences; teachers with other types of training are not covered and their wages depend on their qualifications. It should be emphasized that the former group also receive social benefits, unlike teachers hired on service contracts. Buitrago notes that Colombia has regulated the child-teacher ratio according to various criteria and that each teacher is entitled to a teaching assistant. According to the quality standards for ECE, that ratio is 10:1, 15:1 and 20:1 for children aged 3 to 23 months, 24 to 36 months and 37 to 60 months, respectively. According to Decree No. 3,020 (2002), the ratio for preschool teachers (children aged 3 to 5) is 32:1 in urban areas and 22:1 in rural areas.

In Cuba, the salaries of early childhood teachers are equal to those of teachers at other levels of education and vary depending on whether the teacher was trained at the secondary or post-secondary level. The child-teacher ratio varies according to the age of the children, the size of the class and the real enrolment; for example, it is 20:4 for 3-year-olds and 20:3 for 5-year-olds. Teachers are also allocated preparation time (8 to 12 hours per week), assistants and other types of support.

Quintanilla states that in Mexico, teacher salaries in basic education (children aged 3 to 5) may even be higher than those of other professionals. However, the country's national discussion group reports that low salaries are a problem impacting on the desirability of the profession, which does not always attract the best-qualified candidates. The author also states that only 17.2 per cent of classrooms nationwide, most of them in private schools, have a teaching assistant. Teachers in private preschools (children aged 3 to 5) are responsible for fewer children than those who work in public schools (an average of 45 and 54 per class, respectively).

Ochoa reports that Peru's new legislation establishes the Full Monthly Wage as the basis for teachers' professional career at all levels. This wage is set according to the salary scale for teachers and the working hours of the teacher in question. However, this legislation is still being phased in; the number of available positions is limited and the regulations are being adjusted. The author also states that public school teachers have little support from teaching assistants, whose hiring is contingent on the availability of funds and must be evaluated and approved by a hiring committee although this is not required by law. According to the national discussion group, there is considerable variation in the salaries of early childhood teachers who deal with different age groups, depending on the socio-economic status of the region and the

institution in which they work. Furthermore, working conditions in the country are far from desirable with regard to job security, social benefits, protected time and an enabling environment (resources, facilities, child-teacher ratio, teaching aids or resources, relationship between working hours and deadlines and availability of teaching assistants, among other things).

In Costa Rica, as in Nicaragua, the salaries of early childhood teachers are similar to those of their counterparts in primary education. In Nicaragua, teachers are responsible for 15 to 20 children and are allocated teaching and planning time and classroom furniture appropriate to the age of the children.

In Honduras, too, the salaries of early childhood and primary school teachers are equal. By law, the child-teacher ratio is 25:1 but varies according to the population density of the area in which the school is located; the ratio of classroom to planning time is 4:1.

In Panama, early childhood teachers' salaries are also equivalent to those of primary school teachers. There are no specific requirements with regard to their wages and working conditions with the latter depending on the region and the community in which they work and on the school's infrastructure.

In Venezuela, these teachers receive salaries equal or equivalent to those of primary school teachers based on a salary scale that takes academic degrees or training and years of service into account. The child-teacher ratio varies according to the age of the children: 9:3 for children from birth to age 2; 12:2 for those aged 2 to 3; and 25:2 for those aged 3 to 6.

The second group of countries, in which early childhood teachers earn less than their counterparts in primary education, comprises Brazil, Chile, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic.

Abuchaim reports that in Brazil, the minimum salary of basic education teachers in the public schools is established by law and reviewed annually. Early childhood teachers earn significantly less than primary and secondary school teachers. A comparison between the three occupations shows that the salaries of early childhood teachers with post-secondary qualifications are lower than those of most other workers with the same level of training, and even of workers with secondary school training in other occupations. With regard to working conditions, the author indicates that the vast majority of early childhood teachers work in only one establishment and with a single group of children. Planning, evaluation, teamwork, continuing training and contact with families are carried out during working hours.

Pardo and Adlerstein report that in Chile, the salaries of early childhood teachers vary depending on the institution in which they work. Teachers in state-funded schools, whether public or private, are entitled to the national minimum wage, established in the Teacher's Statute, and to all other benefits as provided therein. These are granted

based on experience, continuing training (applicable only in public schools) and work under difficult conditions (also applicable in state-funded private schools). The salaries of teachers employed by the National Association of Preschools are regulated through a wage floor law; those of teachers in other institutions are not legally regulated. Under these circumstances, the average wage of early childhood teachers is lower than that of other teachers and one of the lowest of any vocational occupation. The little available evidence shows that early childhood teachers have poor working conditions. The authors also state that the child-teacher ratio is high (up to 45:1 for children aged 4 to 5). Some early childhood teachers are eligible for incentives, depending on the type of institution in which they work; those employed by the public schools, the National Association of Preschools and the Integra Foundation are entitled to monetary incentives.

In Guatemala, early childhood teachers, depending on their classification, are paid somewhat less than their counterparts in primary education. Public school teachers may be given permanent, annual or needs-based contracts. Early childhood teachers are responsible for 35 to 40 students per class.

In the Dominican Republic, the minimum salary for early childhood teachers is almost 12 per cent lower than that of primary school teachers. In the private and public schools, the child-teacher ratio is 12:1 and 25-30:1, respectively, and teachers are assigned a teaching assistant (although the ratio of children to assistants is not specified). It is expressly stated that school equipment and infrastructure at this level of education are better than at any other pre-university level in the country. Teachers employed on part-time contracts may take additional jobs.

In El Salvador, the maximum child-teacher ratio is 25-30:1 and teaching assistants are assigned in a number inversely proportionate to the age of the children. Teachers are also given planning time.

In Trinidad and Tobago, according to Thornhill, early childhood teachers receive a gratuity payment equivalent to 20 per cent of their total salary for every three-year contract period. There are no support personnel except where on-the-job trainees are assigned to education centres. The law protects workers who file complaints regarding illegal working conditions. There are several important differences between the working conditions of early childhood teachers and other teachers, including those in regard to permanent or part-time work, salaries and promotion. There are also incentives that are based not on these teachers' performance evaluations, but on the results attained by the children taught, time in service, continuing teacher training and assignment to difficult areas.

As an example of the working conditions of early childhood teachers, Table 15 shows the approximate child-teacher ratio in the countries for which information was obtained.

Table 15: Number of Children per Teacher in Early Childhood Classrooms (Age 4-5), by Country*

Approximate child-teacher ratio	Country
Up to 10	Cuba
11 - 15	Venezuela
16 - 20	Nicaragua
21 - 25	Argentina
	Honduras (#)
26 - 30	El Salvador
	Dominican Republic
	Colombia (◇)
31 - 45	Chile
	Guatemala
46 - 55	Mexico

* Because most of the information provided by the countries that participated in this study concerns 4-to-5-year-olds, the table covers only this age group. It does not indicate whether there are teaching assistants in the classroom because there was insufficient data on this point.

(#) This ratio may be higher in heavily populated and lower in sparsely populated areas.

(◇) This ratio, set out in Decree No. 3,020 (2002), is lower than the one established in the quality standards for early education institutions.

The problem of job insecurity in early childhood teaching is far from limited to Latin America; it is also found in developed countries and is a cross-cutting problem in the profession. As seen from the study of several European countries conducted by Oberhuemer and his colleagues (2010), only a few countries' early childhood teachers have salaries and working conditions that reflect the importance attached to their work. For example, in most of the countries that joined the European Union in 2004 or later (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia), they do not earn a living wage. While working conditions in Western Europe are better, early childhood teachers are held in lower regard than primary school teachers (Austria, Germany, Ireland). In Italy, their social standing is, on the whole, higher although there is still a gap between teachers who work with older children and those who work with younger ones; the former have higher status. In virtually all of the first 15 countries that joined the European Union in 2004 or later (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, England, Germany, Greece, Portugal and Spain), early childhood teachers' salaries are equal to those of primary school teachers.

A study on Denmark, England, Spain and Sweden shows that part-time work is more common among early childhood teachers than in the workforce as a whole and that their salaries are lower than those of primary school teachers and of workers in general (Oberhuemer et al., 2010). Data on the United States also show that, despite variations

associated with the location of the school and the age of the children, early childhood teachers' salaries and benefits are notoriously low, lower than those of workers in most other fields (Kagan et al., 2008).

Both the OECD and OREALC/UNESCO have stated that, in general, salaries and working conditions are key factors in the attractiveness of teaching as a profession. For this reason, some countries need to implement policies that will give teaching a more competitive position on the labour market, not only by increasing teachers' salaries but by improving their overall working conditions through schemes that include, among other things, holidays, relative job security and pensions (OECD, 2009; UNESCO-OREALC, 2013). According to the OECD, teaching can become a more attractive profession by providing flexible working conditions that facilitate a satisfactory balance between work, family responsibilities and other activities.

In particular, it has been said that early childhood teachers must be given decent working conditions as a key component of their full professionalism (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2012; Shaeffer, 2015).

9.2 Professional Career

If “professional career” is understood to mean the system that regulates the hiring, practice, job security, development, promotion and retirement of teachers (Murillo, 2006), virtually all of the countries that participated in this study have provided for the professional career of early childhood teachers, albeit in different forms.

The only exception is Guatemala, where promotion and, by implication, a salary increase is automatic after every four years of service. Early childhood teachers are not rewarded for length of service or for performance. Some of them are entitled to promotion for reasons other than those established by law and unrelated to training. However, their salaries are lower and they do not receive benefits, such as Christmas bonuses.

The other countries may be divided into two groups: those that have established early childhood teaching as a professional career that includes all or most of the aforementioned elements of professional career, and those that have only a few of those elements in place. It is interesting to note that in some of these countries, the professional career for early childhood teachers is part of a larger system that includes all teachers whereas in others, it is a parallel track. In addition, in all of these countries, some early childhood teachers are eligible for professional career while others are not.

The countries that have established early childhood teaching as a full professional career include Colombia, Mexico and Peru. In Colombia, according to Buitrago, the regulations that govern the career of teaching cover the hiring, job security, promotion and retirement of public school teachers and establish the hierarchy of teaching positions. They also establish the administrative status of teachers, including, among other things, rights, duties, prohibitions, disqualifications and incompatibilities. However, these provisions apply only to teachers in the formal public system from preschool (age 3 to 6) onwards, not to those who work with children from birth to age 3.

In 2013, according to Quintanilla, Mexico also established teaching as a professional career, the Professional Teaching Service, and regulated the hiring, promotion, salaries and job security of teachers and administrators in primary and secondary schools run by the state and its decentralized bodies. Training, capacity-building and continuing training are provided through policies, programmes and targeted activities such as an incentive scheme that rewards efficient functioning of the education service and increases the respect paid to teachers in the schools and by society as a whole. Since 1993, the country has also had an optional professional development programme, Professional Career for Teachers, which takes into consideration length of service, highest level of education completed, grade received on the professional training examination, retraining and professional development courses completed, performance evaluations and student achievement. This programme, which will expire in 2015, applies to basic education teachers, including early childhood teachers, but not those who perform nursery and day care functions in ECE. According to Mexico's national discussion group, the professional career is primarily vertical rather than horizontal and, as a result, it is difficult for teachers to transfer performance rewards when changing schools. In addition, a significant percentage of the country's early childhood teachers, primarily those who care for children from birth to age 3, are not eligible for the professional career programme and the rules governing entry to the teaching profession are neither clear nor transparent.

Ochoa reports that in Peru, the professional career for early childhood teachers is part of the broader programme for all teachers, which, in addition to ensuring job security and establishing the length of the working day, allows for both horizontal and vertical advancement. Teachers can advance horizontally in four areas of professional development: pedagogical management, school administration, teacher training and innovation and research. They can advance vertically by applying for promotion to positions of greater responsibility such as school administrator, pedagogical management director, education specialist, principal or assistant principal. The professional career allows for appointment only to positions that have been publicly announced and for periods of up to three years, which may be extended after evaluation. Other benefits include income; opportunities for promotion, supervision and in-service training; and an equitable balance between the rights and duties of teachers. Because the relevant legislation was only recently adopted, the process of entry to the career of public school teacher is still at an early stage.

El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua have also established early childhood teaching as a specific career. In the Dominican Republic, it is included in the broader career of teaching as a whole.

Costa Rica offers an interesting example of two-track professional career, one specifically for early childhood teachers and another that incorporates them into the country's general teaching population.

In contrast, Argentina, Brazil and Chile have established isolated elements of a professional career. According to Brailovsky, Argentina's regulations cover all teachers, including early childhood teachers, and are different for public and private schools. They provide for appointment to teaching positions, vertical promotion and release

from liability. In the public schools, teachers are appointed through an official process whereby, when a position becomes available, candidates are invited to apply in an order based on their teaching scores; those with higher scores are given priority in their choice of position (appointment or tenure). In private schools, there are few regulations governing appointment and promotion. Schools may invite, interview and hire teachers independently without regard for any lists or ranking other than those that they themselves prepare within the limits imposed by the labour laws. Vertical promotion follows similar rules; it uses a point system but the final stage of the process often includes a presentation, examination or interview. The order of promotion is: teacher, head teacher, assistant principal, principal, administrator. This hierarchy varies from one administrative unit to another and may include intermediate positions or use different position titles. Generally speaking, the regulations release teachers from liability in the event of a serious offence. In such cases, a disciplinary board is convened but penalties are rarely imposed.

Abuchaim reports that in recent years, Brazil has also made progress in regulating teachers' professional career and, specifically, their access to positions in public schools. While early childhood teachers do not have their own advancement programme, the law stipulates that vacancies for teachers in the public schools must be publicly announced (despite the fact that this is not done as often as required). Nonetheless, over half of the country's municipalities either have yet to establish professional career plans for teachers or need to improve them.

According to Pardo and Adlerstein, the work of Chile's early childhood teachers is partially regulated by the Teacher's Statute (the law that regulates the work of teachers in state-funded public and private schools), which applies only to teachers who work in those schools. Early childhood teachers who work in privately financed schools or in centres that receive funding from the National Association of Preschools and the Integra Foundation are covered by the Labour Code while employees of the National Association of Preschools are covered by the wage floor law for the Association's staff.

According to Thornhill, in Trinidad and Tobago, teachers who work with 3- and 4-year-olds are not eligible for professional career; their work is regulated by employment contracts, which some of them have and others do not. Originally, teachers had less job security. With the establishment of the ECCE construction programme and the review of the professional requirements, new contractual positions were created. Teachers classified under the old system are paid less than the amount required under the new system but have greater job security. All new career positions are contractual with a fixed salary, usually for a period of three consecutive years, at the end of which a gratuity payment of 20 per cent of the total salary for the period worked is paid.

In Venezuela, early childhood teachers are incorporated into the broader teaching profession while in Cuba, they have a separate career path.

In order to properly assess the issue of the professional career for early childhood teachers in Latin America, it must be borne in mind that the regulation of their work has only recently become of interest at the international level after a long history of job insecurity. For this reason, in most of the world, there is no legal provision

for their professional career and their working conditions may even be worse than those of primary school teachers. However, as it is now recognized that professional career is a key factor in high quality work, the issue is beginning to be included in the debate on early childhood teaching as a profession.

Unfortunately, the little available evidence at the international level shows that in most countries throughout the world, the working conditions of early childhood teachers offer no decent prospects for professional career. Cameron and Moss have demonstrated that, among other things, they have poor career prospects. One exception is Denmark, where early childhood teachers are not only the best paid workers, but also those with the best career prospects. In the other European countries, however, they have fewer opportunities for professional career. In Hungary, for example, the only way for them to rise in the profession is through promotion to an administrative position. In all of the European countries, professional career generally entails leaving the classroom to work in administration; there are few rewards for experienced classroom teachers (Cameron & Moss, 2007).

The ILO has stressed the importance of professional career as a crucial factor in the retention of early childhood teachers. This requires the promotion of policies designed to strengthen their professional careers in order to make ECE more attractive and to raise their status. It also involves offering a variety of alternatives for in-service advancement through professional development opportunities outside the schools, such as sabbaticals, unpaid leave and labour exchanges (Shaeffer, 2015).

9.3 Performance Evaluation

In virtually all of the countries that participated in this study, the performance of early childhood teachers is evaluated; the only exception is Guatemala. These evaluations fall into two categories: those that have various consequences for the teachers evaluated, such as incentives, penalties and, in some cases, training; and those in which performance evaluations are solely formative. In some of the countries analysed, these evaluations are conducted for some early childhood teachers but not others, depending on the institution in which they work and the age of the children in their care.

In Chile, Cuba, Panama, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela, performance evaluations are associated with incentives and/or penalties. According to Pardo and Adlerstein, in Chile these evaluations vary according to the institution in which the teacher works. Those employed by public schools must be evaluated every four years under a system that includes four components: a teaching portfolio, a self-evaluation, a report from the principal and an interview with a peer evaluator. The evaluation has various consequences depending on its outcome; teachers with lower scores must repeat the evaluation whereas those with higher scores may apply for a monetary incentive that rewards professional excellence, assessed by testing their knowledge and teaching skills. In addition, teachers employed by state-funded public and private schools may volunteer for accreditation of their teaching excellence, which also entails an economic incentive.

In Cuba, performance evaluations involve interviews, class observation and a document review. The outcome is used to plan methodological work, fill gaps and make performance recommendations. Teachers whose performance has been repeatedly assessed as poor are considered for dismissal through a further evaluation of their aptitude.

In Panama, performance evaluations are mandatory and entail class observation by the school principal. The outcome is used in considering requests for transfer and awarding annual bonuses for length of service.

Ochoa reports that in Peru, performance evaluations for public school teachers are based on the guidelines contained in the Good Teaching Framework and are mandatory for teachers at all grade levels and in all types of schools as a condition for hiring, promotion and continued employment. Performance evaluations are a condition for continued employment; they are mandatory and are conducted at intervals of three years or less. Teachers who are not approved are dismissed from public school teaching. It should be noted that since all of these provisions are recent, dating from 2013, there are no statistics on the impact of these still ongoing evaluations of initial education teachers. These evaluations also lead to other non-monetary stimuli and incentives for good performance: the teaching excellence programme, “Creative Teaching”, the annual Good Teaching Practices competition, the teaching internship programme, scholarships for bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral studies and an honorary award, the Magisterial Palms Decoration.

In the Dominican Republic, performance evaluations are both formative and summative and are based on tests, interviews and portfolios. They are a condition for salary increases and decisions regarding continuing training.

Thornhill reports that in Trinidad and Tobago, performance evaluations are conducted annually and are formative for the first two years and summative for the third year.

In Venezuela, performance evaluations for early childhood teachers include class observation and are a condition for the granting of tenure, in-line promotion and seniority bonuses.

The countries in which such performance evaluations are solely formative are Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua.

According to Brailovsky, in Argentina, annual performance evaluations in the public schools are individual and open (i.e., involving a frank, semi-structured conversation in which the elements of the evaluation have a guidance function); they involve the teacher under evaluation and the school’s administrators. The parameters of the evaluation vary from one district to another but must include a set of questions on personal and professional development and teaching outcomes, which have few consequences. Teaching evaluations normally have three main components: self-evaluation, interviews and class observation. The teacher’s portfolio must also include administrative and work-related data, the annual work plan and any class observation reports or other information on the teacher’s performance. Similar criteria are used in the private sector although it can be assumed that the conditions are different since, while many private

schools are governed by the same statutes, they are implemented less strictly and with more discretion.

Buitrago reports that in Colombia, performance evaluations are conducted for teachers and school administrators at all levels who have worked in the public schools for at least three months. They are used to assess work-related skills through a process that assesses the functional and behavioural skills of teachers and school administrators. Although there are quality guidelines (standards) for ECE, the performance of early childhood teachers is not evaluated.

In Costa Rica, administrative evaluation of teaching performance is mandatory and based on class observation. It does not apply to early childhood teachers. In Honduras, these evaluations are formative and have no consequences for teachers; they involve, among other things, tests, portfolios and class observation. Nicaragua also requires formative performance evaluations, which include interviews and class observation.

Lastly, in El Salvador, a system for evaluating the performance of early childhood teachers is in place but no information on its nature was available.

9.4 Critical Issues Concerning Working Conditions and Professional Career

The previous analysis of professional career for early childhood teachers in the participating countries has yielded the following critical issues:

9.4.1 Job Insecurity

As stated in the previous sections of this chapter, salaries and working conditions are crucial in making early childhood teaching an attractive profession (Shaeffer, 2015; Sun et al., 2015).

For this reason, the evidence gathered for this study suggests that although the available data is not sufficient to draw firm conclusions in certain cases, the situation in some of these countries is alarming in several respects.

Of particular concern is the situation of early childhood teachers who earn less than their counterparts in primary education, not only because the national budget makes improving their status problematic, but also because the profession has lower status.

The information gathered from various countries points to another source of concern: these teachers' working conditions are poor, as evidenced by high student-teacher ratios and an absence of teaching assistants. Another issue is the lack of protected time for work-related planning, evaluation and teamwork. Taken together, these factors may undermine the overall quality of ECE and lead to stress in teachers' professional and private lives that may affect their teaching, and even the physical and emotional well-being of the children.

9.4.2 *Fragmented Professional Career*

As explained above, opportunities for professional career are a crucial factor in attracting and retaining the best teachers to the schools by offering job security, incentives and long-term career prospects (Shaeffer, 2015).

The evidence gathered for this study shows that in several countries in the region, albeit with some differences, there is a clear need for progress in this area. In some countries, this problem is evidenced by the fact that early childhood teachers have no opportunity whatsoever for professional career, early childhood teaching is a part-time career or professional career is available only to some early childhood teachers.

It should be explained that the goal of professional career for early childhood teachers should be to give them more options for increasing their salaries and expanding their responsibilities other than through promotion to administrative or management posts, which requires leaving the classroom; the goal should be to keep them in the classroom by promoting them horizontally, an approach that has, as yet, been rarely attempted anywhere in the world.

9.4.3 *Inappropriate Teacher Performance Evaluation*

The evidence gathered for this study indicates that in several of the participating countries, performance evaluations for early childhood teachers are a source of concern. This is particularly true where these evaluations are summative in nature and associated with incentives and penalties that may be inappropriate to the specific characteristics of early childhood teaching (Moss, 2009).

As discussed above, this situation reflects two different problems in the evaluation of professional development. First, education authorities must recognize that early childhood teaching has specific features that make it significantly different from primary school teaching, including work with children of a wider age range, their families and teams that include paraprofessionals and professionals in other fields (including, among others, social workers and psychologists) and a variety of curriculum models. For this reason, the current evaluation mechanisms may be incapable of properly evaluating these teachers' performance.

Second, teachers themselves need to move towards broader recognition of the importance of performance evaluation as a democratic mechanism for ensuring accountability to society and, in particular, the children's families. In addition to the reservations expressed by the teaching profession with regard to such evaluation, there is a long history of minimal state involvement in early childhood teaching in the region. As a result, performance evaluations have been viewed as undermining the traditional autonomy of these teachers as they have done in other parts of the world.

10 Guidelines for the Development of Policies for Early Childhood Teachers

In light of the preceding analysis, this chapter proposes a few policy guidelines for early childhood teachers in the Latin American and Caribbean countries for each of the issues addressed in this document.

It is important to bear in mind, on the one hand, that these guidelines are a response to the critical issues identified on the basis of the information available for this study and, on the other, that they are formulated in general terms, without specific recommendations for their implementation, so that each country can adapt them to its own socio-political and cultural context, institutional characteristics, available resources, public policy priorities and feasible timelines.

Contrary to possible expectations, the following guidelines do not correspond to specific policies or courses of action to be taken by countries. While they may appear general and overly broad, they offer suggestions for addressing the tensions and progress analysed above. They are proposed on the understanding that each country will need to consider them and set priorities in light of its own situation. Moreover, they need not necessarily be adopted in their entirety by every country since they reflect critical issues identified at the regional level, some of which may already have been addressed by certain countries.

It should also be noted that these proposals are not neutral; they reflect a position based on the following five postulates:

- Early childhood education must recognize each child as a subject of rights and, for this reason, policy agendas and specific policies concerning teachers must ensure children's enjoyment of the right to learn and to participate fully in society from birth onwards. It is therefore assumed that young children are at the heart of education. In that regard, UNESCO, while recognizing the funding and governance challenges that this may entail for many countries, has stated that ECE policies should address the issues of access and quality (UNESCO, 2007).
- Early childhood teachers are professional educators. Although it is recognized that other educators have an important role to play, the standards on which the following guidelines are based are an attempt to promote the substantive development of the profession; in other words, to empower teachers and the teaching profession as the keepers of important knowledge that is unique and critical for society. UNESCO has, in fact, recognized that teacher training is essential to quality ECE (UNESCO, 2007).

- Public policies for early childhood teachers are part of a broader policy framework for education as a whole. Thus, the guidelines for effective teaching policy must be coordinated with other levels of education and other sectors and incorporated into the cultural, social, historical and political contexts that give them meaning and relevance. In particular, it is essential for the state to be involved in this coordination by adopting enabling public policies (Ponder, 2012).
- Early childhood education should be viewed as a branch of the teaching profession that is characterized by the complexities associated with the education of young children. This means that, like all professions, it requires a common knowledge base acquired during initial training; the traditional view of this occupation as requiring mothering skills that come naturally to women must be abandoned (Urban & Dalli, 2012).
- Placing teachers and teaching at the heart of education reforms means viewing early childhood teachers as key players in that effort. This document recognizes that adoption and implementation of the following guidelines will require teachers' active involvement in an ongoing public dialogue with an impact on policy-making. Only if teachers believe change is important and take responsibility for pursuing it can the long-term implementation of the guidelines be envisaged.

The Latin American and Caribbean countries have been playing a growing role in ECCE and this document views such institutional support as a key factor in the professional development of teachers in the region. While the following guidelines are not presented in order of priority or organized as a policy agenda for countries, the authors believe that the state's role should be to promote, regulate and improve the teaching profession.

10.1 Guidelines for Institution-Building and Professional Profiles

10.1.1 Raising the Professional Status of Early Childhood Teachers

The analysis of institutional models for ECE and critical issues for the profile of early childhood teachers (section 5.1 above) suggests that raising the professional status of these teachers is a critical and urgent challenge. According to various international organizations with experience in this field, formulating new policies for institutional-building at this level of education and regulating its teachers will increase their visibility and importance and thus, it is to be hoped, improve their status and professionalism (ILO-UNESCO, 2015). The progressive recognition of ECE makes it imperative for policies designed to increase its standing to focus on increasing the professionalism of its teachers, which will require providing working conditions that will allow them to meet the complex teaching demands made of them.

Raising the status of the profession will require establishing policies that will inevitably lead to recognition of teachers as an important occupational group that is essential for society as a whole. The countries analysed have insufficient mechanisms for increasing

the visibility and recognition of early childhood teaching in the context of social development. It will not be easy to remedy this problem; in most of these countries, the low status of this profession hinders efforts to provide policy support for the investment needed in order to improve teachers' working conditions, establish a stable body of specialized teachers and provide them with initial and continuing training (Isenberg, 2003). The job insecurity of early childhood teachers, together with nascent efforts towards their professionalism and towards the development of institutional mechanisms, creates a vicious circle that perpetuates their low social status.²¹

According to Guatemala's national discussion group, post-secondary training is now required of the country's primary and secondary school teachers but early childhood teachers are still trained at the secondary level. The group mentions that their trainers may not have a specialization in ECE; their only job requirement is an academic qualification or bachelor's degree. Mexico's national discussion group also reports that little attention has been paid to the issue; the evidence shows that those who train early childhood teachers are less well qualified than other teacher trainers. Analysis has gradually revealed that in these countries, early childhood teachers as an occupational group are considered far from essential by society since there are, in practice, low-cost alternatives that preclude the need for professional educators with high quality initial training, specialized trainers and highly complex training.²²

For this reason, some specialists have stated that raising the status of early childhood teachers requires not only greater regulation of their training and agreement on academic requirements (the content of training curricula), but also policy measures designed to increase their social standing by improving their working conditions and developing a clearer path to professional career in order to meet society's current expectations of the profession (Barnett, 2011; Early et al., 2006; Kagan et al., 2008). It is extremely difficult to overcome this obstacle, which will require regulating not only governments and training institutions, but a wide range of stakeholders with many interests that cannot always be easily balanced in a context in which ECE holds a comparatively weak position (Fromberg, 2003). In fact, the ILO-UNESCO report emphasizes that, despite growing recognition of the importance of this level of education in laying the foundation for life-long learning, early childhood teachers throughout the world receive the least recognition and investment in their professional development of any educators (ILO-UNESCO, 2015).

The following guidelines may facilitate progress on this issue by addressing the critical issues identified in the countries that participated in this study. All of the recommendations are grounded in the idea, put forward in 1966 by the Joint ILO-UNESCO Committee of Experts, that teaching should be regarded as a profession. Examining the professional status of teachers on the basis of this core document requires recognizing that ECE is "a form of public service which is based on expert knowledge and specialized skills. These attributes are acquired by rigorous and continuing study. In addition, professionals

²¹ According to the ILO and UNESCO, this lack of respect is recognized as a problem at all levels and is worsened by austerity measures and poorly designed accountability mechanisms. The report shows that these trends have had an impact on teachers' safety and health and, in particular, on their morale (burn-out) and physical safety (ILO-UNESCO, 2015).

²² On this issue, Peru's national discussion group even expresses concern that equating early childhood teachers with maternal figures is undermining the profession.

accept personal and social responsibility for the education and welfare of their pupils” (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2012, pp. 20).

- **Make the various social stakeholders aware of the importance and complexity of the profession**

It is essential to impress upon school administrators, employers, lawmakers, families and other stakeholders the need for a high quality ECE system- stressing that teachers at this level require advanced specialist training and that every child should be taught by a specialist- as key factors in the quality of education and in social development.

- **Develop a legal framework that will introduce, gradually and in accordance with the situation of each country, a requirement that all classes be taught by an early childhood teacher trained at the post-secondary level**

The ILO and UNESCO (ILO-UNESCO, 2015) are firmly convinced that the key to high quality ECE is to ensure that every child is taught by a teacher who is qualified, motivated and actively involved in decision-making on matters relating to education.

This will require strengthening the composition of current ECE teaching teams and increasing the proportion of professional teachers who can guide the work of their paraprofessional colleagues. This is, of course, an enormous challenge for the entire Latin American region, where most early childhood teaching is provided by community and/or paraprofessional teachers. However, this guideline can serve as a goal to be pursued in the effort to achieve high quality ECE.

- **Agree on a professional profile that will make teachers and society aware of the complexity of early childhood teaching²³**

The national groups of the Anglophone Caribbean countries are particularly keen to establish a professional profile that will make society aware of the specialized knowledge and expertise that early childhood teaching requires, thereby improving its status. These profiles are needed not only for classroom teachers, but also for their trainers.

- **Develop public participation and social dialogue mechanisms for early childhood teachers**

Improving teachers’ status will require a public effort to adopt and implement appropriate legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms to give teachers and their organizations opportunities for social dialogue and allow them to play an important role in public policy debates and education reform efforts. It is essential for states to establish types of dialogue and public decision-making in which teachers can be seen to play a constructive role.

²³ With regard to the need to raise teachers’ status by increasing their professionalism and to increase the proportion of qualified teachers, countries such as Argentina also mention the possibility of providing capacity-building and training to teachers without qualifications who are currently responsible for groups of children. This seems important, particularly for countries in which most educators are community or vocational teachers with no post-secondary training.

10.1.2 Reaching National Consensus on the Goals of Early Childhood Education

As argued in Chapter 5 above, one of the obstacles to the initial training of early childhood teachers is the fact that the various social stakeholders have different views regarding the purpose of training and the roles of teachers; this has an impact on curriculum design.

The development of early childhood teaching as a profession will require intersectoral and interdisciplinary institutional efforts with a common goal. Despite the necessary differences in strategies and the need to take specific educational and sociocultural contexts into account, it is essential to reach national consensus on the goals and outcomes of these efforts. To that end, the relevant social stakeholders – training institutions, teachers’ organizations, families, employers, researchers, policy-makers and others – must be involved. This consensus should lay the foundation for consistent public policies for the entire system of ECE; in other words, the goals of children’s learning and the basis for teachers’ initial training and professional development.

Implementing Consistent, Coordinated Early Childhood Education Systems that Raise Teachers’ Social Standing

The growing importance that governments in the region designate to this level of education in public policy cannot have the anticipated results unless the new institutions make increasing teachers’ social standing a priority. While there has been significant progress with regard to the role of states in the region, the challenge of implementing education systems that function in the diverse contexts and situations of the region has yet to be met. Coordinated, consistent and results-based institutions that will increase public confidence in the teaching profession and the schools are needed.

The concept of institution-building as a system requires bringing together a number of elements in order to coordinate education services with a view to access and quality. Institution-building involves considering providers, types of financing, regulations and policies, curricula and evaluation systems (Kagan & Kauertz, 2012). Robust, consistent institutions facilitate the optimum use of resources, ensure the equity of the system by dismantling barriers to access, providing a minimum level of quality and giving families important information so that they can exercise their right to education.

While the role of states in the regulation and provision of ECE has increased considerably, the Latin American and Caribbean countries’ institutions are still fragmented and their legislation, while well-intentioned, does not reflect the situation on the ground. Countries now have a variety of education programmes and multiple service providers that must be combined into a system capable of promoting quality, maximizing learning achievement and maintaining accountability for the use of public resources.

- **Develop consistent administrative structures**

In light of the sociocultural and political characteristics of these countries, states should pursue the development of an administrative structure that

reflects the goals established in their legislation with regard to the provision of holistic care and the closing of social gaps. Whether they opt for a unified, divided or mixed institutional model, it is essential for it to pursue and be oriented towards a comprehensive approach; in other words, it must combine education and care. Having some child care providers (and programmes) that serve no educational purpose – i.e., nurseries and day care centres) and others that are specifically devoted to ECE sets up a system of services that varies in quality and in nature and appear to be mutually exclusive and/or contradictory. A consistent institutional model should offer a body of professional and vocational teachers who provide an education that focuses on children’s learning and well-being.

Under a consistent institutional model, all policies, regulations and funding guide professional and vocational teachers and other concerned persons towards similar learning and social development outcomes, regardless of their place in the system. With this approach, the development of consistent administrative structures with intersectoral coordination mechanisms requires a greater commitment from the state and a long-term vision that will ensure both the continuity of policies and plans and adequate, sustainable investment in teachers (Blanco, 2012).

- **Implement equivalent regulatory and/or quality control systems for the various education programmes**

The primary weakness of the current ECE institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean is their inability to regulate access to an equivalent quality of education for all children; those who attend community-based private education programmes learn from mothers, monitors and non-professional teachers with little training while those who attend public education programmes with teachers in charge of the group are likely to have a better learning experience. In practice, all of the countries reported that they needed to provide better equipment and a minimum level of quality throughout the system. This will require institutional models that provide for the regulation, monitoring and evaluation of teaching processes and factors.

Research has shown that structural variables such as the child-adult ratio, appropriate curricula, trained professional and vocational teachers, proper infrastructures, a habitable physical environment and available teaching materials determine a school’s quality (Bedregal, 2006; Bennet, 2010; Center on the Developing Child, 2007; Rolla & Rivadeneira, 2006). These are precisely the minimum common standards that should be ensured for all children enrolled in school. While institutional models should include systems and agencies that monitor compliance with these quality requirements, this does not mean that the programmes should be standardized and homogenized, but rather that opportunities for and access to ECE should be available to all children, regardless of their living conditions.

- **An equitable and sustained public financing system for early childhood education**

Sustained public financing for ECE programmes is critical in ensuring growth with quality (Clifford, 2012; OECD, 2014b) because it makes it possible to hire competent staff and invest adequately in the infrastructures and equipment that provide the necessary physical environment for effective learning (OECD, 2014b). OECD studies (OECD, 2013a, 2013b, 2014b) show that in countries that provide insufficient or unequal financing for ECE, parents have less confidence in schools and teachers and families that do not view public school teachers as professionals would rather send their children to private services. This requires increased household expenditure or changes that allow a parent to care for the child, which makes it difficult for women to work and increases the likelihood that older siblings will drop out of school to care for the child.

Generally speaking, the countries in the region are increasing their level of public financing. However, this investment (in terms of GDP) is lower than in the developed countries and varies within countries, depending on the type of care and the age group of the children. The policy challenge is to develop a financing system based on three key principles: it must (1) be comprehensive and inclusive (not limited to one sector of the population); (2) offer high quality programmes and services (not the bare minimum); and (3) be evidence-based; in other words, informed by data and impact assessments on an integrated ECCE system (Brodsky, 2012).

The ILO-UNESCO Committee of Experts (ILO-UNESCO, 2015) has established that the provision of equitable, sustained financing has a clear impact on early childhood teaching by presenting it as a more attractive profession and improving society's attitude towards ECE. However, the Committee notes the need to address the unpredictability of this increased investment through policies that ensure its sustainability, which may be easily affected by changes of government.

With a view to increasing sustained financing for ECE, the ILO and UNESCO (ILO-UNESCO, 2015) state that governments may use supplementary financing from the private sector in order to provide poor and disadvantaged children with equitable access. Private sector involvement, which entails a market approach, can ensure the adequate, efficient provision of services under an institutional model that monitors quality and equity. What is being proposed here is that private sector involvement be regulated using public standards since a purely market strategy for increased spending on young children has been shown to benefit wealthier families, who can pay for these services.

- **Focused, equitable deployment of the workforce**

Countries are facing the challenge of achieving a better balance in the profile and deployment of their workforce in order to meet growing needs and improve the quality of their teachers. It is essential to develop public policies for balancing

workforce distribution and teachers' professional development and effectiveness. In particular, a sufficient number of well-trained teachers must be deployed to rural areas and those where poverty is greatest.

- **Promotion of a gender-inclusive workforce**

Public policies must be used to overcome the feminization of teaching, which, while not limited to the region, is taken for granted there. In European and OECD countries this challenge has been discussed, and policies aimed at addressing it have been introduced since the 1980s. In the Latin American and Caribbean countries, it is essential to combat the assumption that women make the best teachers and the association of stereotypes about women and mothers with early childhood teaching and school administration. Campaigns that demonstrate the scientific complexity of the profession and restoring teachers' social status are an important step in that regard. Some developed countries have shown that strategies such as professional networking and supervision of male teachers facilitate progress towards a gender-inclusive profession.

10.1.4 *Introducing Information, Monitoring and Evaluation Systems for Policies on Early Childhood Education*

The available information on the profession is minimal and of varying quality. Although all of the countries stress the need for studies, monitoring systems, evaluation and official lists of services and programmes, there is very little experience in that regard. As has been widely recognized by the developed countries and international organizations (OECD, 2014b; UNESCO, 2012), informed policy- and decision-making with a view to strengthening the profession is largely dependent on the existence of systems that allow for the production of reliable, continuous data on teaching practices and the impact thereof.

- **Implement (longitudinal) early childhood education impact assessment programmes**

While investment in ECE has increased, countries also recognize the absence of quantity and quality assessments of the impact of the investment being made. It is urgent to put in place monitoring systems in order to sustain and adjust investment, thereby increasing its effectiveness. Developed countries, such as the United States and England, have longitudinal monitoring programmes, which, for over 20 years, have gathered empirical evidence and data on the impact of teaching to inform public policy-making (the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project in England and the Perry School and Abecedarian Projects in the United States).

The Latin American and Caribbean countries have yet to establish such assessment programmes. As a result, their policies are informed by the design and operation of various education programmes rather than by the contribution of programmes and teachers to the system's anticipated outcome.

- **Put in place national systems for the production of data on early childhood education**

In addition to the few available data on ECE, countries in the region are facing the task of agreeing on a model and developing national data production systems that are comparable between countries and over time. In that regard, the OECD (OECD, 2014b) has identified this problem in the countries' reports and the countries themselves have often explained that their geopolitical divisions and/or divided institutional structures make it difficult to produce unified, reliable baselines and monitoring systems. It is generally assumed that there is a large margin of error that skews the interpretation of data and complicates comparison at the international level.

10.2 Guidelines for Initial Training

10.2.1 Require Post-Secondary Initial Training for Early Childhood Teachers

As explained in Chapter 6 above, it is now widely recognized that it is important for early childhood teachers to have four years of specialized training at the post-secondary level, either in universities or in other higher education institutions. Therefore, the lack of such training seriously limits the quality of ECE.

For this reason, countries that still train early childhood teachers at the secondary level should make progress in that regard. The following guidelines are proposed:

- **Make post-secondary training a legal requirement for early childhood teaching**

While this measure will not ensure that all children who attend initial education programmes are properly taught, it is a minimum requirement for progress towards quality education at this level. Since some countries in the region have a high percentage of early childhood teachers with secondary school training, making progress in this regard a significant challenge, this guideline does not call for an immediate solution but merely suggests that it be set as a medium- or long-term goal.

- **Develop a post-secondary training plan for currently employed early childhood teachers with secondary level qualifications**

This measure is an alternative for providing post-secondary training to currently employed early childhood teachers who were trained at the secondary level. This is important because several countries have many such teachers.

This training plan should be offered in-service and be expressly designed to expand teachers' knowledge and skills rather than developing a purely formal or bureaucratic certification programme.

- **Develop a plan for the progressive conversion of secondary to post-secondary level training institutions**

This means working towards the progressive closure of early childhood teacher training programmes at the secondary level and converting them to post-secondary institutions.

Such a transformation is a major task since the central administration will need to develop new curricula, establish specialized teaching faculties, acquire the necessary training resources (i.e., publications) and seek ways to finance training programmes.

The guidelines proposed here may present enormous challenges for Latin American countries, as well as for other high-income countries, because the high cost of a longer and more complex programme and the higher salaries paid to better-qualified teachers make post-secondary training extremely expensive.

Nonetheless, initial training of early childhood teachers at the post-secondary level should be an ultimate goal to be pursued in the search for quality. Covering this cost will require not only making funding available, but also convincing the various ECE stakeholders – lawmakers, government authorities, families, employers and early childhood teachers’ organizations – of the importance of such an investment.

10.2.2 Raising the Admission Requirements of Programmes for the Initial Training of Early Childhood Teachers

The evidence gathered for this study shows that in most of the countries in the region, admission to initial training for early childhood teachers is not academically selective.

There should be minimum requirements for this training, including an academic standard that at least ensures that the students will be able to perform successfully throughout their post-secondary studies. However, it is also important to take into account the aptitude and attitude suited to the skills required for this profession.

The exact combination of admission requirements should be determined by each country, depending on the characteristics of its post-secondary education system and the attractiveness of early childhood teaching as a profession. Thus, it is important to reiterate that the need to set minimum requirements should be balanced with the attractiveness of ECE in each country to ensure that the requirements do not result in a serious shortage of applicants.²⁴

²⁴ Argentina’s national discussion group does not agree that there is a relationship between the selection of applicants, the quality of initial training and the subsequent performance of teachers. It considers that an emphasis on selection undermines the quality of the instruction offered by training institutions and has little impact on students. The group believes that responsibility for basic preparation lies with the lower levels of the education system and suggests that admission requirements should include, for example, grade point averages and required examinations and courses in secondary school. Lastly, it believes that excessive selectivity hinders the admission of future teachers who might make significant academic progress in higher education.

It should also be emphasized that raising the requirements for admission to programmes for the initial training of early childhood teachers will not in itself guarantee that the graduates have the skills required for this profession. As discussed in Chapter 6 above, this is dependent on several aspects of initial training, including the curriculum and the regulations governing post-secondary training. Attracting better students will also require raising the status of the profession.

10.2.3 *Bring the Initial Teacher Training Curriculum into Line with Agreed Goals for Early Childhood Education*

As argued in Chapter 7 above, in several countries in the region, curricula for the initial training of early childhood teachers vary widely. While these differences may reflect a valuable diversity of education goals, they may also hinder the inclusion of content that is widely recognized as important for the profession.

The following guidelines seek to preserve this content in initial training:

- **Set standards, directives or guidelines for the initial training of early childhood teachers**

Their purpose should be to provide training institutions with general guidelines on the basic knowledge, skills and aptitudes that early childhood teachers need so that their teaching will, in practice, promote children's development and learning.

Thus, these standards should serve as the minimum common denominator for early childhood teaching by reflecting the underlying principles of the field, the outcome of international research and specific local needs while allowing schools to put their own stamp on their study programmes (for example, intercultural bilingual education or types of curriculum).

In order for these standards to be legitimate and relevant, early childhood teachers' organizations must play an important role their development and extensive consultations must be held in order to ensure that they reflect teachers' views regarding the basic elements of initial training.

- **Change the curricula of programmes for the initial training of early childhood teachers**

This change must be based primarily on the standards, directives or guidelines set in each country in order to ensure that all of the basic knowledge, skills and aptitudes required for early childhood teaching are incorporated into initial training. Proposed curricula should include the fundamental principles of ECE, such as play-based learning and holistic child development (including not only languages and mathematics, but also personal, social, artistic and physical development), as well as the transition to primary school and special education at this level.

It is also essential to take into account the specific challenges that each country faces with regard to the initial training of early childhood teachers in light of its

own situation and, in particular, the need to provide all children with an education that includes, among other things, instruction in their culture and language.

Adopting these guidelines will require understanding that ECE is a profession and, as such, requires a core of fundamental knowledge that cannot be eliminated without undermining the professionalism of future teachers. However, in view of the discussion on this issue, progress towards that goal will necessarily require launching a national debate in order to reach consensus among the relevant stakeholders, including organizations of early childhood teachers, on the specific knowledge to be included in the initial training of early childhood teachers.

10.2.4 *Strengthening Early Childhood Teacher Training Institutions*

As analysed in Chapter 7, the available evidence suggests that the institutions responsible for the initial training of early childhood teachers have weaknesses, particularly insufficient resources and inadequate mechanisms for demonstrating their quality. The following guidelines will help to overcome these problems:

- **Establish public accreditation systems for early childhood teacher training institutions**

These systems should aim to ensure that all training institutions provide instruction of sufficient quality to meet their goals effectively. Certification should be based on stringent requirements and be a requirement for offering a programme for the initial training of early childhood teachers, not merely a formality based on criteria tangential to that function. This mechanism will allow society to make training institutions accountable for training good early childhood teachers.

- **Provide early childhood teacher training institutions with the resources necessary for the provision of adequate initial training**

The establishment of accreditation systems cannot be an isolated mechanism for strengthening early childhood teacher training institutions; they must also be provided with the necessary resources to move towards compliance with the requirements.

These resources must be allocated to acquisition of the equipment needed for the completion of this task, including, among other things, specialized publications, ECE resources and a network of schools for practice teaching. Efforts must also be made to strengthen relations between teacher training institutions and schools in order to develop a partnership that both promotes practice teaching by trainees and incorporates new knowledge and innovation into the work of these institutions.

This guideline is an effort to support the idea that, owing to its complexity, early childhood teacher training requires specialized resources in order to be effective. The historical unpredictability of resources for teacher training must be addressed.

- **Strengthen existing academic institutions**

As part of the preceding point, training institutions must have sufficient resources to form stable teaching faculties specializing in ECE. Of course, it is now widely recognized that only this type of faculty can adequately implement an initial training programme by providing opportunities for discussion and debate based on a common core of specialized knowledge.

Following this guideline may require training programmes to make a significant investment in recruiting academics to join their faculty or updating and expanding their current faculty members' knowledge in their respective areas of specialization.

Progress in strengthening early childhood teacher training institutions will necessarily cost significantly more than the current expenditure. But, above all, it will require policy-makers who believe that the quality of ECE is critically dependent on the initial training of its teachers and, for this reason, that stakeholders must agree on the technical requirements for achieving this goal (Hyson et al., 2013).

10.3 Guidelines for Continuing Professional Development

10.3.1 Strengthen State Regulation of Continuing Professional Development Programmes for Early Childhood Teachers

As argued in Chapter 8 above, the evidence gathered for this study shows that there is insufficient state regulation of existing programmes for the continuing professional development of early childhood teachers in various countries in the region. The following guidelines will help to overcome this problem:

- **Establish an accreditation system of programmes for the professional development of early childhood teachers**

This system should publicly certify the quality of existing programmes from the point of view of the soundness of their curricula, the level of their current training resources and the academic qualifications of their faculty.

In countries where this type of programme is governed primarily by market forces, this guideline may entail a shift towards a model in which the state plays a key role by helping to improve the quality of ECE.

- **Develop a national policy on the continuing professional development of early childhood teachers**

This policy should seek to improve the consistency and relevance of the available programmes by avoiding gaps and duplication in content and methodology. It should also seek to adopt administrative models that will help currently employed teachers to find a balance between teaching and regular participation in

continuing professional development programmes. Lastly, it should offer feasible payment plans that will facilitate early childhood teachers' participation in continuing professional development programmes and ensure the sustainability of these programmes over time.

10.3.2 *Encourage the Systematic Linking of Programmes for the Continuing Professional Development of Early Childhood Teachers*

As argued in Chapter 8 above, the evidence gathered for this study suggests that in several of the participating countries, programmes for the continuing professional development of early childhood teachers are not linked to the initial education system as a whole in terms of their relationship with initial training and public policy and their response to the needs of currently employed teachers. The following guidelines may help to overcome these problems:

- **Identify the professional development needs of currently employed early childhood teachers**

This diagnosis should be used in deciding which programmes for the professional development of early childhood teachers to offer, based on their expressed needs and taking into account their length of service and areas of interest, the type of curriculum and the characteristics of the children in their care.

This guideline is a practical short-term step towards the systematic integration of continuing professional development programmes.

- **Promote the availability of various alternatives for the continuing professional development of early childhood teachers in terms of content, duration and approach**

This range of options can be used to facilitate, in a single move, the linking of continuing professional development programmes with the priorities of initial training and public policy and the personal interests of teachers themselves. Thus, all continuing professional development programmes would benefit by being linked organically to the rest of the initial education system.

- **Encourage the establishment of learning communities**

There has been a growing awareness that peer learning for teachers is a rich source of continuing professional development that has a positive impact on teaching effectiveness. As research has shown, learning communities allow teachers to share their understanding, research and teaching practices. A learning community is a group of teachers who undertake to cooperate in research, problem-solving and discussion of their teaching practices; thus, they complement formal continuing professional development programmes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Mindich & Lieberman, 2012). These communities, which

have already been established for teachers at other levels of education in several countries in the region (UNESCO-OREALC, 2013), might assume responsibility for, among other things, facilitating the transition of teachers who have recently entered the field.

The scope of these guidelines is not limited to institutions that offer professional development programmes; they should be coordinated with the institutions that employ early childhood teachers and with each country's domestic law with a view to harmonization. Progress in that regard will make it possible to increase the percentage of early childhood teachers with this type of certification and thus to promote their effective development throughout their career.

10.3.3 *Systematize Existing Data on the Continuing Professional Development of Early Childhood Teachers*

As explained in Chapter 8 above, several of the participating countries do not have aggregated country-wide data on their continuing professional development programmes and are therefore unable to take advantage of a valuable resource that could inform national policy development. The following guidelines may facilitate progress in that regard:

- **Centralize the available data on existing professional development programmes**

In practice, this guideline entails making better use of the currently available but disparate data on the countries in the region. These data could be compiled by systematically entering them in a national database organized by content, modality, length and type of certification granted.

This database could also include the outcome of existing research on continuing professional development programmes for early childhood teachers.

- **Increase the availability of existing data on continuing professional development programmes**

The purpose of this guideline is to improve the information available both to early childhood teachers seeking information on available options and to public policy-makers and researchers in the field.

Progress on this issue would allow teachers to take informed decisions, facilitate the development of more grounded policies and promote further research in the field.

Adopting these guidelines could lead to qualitative improvement in the development of programmes for the continuing professional development of early childhood teachers by providing an overview of their nature and, on that basis, helping to strengthen them.

10.4 Guidelines for Working Conditions and Professional Career

10.4.1 Improve Salaries and Working Conditions

The evidence reviewed in Chapter 9 shows that the salaries and working conditions of early childhood teachers are inadequate and, in several countries, lower than those of primary school teachers, lessening the profession's attractiveness.

The following guidelines may help to overcome these serious problems:

- **Establish fair salaries that reflect the professional status sought**

These salaries should be paid to early childhood teachers at the beginning of and throughout their careers and should be at least equivalent to those of all other teachers in the country in question. However, the goal should be to bring them into line with those of other professionals as a sign of the importance of early childhood teaching as a profession.

- **Provide early childhood teachers with attractive individual and collective working conditions**

Policies on this issue should seek to improve teachers' working conditions, particularly by providing protected time for non-teaching activities (planning, evaluation, teamwork and contact with families), reducing the high student-teacher ratio and assigning teaching assistants to help them provide a proper educational experience in the schools.

Many countries in the region will probably find this a difficult challenge owing to the high costs involved. However, because it is indispensable in making early childhood teaching an attractive profession, a way to move gradually in that direction must be found.

10.4.2 Establish Attractive Prospects for Professional Career

As explained in Section 9.2 above, in several of the participating countries – albeit to different extents – there is no professional career system for early childhood teachers and none of the elements thereof are in place.

The following guidelines may facilitate progress in this regard:

- **Establish a professional career system for early childhood teachers that clearly and transparently regulates their hiring, practice, job security, development, promotion and retirement**

This system may be incorporated into that of teachers as a whole or be established specifically for early childhood teachers.

The key take-away of this guideline is that professional career for early childhood teachers must include the various stages of their careers while reflecting the

specific characteristics of the profession (for example, play-based learning, multidisciplinary teamwork and involvement of the family) in setting criteria for promotion.

- **Establish a professional career system that includes early childhood teachers**

A professional career for early childhood teachers should allow them to accumulate entitlements throughout their careers, regardless of the institution in which they work or the age of the children in their care.

This guideline represents a departure from current practice in the region, where professional career is made available to only a small fraction of early childhood teachers, ignoring the fact that they constitute an occupational group. The guideline is based on the importance of promoting these teachers as a group in order to improve the quality of teaching at this level of education.

- **Link professional development to professional career for early childhood teachers**

Participation in relevant, high quality continuing professional development programmes should be heavily weighted in decisions on promotion and their purpose – improving teaching skills – should be stressed.

However, it is important to avoid mechanically linking the number of hours of professional development with a point system for professional career that might undermine the quality and relevance of such training.

It will not always be easy to adopt these guidelines since professional career systems must reflect the institutions that employ early childhood teachers and, as explained in Chapter 5 above, these institutions are highly fragmented in most of the countries studied. Therefore, progress in this regard will require coordination between institutions in order to agree on criteria for the professional career of early childhood teachers that will make it feasible to implement these guidelines.

10.4.3 *Generar mecanismos apropiados de evaluación del desempeño profesional*

As argued in Chapter 9 above, the increasing introduction of mechanisms for evaluating the performance of early childhood teachers has met with opposition from the profession. While the importance of this type of evaluation has been generally recognized, the mechanisms usually employed for this purpose have been widely rejected because they are seen as undermining the goals and teaching methods that are appropriate to ECE. In order to overcome this problem, the following guideline is proposed:

- **Build consensus between early childhood teachers' organizations and the education authority**

This will entail agreeing on appropriate mechanisms for evaluating the performance of early childhood teachers, which should reflect the specific

characteristics of ECE that define the profession. This effort should seek to identify evaluation methods and instruments that respect the uniqueness of the work of early childhood teachers by taking into account the fact that they work with children who vary widely in age, with families and with teams that include paraprofessionals and professionals in other fields using a range of curriculum models that are specific to ECE.

The performance evaluation system used should be objective, transparent and based on guidelines or standards that have been agreed with the profession. This will require developing participatory mechanisms so that teachers can contribute to the effort.

Progress in this regard will require replacing the technocratic bias associated with performance evaluations with a professional approach whereby performance evaluations become both a democratic process of accountability to society and families and a training mechanism for improving professional development.

11 Conclusions

11.1 Early Childhood Education as a Highly Complex Process

Several of the critical issues identified in this document originate from the widespread belief that the education of young children in an institutional context is a simple process that can ideally be provided by only meeting their basic needs (food and shelter) and providing maternal care. This belief underlies the policies of many countries around the world, which have focused on coverage in ECE while postponing improvement in its quality.

Despite the widespread nature of ECE, research has demonstrated conclusively that only high quality ECE – in other words, education that has an impact on children’s development and learning – can be beneficial. Conversely, it has been shown that poor quality ECE may be harmful to children. The evidence shows that, owing to its enormous complexity, high quality ECE is the result of interrelated factors at various levels, including a large budget and, above all, well-trained early childhood teachers. At the same time, viewing ECE as a birth right prevents it from being seen as a service intended merely to meet the basic needs of children and reaffirms it as a process designed to ensure holistic development during the first years of life (Barnett, 2011).

For this reason, it is important that policies concerning ECE be based on the premise that, in order for this level of education to meet modern society’s high expectations, they must focus on the achievement of high quality standards. This will require not only increasing public spending on ECE but, as discussed in the following section, meeting the perhaps-greater challenge of effecting cultural change by transforming it from a care-based model to a level of education in its own right (UNESCO, 2015b).

11.2 Professionalism Represents a Major Cultural Change for Children and their Education

The professional development of early childhood teachers requires a complex approach. In addition to intersectoral policies and effective care and education programmes, countries must address the beliefs and images of children and education on which early childhood schools and teaching are based. There is a general consensus that the professional development of early childhood teachers requires giving new meaning to the terms “children”, “childhood”, “quality” and “teaching practices”.

It is now agreed that prioritizing provision programmes is not enough to ensure the effectiveness and quality of education (Kagan & Kauerz, 2012). In the case of early childhood teachers, professional development also includes public confidence in the

field and society's assumptions about who children are and what they should know, be and do (Mayall, 2002). In that sense, extensive research in various disciplines explains the ways in which these images of children (James & Prout, 1997) and beliefs about schools and teachers (Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg et al., 2005; Penn, 2000) increase or decrease the legitimacy of public policies.

This perspective shows the importance of promoting a profound cultural change that will give new meaning to the role of ECE in society and to the social value of the teachers who provide it. Countries recognize that only through new sociocultural codes that genuinely view children as subjects of rights and teachers as agents of social change and guardians of citizenship can what has, until now, been considered a semiprofession become a profession (Batallán, 2007).

11.3 The Professionalism of Early Childhood Teaching as a Profession Represents a Challenge at the Global Level

In light of the overwhelming international evidence of the link between ECE and countries' social development, investment in education programmes and teachers' professional development appears to be the natural point of departure for human development policies (Sen, 1999; van der Gaag, 2002). The current situation of early childhood teachers is not specific to Latin America and the Caribbean; a growing body of specialist studies and comparative research shows how these professionals should approach the complex challenge of caring for and teaching a variety of children while, at the same time, responding to growing public awareness of the social return on investment in ECE.

Both the more developed countries of Europe and North America and the developing countries have recognized that the professionalism of early childhood teaching is feasible as part of a broader agenda that includes policy-making (Vaillant, 2013) and the establishment of institutions capable of investing in and coordinating a consistent system (Brodsky, 2012; Stebbins, 2012). As OREALC/UNESCO (OREALC/UNESCO, 2013) have stated, however outstanding the teacher policies formulated, they will not change the profession substantially unless institutions are robust and capable of driving and monitoring their implementation.

In addition, countries' experience at the international level shows that they must simultaneously face symbolic but complex challenges, raise teachers' social status and build public confidence in schools and teachers (ILO-UNESCO, 2015).

11.4 The State as a Key Stakeholder in Early Childhood Education

Several of the critical issues identified in this document are rooted in the failure to harmonize the various components of this level of education. For example, in several countries the ECE system is merely a collection of programmes and policies with unrelated goals and strategies.

Not only is this the situation in most of the world, but international experience has shown that the countries that have successfully established high quality ECE (Cuba, Finland and Sweden) are precisely those in which the state has adopted strong policies that have harmonized the various levels, stakeholders and initiatives that comprise this level of education (OECD, 2013; Tinajero, 2010)

For this reason, it is important to enhance the state's not only influential, but essential role in implementing consistent early childhood policies capable of forming synergies between the various efforts made. In practice, this will require states to develop convergent goals for education and teacher training.

11.5 Empowering the Profession from the Pedagogical and Policy Perspectives

The challenge facing the professional development of early childhood teachers is to strengthen the profession and empower its teachers in two ways. Both UNESCO and the ILO, through their Joint Committee of Experts, have set their empowerment as a priority goal for 2030. In that regard, the need to ensure that every child is taught by a qualified, motivated teacher who receives professional support and is capable of participating in decision-making on matters relating to early childhood teaching has been established as a key condition for a sustainable society. In order to achieve that goal, two approaches are needed.

First, the specific pedagogical content that distinguishes early childhood teaching from other education sciences with classroom applications (such as psychology, anthropology and sociology) must be determined and emphasized. This will require identifying good teaching practices, a knowledge base specific to the profession and teaching experiences that are relevant and effective in their various contexts. This does not mean reducing teaching to a technical repertoire of actions and conditions, but of recognizing the complexity of a body of scientific knowledge in the process of development, accumulation and validation by the professionals who use it. As Lee Shulman has said, "We have an obligation to raise standards in the interest of improvement and reform, but we must avoid the creation of rigid orthodoxies. We must achieve standards without standardization. We must be careful that the knowledge-based approach does not produce an overly technical image of teaching, a scientific enterprise that has lost its soul" (Shulman, 2005, p. 27).

Empowering early childhood teachers also means recognizing them as policy stakeholders and decision-makers on matters relating to early childhood teaching. From this point of view, teachers' participation in public discussions, policy-making and forums for professional cooperation provides opportunities for dialogue on basic issues with a view to agreement on and interpretation of their role and that of ECE.

Ultimately, empowering the teaching profession will require policies that mobilize the capacities of stakeholders and institutions in order to agree on the meaning of ECE and to increase cooperation in pursuing shared goals and resolving disputes and tensions through transparent, participatory dialogue.

11.6 Further Research with a View to Improving Policies Concerning Early Childhood Teachers

As has been demonstrated throughout this document, there is little information on ECE in countries in the region. This lack is particularly evident in the case of policies concerning teachers (there is more information on institutions at this level of education) and poses a serious problem when setting public policies, including those designed to improve teaching practice (Sun et al., 2015), since such policies must be based on evidence gathered in other contexts, primarily those of developed countries.

The available information shows significant variation between countries, a fact that cannot be ignored when developing effective policies concerning early childhood teachers. Of course, good public practice must be grounded in information relevant to the context; otherwise, it would ultimately be based on intuition or on information provided by other, and sometimes very different, countries. In practice, virtually all of the research mentioned in this document was carried out in Anglophone developed countries whose cultures, income levels and therefore policy rationales are probably quite different from those of Latin America (Rebello Britto et al., 2013).

These considerations make it essential to encourage research into the various elements of the early childhood system as a key factor in the development of sound, effective policies which address the specific problems that each country needs to solve.

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LINKS OF INTEREST

Colegio de Profesores del Perú
<http://www.cppe.org.pe/>

Comité de Administración del Fondo de Asistencia y Estímulo de los Trabajadores del Sector Educación, CAFAE-SE
<http://www.cafae-se.com.pe/web/index.html>

Federación Nacional de Auxiliares de Educación del Perú FENAEP
<http://docentesauxiliares.jimdo.com/>

Marco del Buen Desempeño Docente (criterios de evaluación docente)

<http://desarrollodocente.perueduca.pe/marco-del-buen-desempeno-docente>

Ministerio de Educación del Perú

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