

Country profile prepared for the
Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007
Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education

Cuba

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

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Geneva, (Switzerland)

2006

This profile was commissioned by the Education for All Global Monitoring Report as background information to assist in drafting the 2007 Report. It has not been edited by the team. Information included in the series of profiles has been compiled by the IBE. In several cases data have been revised and/or expanded thanks to the helpful support of Ministries of Education and UNICEF offices worldwide. The views and opinions expressed in the present document are not necessarily those of the EFA Global Monitoring Report or UNESCO. The profile can be cited as follows: "Country Profile commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, Strong foundations: early childhood care and education". For further information, please contact: efareport@unesco.org

CUBA

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

A. GENERAL INFORMATION, STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

Starting age of compulsory education (if applicable):

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), education is compulsory for children aged six to 14.

1. ISCED 0 PROGRAMMES (USUALLY, PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION)

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programmes:

The preschool education system for children aged zero to six is organized through institutional and non-institutional channels. The “Educate Your Child” programme is recognized as one of the forms of non-institutional provision. This is an official programme coordinated by the Ministry of Education.

Education is rooted in community participation and is approached intersectorally; hence, it is structured in such a way that society groups and organizations involved in family orientation and in community mobilization are represented. All of this is coordinated by the Ministry of Education.

The preschool level caters to groups of children aged five to six and provision is through formal institutions (schools and children’s circles) and through non-institutional modalities.

1.2. Normative age group(s) covered by ISCED 0 programmes:

Children aged zero to six, through institutional and non-institutional channels.

1.3. ISCED 0 programmes: statistics and indicators *(Please include the most recent data if available)*

1.3.1. Enrolment: (refers to enrolment as of age 3.)

	Percentage	Year
Gross enrolment ratio	116.4	2003-04
Net enrolment ratio	100	2002-03
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	98.3	2003-04

Source: UIS.

1.3.2. *Enrolment ratio by age group, 2003/04 (percentage, also including the first years of primary education when applicable):*

Less than 3 years of age	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7
11.0	99.1	99.7	100	0.0	0.0
			1.0(*)	99.2(**)	96.8(**)

(*) Enrolled in primary education. (**) Primary education enrolment ratio.

1.3.3. *Teachers, 2003-04:*

Total number of teachers	Of whom female (%)	Percentage of trained teachers (all)	Percentage of trained teachers (males)	Percentage of trained teachers (females)
27,239	100	100	–	100

Source: UIS.

1.3.4. *Funding: Data not available*

	Percentage
Public current expenditure per pupil as percentage of the Gross National Product per capita	...

1.3.5. *Main source(s) of financing:*

Funding comes from the Government budget.

2. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMMES *(Generally preceding ISCED 0 programmes)*

2.1. National definition of other ECCE programmes:

Cuba provides preschool services for the child population aged zero to six through two channels: one is institutional and involves centres known as “children’s circles” from the second year of life (age one year) to the sixth year (ages five-six), and in preschool grades in both children’s circles and primary schools.

The Educate Your Child programme was devised as a non-institutional alternative for children who do not attend an educational establishment. The programme aims to coach families to stimulate their children’s integrated development, based on their own experience. Moreover, through this non-institutional format, Educate Your Child provides educational coverage for some 7,000 children aged five to six living in mountainous areas where there are no children’s circles and primary schools are too far away.

2.2. Normative age group(s) covered by other ECCE programmes:

The Educate Your Child programme caters to the entire child population from ages zero to six, as well as pregnant women.

2.3. Estimated number of children covered by other ECCE programmes:

As at June 2005, the structure of care for children was as follows: in institutional formats, children's circles cover 15.5% and the preschool grade, 15%. Educate Your Child covers 69%. Overall coverage is 99.5%.

B. BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING ECCE PROGRAMMES (INCLUDING ISCED 0)

3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:

The Cuban preschool education system encompasses children from birth to their entry into school (zero to age five-six). It constitutes a first subsystem in the national education system and it is non-compulsory. It began when children's circles were established in 1961; before that time there were only some 300 educational centres in Cuba which provided basically for children aged five to six.

In 1980, Resolution 577 introduced regulations for children's circles and in 1981 Resolution 430 established a new curriculum. The preschool grade was considered part of primary education until 1992, when it was brought under preschool education as the final stage in that subsystem.

In 1992, the Educate Your Child programme was extended to the entire country, following 10 years of scientific research. This social programme is based on strong community engagement and it takes an intersectoral approach. It is aimed at coaching families to stimulate their children's integrated development, based on their own experience.

Family orientation is provided in two different ways: individually, basically for families with children aged zero to two, and in small groups of families with their children, who receive guidance twice weekly. Families receive guidance from guides known as counsellors, who are selected by the agencies and organizations participating in the programme and include members of the families themselves. In turn, counsellors are trained by supervisors known as promoters.

In June 2005 Cuba had 116,165 counsellors and 52,777 promoters.

3.2. Official body/bodies in charge of supervision or coordination:

The Ministry of Education is responsible for supervision, through the Preschool Education Bureau and the national technical group of the Educate Your Child programme, in which all the agencies and organizations involved in the programme are represented. This structure of coordinating groups is found in each province and municipality and in popular councils. Popular councils are the form of government organization within the community.

3.3. Other entities involved in the provision (e.g. municipalities, local governments) and main types of providers (e.g. public, private, mixed, community-based, etc.):

See 3.2 above.

3.4. Type of personnel involved (teachers, assistants, other staff):

In institutional schemes, educators and teaching assistants are responsible for care and education. The Educate Your Child programme is staffed by family doctors and nurses, teachers and volunteers who are brought together by the agencies and organizations involved in the programme and include the families themselves.

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):

Educators in children's circles are trained as preschool education graduates in tertiary institutions with a five-year curriculum entered after twelfth grade. Educators already in service who have a non-tertiary level of teacher training acquire their university training through six-year courses provided by the institutes themselves.

Teaching assistants take basic courses lasting two years or less and earn their qualification by means of a work-study system. Teaching assistants who achieve good results may have the opportunity to study for a preschool education degree.

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:

It is the State's responsibility to create the conditions for early childhood education, as enshrined in the Constitution, the Family Code and the Child and Youth Code.

3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:

The preschool education system caters to children with special education needs, both in the institutional regime and in the Educate Your Child programme. Provision within the institutional scheme is made in special circles or special facilities within children's circles or in special schools. There is also provision for children with their families in the Educate Your Child programme.

3.8. Special projects/programmes aiming at expanding or improving ECCE:

In Cuba ECCE provision covers 99.5% of the population aged zero to six.

3.9. Information concerning the curriculum (if applicable) or the contents of ECCE programmes

3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

Education for children aged zero to six is aimed at optimizing each child's integrated development and, hence, preparing them in the best way possible for school learning.

3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:

The preschool education programme is structured in development areas and its contents encompass:

- a) Socio-moral development
 - emotions and feelings;
 - moral qualities and development of independence and autonomy;
 - interpersonal relations and rules of social conduct;
 - cultural habits;
- b) Motor development
 - gymnastics;
 - physical education;
- c) World knowledge
 - knowledge of the social and natural world and of objects, their properties and relationships, including qualities such as form, colour, size, texture and interrelationships, space and time, quantitative relationships (basic notions of mathematics), mechanical relationships and cause-effect relationships;
 - construction (with different materials such as cubes, paper, boxes, and so on);

- d) Mother tongue
 - vocabulary;
 - grammatical construction;
 - oral expression;
 - phonic analysis;
 - pre-writing skills;
 - children's literature;
- e) Artistic expression
 - drawing;
 - modelling;
 - manual work;
- f) Music and corporal expression
- g) Play

The institution's educational process is organized into different types of activities in which the content listed above is put into practice. The types of activities are set out below:

Programmed activities. Designed especially for the different areas of development, these have a particular age-appropriate slot in the timetable. Their structure, orientation and organization, as well as the methods, procedures and teaching materials for this level, are suited to the specific traits and features of children in these age groups.

Independent activities. The content of these is based on the children's interests, tastes and needs. They are organized to encourage decision-making as to which activity, when and how. They give the child the opportunity to choose from among the broadest and most varied alternatives. They can be carried out with a group of one particular age or with the groups in an education stage. Some of the alternatives offered are role-play, educational games, movement games, dramatizations, musical games and excursions. There is no scheme of contents.

Complementary activities. As the name suggests, these activities are a complement to the programmed activities and/or the programme in general. This type of organization allows for the use of a broad variety of procedures to enrich, reaffirm and practise a particular content. These activities are approached in a flexible manner and allow children to move in and out of their own age group. They are also organized to address particular programme content that does not have an allotted teaching schedule but is carried out on a one-off basis.

Processes (meals, sleep, hygiene and bathing). This is designed to meet children's basic needs, organized in an educational manner. It is based on the principles of gradualness, consecutiveness, simultaneousness and appropriateness to individual traits and needs.

3.9.3. Average number of hours per week and average amount of weeks per year:

Institutions work to a schedule of 6 a.m. to 7 p.m., with a staggered timetable for teachers and other workers. The children arrive at 8.00 a.m. and stay as late as 7 p.m., depending on their parents' working hours.

The educational process is governed by the children's natural pace and the duration of educational activities varies according to the children's ages and characteristics.

3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information

Preschool pupils access the system by age and cycle as follows:

- children's circles are for the children of working mothers and are organized by age in groups of up to 30 children, except at the preschool grade, in which up to 20 children may be enrolled;
- the preschool grade is open to all children, whether their mothers work or not, but it is not compulsory;
- the non-institutional channel for preschool education is open to all children who do not attend preschool and their families.
- [*Sources:* See also website of the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI), <http://www.oei.es/>]

C. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION ON ECCE (TO BE COLLECTED IF POSSIBLE IN COLLABORATION WITH UNICEF OFFICES)

4.1. Parenting programmes are usually addressed to parents and families of children less than six years of age. Please give information on any parental education programme in your country in the table below:

Type of programme	Yes or No (note for each programme)	Please estimate the number of beneficiaries (if possible)
Parenting education through early learning centres and child care centres	Yes, as part of the concept of early education. It is conducted in children's circles and preschool grades and is at the core of the Educate Your Child programme.	813,354 (counting only one family member, which is not entirely accurate because the other members are involved as well).
As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits	Visits are conducted both by institutions and through the Educate Your Child programme. Guidance on health matters is part of the counselling work undertaken with families.	
Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development		
As component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes		
Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with media for and with children	For Life messages are broadcast over national TV and there is a regular information programme on the education channel. Work is under way to design a TV programme aimed at families with children aged zero to six.	
Other (please specify)		

Are any of these programmes targeted specifically toward the vulnerable, poor, disadvantaged or excluded? If so, which ones? (Please provide/attach any additional and relevant information if available)

The entire population has open access to education for children aged zero to six.

4.2. Is there a national-level system for monitoring children's development or school readiness prior to entering primary school?

The preschool education evaluation system includes:

- systematic evaluation conducted by teachers and by counsellors in the non-institutional programme and families;
- a round of assessment every two months based on development achievements and the cycle objectives established for each year of life or cycle;
- final evaluation or assessment of development conducted at the end of each school level;
- system of diagnostic tasks given to all children ending the preschool stage (before they start school). They are administered by preschool teachers and by those who are to continue with the children in first grade. They are not intended to yield a grade of any kind, but are directed towards deepening children's level of development as regards a number of basic abilities preparatory to learning reading and writing. Teachers use these to prepare individual profiles for each child and for the group and, on this basis, to design the early part of first grade, which is called the "preparation stage", in order to coordinate the preschool and school levels coherently;
The diagnostic tasks include those referring to the emotional domain.
- five-yearly monitoring of education provided through the non-institutional regime.

4.3. Is there a policy on early childhood (ECCE, ECD, etc.) that has been accepted? If not, is there one under development?

The political determination of the Cuban Government, which is manifested in the obligations of the Ministry of Education, whose functions include, among others, guaranteeing that the conditions exist for the provision of education to this age group.

[Information revised and supplementary data provided by UNICEF, December 2005.]