



Education International

Early Childhood Education: A Global Scenario



A study conducted by the Education
International ECE Task Force

June 2010



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FOREWORD

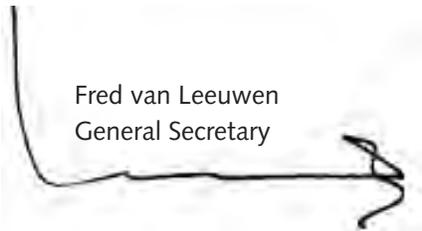
Children have a right, as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to receive education, and early childhood education (ECE) must be considered part of this right. Education International strongly believes that early childhood education is of great value to all children and should be available to all. It provides a sound basis for learning and helps to develop skills, knowledge, personal competence and confidence and a sense of social responsibility. Therefore, every child should have access to early education of good quality.

Education International's commitment to early childhood education is expressed in the 1998 Resolution passed by the EI World Congress in Washington D.C., which resolved to lobby for the provision of quality ECE to every child, free of charge and to improve the conditions of educators working in the sector.

Furthermore, the 5th World Congress of Education International, held in Berlin in 2007, decided that the EI Executive Board should establish a Task Force on Early Childhood Education. The aim of the Task Force, which was established by the Board in 2008, is to advise EI on various aspects of early childhood education, including strategies for the effective implementation of the Washington Resolution, on ECE policy, practice, programmes and activities.

This study is a product of an ECE mapping exercise conducted by the Task Force. Its findings reveal that there is a wide range of positive developments and experiences in several countries, including increasing participation rates, provision of comprehensive ECE services, as well as the training and professional development of teachers. However, progress remains slow and uneven, both within and between countries. We therefore encourage public authorities to invest in early childhood education and teacher unions and other civil society organizations to ensure that this neglected Education for All (EFA) goal is achieved by 2015.

We would like to thank members of the Task Force for conducting this study and hope its findings will enable EI member organizations to share experiences and strengthen their ECE advocacy activities.



Fred van Leeuwen
General Secretary



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The Task Force would also like to extend its appreciation to the EI Secretariat for providing the necessary administrative support and coordination, without which it would have been difficult to complete this study.

Last but not least, we would like to thank the EI Executive Board for giving us the opportunity to carry out this important task and for the support they provided during the entire process and hope that this report and its findings will be of great value to EI and its member organisations across the globe.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (ECE) provision is becoming a growing priority, and has received increased policy attention, in many countries during the past years. Equitable access to quality early childhood education is increasingly viewed by policy makers as a way of strengthening the foundations of lifelong learning for all children and supporting the educational and social needs of families. While countries are increasingly determined to increase the provision of ECE, these policy developments are often motivated by economic and political goals (Urban 2009: 12). It should not be forgotten that early childhood education is, first and foremost, *for children*.

While the contribution of ECE towards broader social, economic and education goals is being recognised (OECD 2009b: 9), the sector remains under-developed in a number of countries (gaps in provision and inadequate quality in services), due in part to a lack of investments, as well as the diversity of bodies and actors involved in its organisation and provision that may not be well coordinated and/or regulated. For example, the OECD *Starting Strong II* report states that: 'in many OECD countries, the level of regulation of services for children under 3 gives rise for concern: much of the child care sector is private and unregulated, with staff training and pedagogical programming being particularly weak' (OECD 2006).

Education International strongly believes that early childhood education is of great value to all children and should be equally available and accessible to all. Strengthening knowledge on the various approaches and practices on ECE adopted in different countries can contribute towards the improvement of policy on early childhood education through the identification of successes and challenges encountered in different contexts.

This study was conducted by the Education International Early Childhood Education (ECE) Task Force and gathered and analysed cross-national data on early childhood education policies, systems, programmes and activities from 17 countries, namely: Brazil, Canada, Denmark, The Gambia, Ghana, Hungary, Mexico, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Togo, the United States and Venezuela.

These case studies are largely based on data collected by the ECE Task Force from government and other sources, and complemented by previously



published reports, studies, and online resources, including EI policy documents on ECE and the report, *Early Childhood Education in Europe: Achievements, Challenges and Responsibilities*, commissioned by EI and undertaken by Dr Mathias Urban. The OECD report, *Starting Strong II*, published in 2006, provided more comprehensive information on a number of OECD countries included in this report, as well as a synopsis of the main discussions on policies and practices in early childhood education relevant to each country. Additionally, the UNESCO Education for All Global Monitoring Report *Strong Foundations*, published in 2007, and the European Database of the European Information Network on Education, Eurydice, provided detailed information and statistics for some of the countries.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The overall goal of the study was to investigate early childhood education policies, programmes and activities across the globe, with a view to making this information available to EI member organisations to facilitate evidence-based policy-making and information exchange.

The specific objectives of the study were:

- To identify key ECE policy issues in each of the participating countries, with a view to identifying common regional and international trends and developments, as well as the diversity and uniqueness of the various systems;
- To identify the main providers and funders of ECE services in the target countries;
- To map out the level of access to ECE services and union views on the quality of these services;
- To map out the structure of the ECE workforce in the participating countries, their professional development and conditions of service; and,
- To collect examples of good practice and case studies to facilitate information exchange among EI member organisations and other stakeholders.

1.2 Limitations of the study

The conduct of this study was not without constraints. The main challenge was the limited amount of information available on ECE and sources of data, particularly at the global level. There is a general shortage of information and data on ECE and many studies tend to rely on the OECD's dual publication *Starting Strong I & II*, whose data is mainly limited to OECD countries. While this study will add to the pool of the few available resources in the field of early education, further research into various aspects of early childhood education needs to be undertaken.

The time factor also posed a challenge to members of the Task Force, who collected the data and the EI Secretariat, who analysed it and came up with the report. Most of the members of the Task Force are full time union staff members, public employees or union leaders.

2. WHAT IS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?



ECE contributes to cognitive and other domains of child development.

Given the multifaceted nature of early childhood, it often goes by a number of names and definitions, in different countries, as well as between different stakeholders. For example, UNESCO refers to early education as early childhood care and education (ECCE), the OECD calls it early childhood education and care (ECEC), the World Bank calls it early child development (ECD), while UNICEF calls it early childhood development (ECD).

compulsory schooling and provided in different kinds of settings – nurseries, crèches, childcare centres, kindergartens, pre-schools and other similar institutions (1998 Congress Resolution on Early Childhood Education).

Throughout this report, early education services will be referred to as early childhood education. This is education from a broader point of view - wholesome education that encompasses children's holistic development and learning, where care forms an integral part of a child's development and education.

Similarly, different countries use different names to describe ECE teaching staff. The names most commonly used in the countries covered in this study include teachers, educators, pedagogues and carers /care givers. In this study, the terms "teacher" or "teaching staff" are mostly used to describe the teaching workforce. It is also important to note that, in addition to the teaching staff, some countries have teaching assistants, cooks, nurses, psychologists and other specialists and support staff working in early education.

Early childhood education has enormous individual, social and economic benefits. For example, early childhood programmes complement the roles of parents and other carers in raising children during the early years. The early childhood years set the foundation for life, ensuring that children have positive experiences and that their needs for health, stimulation and support are met, and that they learn to interact with their surroundings. Furthermore, early childhood education programmes result in easier transition to primary school, better completion rates, reduced poverty and social equality (UNESCO 2007). Children from poor families, immigrant children and children from other vulnerable groups may particularly benefit from ECE's equalising factor before compulsory schooling. For example, access to ECE can help immigrant children develop and learn the local language.

The OECD (2006) further argues that early childhood education enables women to participate in the labour market, thereby contributing to economic growth. The OECD (2006:12) posits: "Because economic prosperity depends on maintaining a high employment population ratio, the wish to bring more women into the labour market has been a key driver of government interest in expanding ECEC services".



Governments' interest in the economic benefits of ECE is reflected in the European targets for early education, known as the Barcelona Targets. These targets, which were agreed at the Barcelona summit in 2002, simply set targets for childcare places for children aged 0-3 and 3 to mandatory school age, to be achieved by 2010. While such ECE policies, which focus on employment and gender equality, are essential, they are, unfortunately, inadequate. There is need to go beyond the provision of childcare places to comprehensive services for children, that take the needs and the rights of children into account. This approach is supported by (UNESCO 2007), which argues that early childhood programmes should have as their core objective the well-being and holistic development of children's capacities.

3. EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL'S COMMITMENT TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The fundamental right of each child to learn and develop to his or her full potential, through equal access to quality education, regardless of their age, gender, origin, ethnicity and or social background, provides the foundation for Education International's (EI) commitment to early childhood education. It is rooted in the idea that:

"early childhood is the most critical period for cognitive and social development, the acquisition of languages and early literacy. Children are active learners from birth, and the first years are vital. . . Early childhood education (ECE) should be recognized as a first step of basic education, as a fully integrated sector within national education systems. Provision should be universally accessible and free for all children [...] High quality ECE provides the foundation for life-long learning and stimulates children's social, emotional, physical, cognitive and linguistic development"

(Education International 2006).

In 1998, the 2nd EI World Congress in Washington D.C. passed a resolution on early childhood education. The Congress delegates from around the world agreed that children have a right, as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to receive education, and early childhood education must be considered part of this right. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states that 'everyone has the right to education', while Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires states to recognize the right of the child to education on the basis of equal opportunity.

Year 2008 marked the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The fundamental and inalienable human rights (including education), enshrined in this document remain as relevant today as they were in 1948. That is the reason why EI insists that early childhood education is a basic human right. In addition, it should be noted that ECE is the first Education for All (EFA) goal. Unfortunately, this study confirms the findings of the 2008 Education



for All Global Monitoring Report that ECE remains a largely neglected EFA goal. Therefore, it will not be possible to achieve the EFA goals by 2015 without achieving the ECE goal.

The Washington Congress delegates also agreed that quality ECE services should be a public service and an integral part of a country's education system, be provided free of charge and be available to all children, including those with special needs. The Congress also resolved that the same status of pedagogical training should be provided for all teachers, including early childhood teachers, so as to promote continuity in the educational system, that appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that both men and women are recruited and trained as early childhood teachers and that teachers in early childhood education should have the same rights, status and entitlements as teachers in other sectors.

In Europe, Education International has developed a policy on early childhood education. In this policy, which was ratified by the EI/ETUCE Pan-European Conference in 2006, the region and its member organizations commit themselves to:

- be active participants in, and initiators of, the debate on high quality ECE as an inherent part of basic education and thus every child's right
- advocate for ECE to be a priority on the policy agendas of local authorities, governments and intergovernmental bodies.
- promote ECE that is publicly funded and universally accessible, although not compulsory
- monitor the rise of private sector initiatives in ECE in Europe and counteract the emergence of ECE as a commodity.
- advocate the integration of ECE into education systems under the auspices of the Ministries of Education or their equivalents
- counteract the split between education and care that results in inequality, instability for children, and low quality provision
- seek high standards of teacher education in ECE, at the same academic level as teacher education for primary school and onwards.
- work to achieve pay and working conditions for early childhood teachers, which are on a par with the best available of the other sectors of the education system
- seek improved opportunities for continuous professional development
- seek better career opportunities for early childhood teachers, particularly within the realm of educational research

- seek to attract more men to early childhood teacher education, and more qualified male teachers to ECE
- advocate higher resources nationally and cross-nationally for educational research with direct relevance for ECE
- urge governments to support ECE research on a national level, and encourage research and cross-national data collection on an international level, for the purpose of continued quality improvement.
- undertake further research on ECE in order to have a strong knowledge-based position on its quality, on the status of the teachers delivering ECE, and on the programmes being established.
- facilitate collaboration with other specialists
- encourage the strengthening of co-operation and communication with parents
- pay special attention to ECE developments for children under three, and ensure that they are always included in all the above recommendations

The 5th World Congress of Education International held in Berlin in 2007 decided that the EI Executive Board should establish a Task Force on Early Childhood Education. The aim of the Task Force, which was established in 2008, is to advise EI on various aspects of early childhood education, including strategies for the effective implementation of the Washington Resolution on ECE, on ECE policy, practice, programmes and activities. Furthermore, the Task Force is mandated to create an opportunity for EI member organisations to learn from one another and from other stakeholders participating in the field of early education. Since its formation, the Task Force has supported or facilitated the organisation of two ECE seminars, a Pan-European seminar held in Malta in November 2008 and a Pan-African meeting held in Accra in September 2009. One of the key recommendations from the Accra seminar was to develop a Pan-African ECE policy. A working group to spearhead this important initiative was set up by the region. This particular study is also part of the work of the Task Force.

In view of the foregoing, Education International believes that early childhood education is a public good and that every child should have access to ECE services of good quality, free of charge. In that respect, EI's member organisations are committed to engage with governments, UN agencies, civil society organisations and other stakeholders to promote quality early childhood education for all.

4. MAIN ISSUES AND TRENDS EMERGING FROM THE STUDY

Early childhood education systems differ greatly, not only across continents, but also within and between neighbouring countries, largely due to their socio-cultural and socio-economic and political contexts. Generally, despite these national and regional differences, unions within countries share similar concerns about how ECE programmes and services should be organised, implemented, maintained and monitored. Issues such as universal access for children and families, adequate training and qualifications of ECE staff, fair and equal working conditions and salaries for teaching staff, well-structured ECE governance, quality of ECE services, and including 'care' as an integral part of ECE, are common themes resonating across the ECE sector. In some countries they have been met with success and in others, remain key challenges. In this section, examples from different countries are provided under each issue to highlight different practices, successes and challenges. The main findings of the study may be briefly summarised as follows:

- Many early childhood education systems are characterised by multiple providers and funders, some of which are government, private, community, faith-based and non-governmental organisations.
- The ECE sector remains predominantly privatised, particularly for the 0-3 year age group.
- Access to ECE services remains low in many developing countries, particularly for the 0-3 year age group, poor and rural children, children with special needs and other vulnerable groups.
- There is a shortage of professionally trained and qualified ECE teaching staff in many countries.
- Men are seriously underrepresented in ECE, with over 90 percent of the teaching staff being women.
- The conditions of service for ECE teaching staff tend to be inferior to those of their counterparts in other education sectors. This might also be linked to the generally lower levels of qualifications in the ECE sector.
- The quality of ECE services is perceived to be higher in urban areas and much lower in rural areas, partly because of the uneven allocation or availability of resources, including qualified teaching staff.
- The ECE workforce remains generally non-unionised in many countries.

4.1 Early childhood education policy and governance

The OECD (2006) identifies key approaches to effective ECE provision. For example, the *Starting Strong II* study calls for a systemic and integrated approach to ECE policy, characterized by well-coordinated policy frameworks at the central and decentralized levels. The report advises governments to appoint a lead ministry and to adopt a collaborative and partnership approach. Such an approach would provide links across services (e.g. health, nutrition, special education etc), professionals and parents.

This study's findings indicate that policies on early childhood education and the governance of ECE vary greatly between countries, and depend largely on the approach towards ECE in a particular country (if education, care and development are seen as interlinked with one another, or are considered as separate entities). For example, there is a stark division between countries that treat education and care separately, such as in **Canada** where child-care regulation and policies for children under 5 years fall under one domain, and public kindergarten policy and administration for children 5 years and older under another, and countries where a child-centred holistic approach to ECE combines care, development and learning under one domain, such as in the case of **Denmark** (where ECE forms an integral part of the social welfare system) and **Norway** (where ECE is part of the education system).

In countries where ECE falls under one domain, it is often also the responsibility of a single government ministry, department or agency, for example in **Denmark** the Ministry of Social Affairs holds the overall responsibility for ECE and provision is decentralised to the municipalities, and **New Zealand** where ECE comes under the auspices of the Ministry of Education.

In **Norway**, the responsibility for ECE has been held by the Ministry of Education and Research since 2006. The ministry organises ECE from birth to compulsory school age, out of school services and the professional training of educators (Urban 2009: 33). ECE thus forms an integral part of the national education system. At the local level, municipalities have unified school and ECE services in one department, which has resulted in closer coordination between ECE and primary education. In 2003, the Norwegian Parliament reached a broad agreement about the main objectives of the country's ECE policy. These are access for all children, equal financing for private and



public ECE, and a limit for parental fees, quality and diversity. The legislative objective guaranteeing the child's individual right to attend ECE came into force in 2009. The Kindergarten Act and Framework Plan were revised in 2006 and the Act has more in focus child participation, while the Framework Plan links ECE stronger to education.

In many countries, ECE services for 0-3 year olds fall under the responsibility of one ministry, and ECE services for 3-6 year olds under another ministry (e.g. **Hungary, Portugal**). ECE provision for children aged three up to compulsory school age is often much more developed than ECE services for under 3 year olds, and the former often forms part of the education system, whereas ECE for 0-3 year olds generally does not. In **Hungary**, the much larger kindergarten education system for 3-7 year olds is considered the first stage of public education (OECD 2006: 343) and is governed by the Education Act. In **Venezuela**, early childhood education forms part of the education system, and attendance is obligatory from the age of three.

In **Portugal**, ECE forms an integral part of the national education system governed by the 1997 Framework Law. Overall responsibility is shared between the Ministry of Education (responsible for pre-primary education for 3-6 year olds) and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (responsible for ECE services for 0-3 year olds). ECE has been gradually decentralised over the past years, where increasingly policy and organisational matters fall under the auspices of municipalities, particularly the training and conditions of non-teaching staff.

In countries where ECE does not fall under one domain, the governance of the sector is often shared between a number of ministries and government agencies. As highlighted in the OECD *Starting Strong* report of 2001, administrative responsibilities for ECE tend to be fragmented in many countries (Urban 2009: 31), and services tend to be more fragmented in 'childcare' than pre-school education. For example, in **Canada**, different levels of government hold responsibility for ECE services, and responsibility is divided between the provincial/territorial governments. Similarly, in **Brazil** and **Venezuela**, the responsibility for ECE provision and services is highly decentralised between and within the regions, with rural areas often very under-serviced, despite national efforts to improve access in disadvantaged regions.

In **Mexico**, various levels and bodies hold responsibility for ECE in a highly decentralised system without a common framework and coordinated policy at the central level. There exists no ECE policy at the federal level in **Mexico**, and ECE is largely a private matter with minimal state involvement. In the **United States**, early childhood education policy is traditionally characterised by limited government intervention in family matters, and as such, there exists no national coordinated policy framework or a federal state department responsible for children's services. As a result, policy and provision of ECE services is largely a responsibility of each State, which also accounts for great variations in policies between them. In **The Gambia**, ECE is not part of the basic education system, and multiple ministries are involved in its governance. Supervision and monitoring of ECE services are minimal.

4.2 Provision and funding

Private provision tends to be very high in countries where there is no central body responsible for ECE services and where public funding is very low. More often provision for 0-3 year olds is private compared to services for 3-6 year olds. This is particularly the case in developing countries, such as the **Gambia, Ghana, Nepal, Nigeria, St. Lucia, St. Vincent** and the **Grenadines**, but also in developed countries such as **Canada** and **the United States**.

In the **United States**, around 90 percent of ECE provision for 0-3 year olds is private, and mainly provided in private centres and family day care homes. In **Nepal**, 70 percent of ECE provision is private (private centres usually combine nurseries and kindergartens, that include the 0-3 age-group, while school-based ECE centres generally only have kindergartens for 4-5 year olds), and in **Ghana**, 75 percent of services for the 0-3 year age group (nurseries and crèches) are provided by the private sector. By contrast, in Denmark only 1 percent of all ECE services are private, and around 97 percent of services are provided by the public sector. The remaining 2 percent are services run by parents or an association.

Moreover, in developing countries in particular, international agencies, NGOs, faith-based organisations, local communities and private institutions are often involved in the organisation, provision and funding of early childhood education services (such as in **The Gambia, Ghana, Nepal, Nigeria**,



St. Lucia, and Togo). In the **Gambia**, early childhood education is largely provided by private institutions who act as service providers rather than on the holistic development of the child, although NGOs, faith-based organisations, local communities and the government in part, may also assume responsibility for ECE provision.

In **Nepal**, funding is borne, for a large part, by local communities, international agencies and NGOs, and in the private sector parental fees, as government funding is very low. In **The Gambia**, public funding from the central government and local authorities is complemented by funding from NGOs such as Action Aid International and international agencies such as UNICEF. In **St. Lucia** and **St. Vincent and the Grenadines**, funding similarly comes from a variety of sources, including parental fees, government subvention, NGOs, the European Union, UNICEF and the Bernard van Leer Foundation. In private ECE services, the costs are often borne entirely by parents. For example, in **Nigeria** and **Ghana** parents additionally pay for teaching and learning materials, whereas in Ghana these are increasingly provided in the private sector by the government.

In countries where government ministries and agencies play a central role in the organisation of ECE, they also contribute considerably to ECE funding, such as in **Denmark** and **Norway**, where municipalities are responsible for the implementation and provision of early childhood education, and receive block grants or funding from central government. In **Norway** there has been a considerable increase in ECE funding over the past decade to match the increased demand for ECE services, yet the system does still rely on parental contributions, set at a maximum of 20 percent of costs. Also in **Denmark** parental fees are relatively high at 25-30 percent.

In **Hungary** and **Portugal**, funding for ECE is largely public and costs are largely borne by the local authorities and the state combined. In **Hungary**, around 90 percent of total government ECE expenditure is directed at maintaining public provision of ECE and the remaining funding is directed towards a small non-profit sector run by voluntary agencies and churches (OECD 2006: 347). Yet, there has been little increase in the level of funding allocated by the state per child, and local authorities do not preside over the funds to complement this per capita allocation. This has resulted in larger groups of children and merged classes.

In **Canada**, the differentiation of care and education extends to its funding: regulated child care services are not publicly funded, but instead provincial governments subsidise services indirectly through the allocation of grants to parents (under the idea that parents should choose themselves what service is best for their children). The average parental contribution to public and community services, with the exception of **Quebec**, is very high at 50 percent. By contrast kindergarten is publicly funded for five year olds in almost all provinces/territories. Similarly, in the **United States**, parental contributions make up a considerable amount of the costs of ECE, and parents may assume all of the costs of childcare.

In **New Zealand**, while the government regulates and funds ECE programmes, the services are provided by a mix of community groups and private businesses, that include half-day and full-day kindergartens, full-day centre based education and care, Maori and Pasifika language nests, parent-led centres, home-based education and care, and playgroups. Community services are provided by not-for-profit incorporated societies or charitable trusts or are run by local authorities or universities.

4.3 Access

Generally, in all of the countries included in the survey, enrolment of under-three year olds in ECE programmes is considerably lower than children over three years until the compulsory school age. In some countries, lower enrolment of the 0-3 age group may be explained by children staying at home for longer periods in their early years and fewer parents placing their children in out-of-home child care but rather in informal child care arrangements (**Portugal**). In **Denmark** and **Norway**, long parental leave of 1 year at 50 percent (or higher) of their previous salary (UNICEF 2008: 2) may also account for the majority of infants staying at home with their parent(s) during their first year of life. Despite general low enrolment rates of 0-3 year olds, increasingly, infants – under one-year olds – are being cared for outside of the home, particularly in developed countries. For example, in the **United States**, more than 50 percent of infants are in some form of child care, which may be explained by the fact that employed parents are not entitled to some form of paid leave (UNICEF 2008: 3).



Low enrolment rates of under three year olds may also be explained by the fact that in many countries, better integrated and regulated ECE services are more readily available for children over three years compared to children under three years of age, particularly in developing countries. Services for under three year olds tend to be more scarce and less well regulated, dominated instead by informal child care services, community or home-based education and care or playgroups. In **Brazil, Mexico, Hungary, Nigeria, Nepal, Ghana, and St. Lucia**, ECE service for 0-3 year olds takes place on a much smaller scale due to insufficient public funds, resulting in much lower access to ECE for this age group. For example, in **Mexico**, access to ECE services for 0-3 year olds is extremely low at 3 percent, yet by contrast enrolment is obligatory for children from the age of three. In **Nepal**, early childhood services for 0-3 year olds are very limited, and only provided by private fee-based ECE centres, which greatly impedes access for many children in this age group.

In developing countries, ECE services are often scarce in rural areas, as the majority of services are available in capital cities and urban areas (**Brazil, Nepal, Mexico, Hungary, The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Togo and Venezuela**). In **The Gambia**, for example, very few programmes have been implemented in rural areas, with the exception of NGO and faith-based run services. In Togo, access to ECE services in rural areas is only around 8 percent, and around 60 percent of all ECE services are located in two main cities. In **Nepal**, a very limited percentage of children have access to private, fee-paying pre-school establishments that are almost exclusively based in urban areas (UNESCO IBE 2006), greatly disadvantaging children in rural parts of the country. Moreover, ECE centres that are based in rural areas often have poor infrastructure, and lack appropriate facilities and equipment, as evidenced by the situation in **Nigeria and Ghana**.

Parental fees are another large hindering factor to children's access to ECE programmes, particularly in developing countries where many parents are unable to afford high fees, especially in private ECE centres. This is particularly the case in developing countries, where ECE structures may often be private and fee-charging, such as **The Gambia, Nepal, Nigeria, Ghana, St. Lucia and Togo**.

Also in developed countries, high parental fees may form a barrier for low-income groups. In the **United States** there exists a mosaic of services, regu-

lations and funding sources for ECE programmes, which has led to uneven quality of services provided, and inequality of access between low-income and high-income families (with the latter being generally able to afford largely privatized services). In **Canada**, approximately 24 percent of children aged 0-5 years have access to regulated early childhood education services, the majority of which are provided by non-profit and community organizations. The average parental contribution to public and community services is very high, at about 50 percent.

Some countries have developed programmes and/or provide subsidies that target low-income families to increase or ensure their access to ECE services. In **Norway**, for example, fees for very poor families are waived entirely for children under three years old (UNICEF 2008: 20). In the United States, the federal “Head Start” programme covers comprehensive education, health, nutrition and parental involvement services that target young vulnerable children between 0-5 years from very low-income families. However, currently less than 10 percent of eligible children are being served by the programme. In **Brazil**, family- and community-programmes targeted at disadvantaged regions and poor communities in urban areas have attempted to increase the enrolment of children in ECE services, by engaging parents into the programme.

In terms of early education programmes targeting the inclusion of children from ethnic minorities or aboriginal populations, **New Zealand** has specific services focusing on the inclusion of Maori (indigenous) and Pasifika (migrant) children in early childhood education who, along with children from low-income families, remain the most excluded groups from ECE. Projects that have focused on their inclusion have had mixed success, yet parent-led Maori and Pasifika “language nests” have been fairly successful in targeting these groups of children. Additionally, there exists a national, intercultural early childhood curriculum guideline (*Te Whaaraki*) in place for all ECE services (including home-based services), developed in partnership with Maori groups (UNESCO 2002b).

In **Hungary**, the access of Roma children to ECE programmes remains very low. Roma children are often excluded from educational services and/or segregated into special needs schools.



ECE services focusing on children with special needs and/or disabilities have been met with mixed success. In **Hungary**, public policy previously encouraged segregated education for children with special needs and/or disabilities, although, since the 1990s, children have been increasingly integrated into mainstream child care provision, but this remains a slow process. In other countries, children with special needs are generally integrated into mainstream centres, and if necessary, guided/taught by specialists or through specific support programmes (**Denmark, New Zealand, Norway and Portugal**). In **Norway**, additional support is provided to ECE centres targeted at disadvantaged children in general, including children with disabilities, children from low-income families and children from minority groups facing language barriers. In developing countries, programmes focusing on children with special learning needs, for example, through specific support structures, are generally lacking.

4.4 Quality

The quality of early childhood education services is interpreted in different ways between the countries included in the study. In the **United States**, ECE is regarded primarily as a preparation for the child's success in school, whereas in Nordic countries such as **Denmark and Norway**, early years of life are seen as a critical opportunity, not only for the development of cognitive and linguistic skills, but also for social skills and an awareness of others. ECE is envisioned in these countries, not only as an investment in a child's success in school but also an investment in society and citizenship (UNICEF 2008: 17). The quality of ECE services may also be reflected in the existence of a national plan for early childhood services, which includes a strategy for the inclusion of disadvantaged children. In developing countries, such a plan is often lacking, but also in **Canada and the United States** (Ibid).

Insufficient resources and funding for early childhood education programmes have been indicated by unions in the majority of the countries included in the study as a major challenge to the development of the sector, particularly developing services that are free of charge and targeting disadvantaged children. In developing countries, in particular, a lack of resources for ECE services has made it difficult to provide services beyond the capital and larger cities, and to improve the quality of those services that already exist, in terms

of infrastructure, facilities, and trained and adequately remunerated teachers (**Brazil, The Gambia, Ghana, Nepal, Nigeria, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Togo and Venezuela**). Also in developed countries such as Hungary, lack of adequate funding for ECE has been given as a crucial factor affecting the quality of services delivered, particularly in the future.

Child-teacher ratios are another indicator of the quality of early childhood education, in terms of whether children receive enough attention and stimulation. There exists a dichotomy between developed and developing countries in terms of child-teacher ratios. In the former, these tend to be fairly low, and in the latter relatively high and even very high. In public centres in **Ghana**, child-teacher ratios are approximately 34 children per teacher, in **Nigeria** around 37 children per teacher, and in **Nepal** can be as high as 40 children per teacher.

Low qualifications and remuneration of teaching staff was highlighted by a number of unions as impeding the quality of ECE services. These issues will be discussed in more detail in the following sub-sections.

UNICEF (2008:2) proposes what may be perceived as ECE quality indicators, a set of minimum standards for protecting the rights of young children. The organisation identifies 10 benchmarks, and these are shown below:

1. Parental leave of one year at 50 percent of salary
2. National plan with priority for the disadvantaged
3. Subsidised and regulated care services for 25 percent of children under 3
4. Subsidised and accredited ECE services for 80 percent of 4 year olds
5. 80 percent of child care staff trained
6. 50 percent of staff tertiary educated
7. Staff to child ratio of no more than 1:15
8. 1 percent of GDP spent on ECE
9. Child poverty rate less than 10 percent
10. Near universal access to essential child health services

Although the above benchmarks¹ are mainly based on ECE data from OECD countries, they may serve as a useful indicative framework for other countries.

¹ The full UNICEF report card can be accessed at the following link : <http://www.childwellbeing.org.uk/documents/Report-card-8.pdf>

4.5 Trained and qualified ECE teaching staff

In the majority of the countries included in the study, there exists a disproportionate gender balance in ECE teaching staff; with the large majority of early childhood education staff being female.

The following table provides an overview of the percentage of female and male teaching staff working in the ECE sectors in the various countries for the most recent years available. Only in the Gambia in 2006 was there a considerable balance in the composition of the ECE teaching staff.

Table 1: Gender composition of ECE teaching staff

Country	Total staff (year)	Male % of total (year)	Female % of total (year)
Brazil	336, 186 (2008)	6	94 (2008)
Canada		2	98 (2006)
Denmark	29, 306 (2007)	6	94 (2008)
The Gambia	1532 (2006)	45	55 (2006)
Ghana	40, 796 (2006)	18	82 (2006)
Hungary	-	-	-
Mexico	-	-	-
Nepal	-	-	-
New Zealand	16, 861	2	98
Nigeria	-	10	90
Norway		8	92
Portugal	16, 607 (2006/7)	3	97 (2006/7)
St. Lucia	515 (2007)	0	100 (2007)
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	389 (2007)	0	100 (2007)
Togo	-	-	88 (2006)
United States		+/- 3	+/- 97
Venezuela	87, 317 (2007)	5	95

Source: Union responses to mapping exercise & secondary sources

As shown in the table above, women comprise more than 90 percent of the teaching staff in 9 of the 12 participating countries for which data was available. This disproportionate representation of male staff in ECE may wrongfully suggest that the role of educating and caring for young children should be the exclusive responsibility of women. There is need for teacher unions to work closely with their governments and other stakeholders in coming up with programmes that can encourage men to take up ECE as a career.

Low numbers of qualified teaching staff is an issue in a majority of the participating countries. This can have a negative effect on the quality of ECE services, and also trigger high staff turnover as a result of poor salaries, based on lower qualifications. In developing countries in particular, the issue of un- and under-qualified teachers presents a major challenge, particularly in **the Gambia, Ghana, Nepal, Nigeria** and **Togo**, where between 60-90 percent of teaching staff are unqualified. In **the Gambia**, few training facilities are available to teachers, and programmes are not standardised. Some faith-based organisations run training centres for teachers and also provide in-service programmes for teaching staff working in their centres.

Qualifications of teaching staff in ECE centres tend to differ markedly between public and private services in developing countries, where in some countries teachers may be better qualified in private centres and teaching assistants and additional support staff are present (**Nepal**), while in other countries the provision of services varies greatly across the private sector, and may be of lower standards than public services (**Brazil**).

In developed countries a lack of qualified teachers is also an issue, for example in **Denmark**, where according to BUPL, only 65 percent of the staff have a bachelor's degree in education, and 35 percent have just received a short training, or no training at all. In **Norway**, staff qualification requirements are relatively low, with standards requiring that 33 percent of ECE staff should hold teaching qualifications. UEN indicates that better qualifications are likely to lead to higher salaries and better working conditions, which increases the attractiveness of the profession for more qualified teachers, and encourages the retention of those already in the sector. In **Hungary**, enrolment in education training colleges has been declining over the past decades. Combined with an ever ageing teaching staff, as well as a shortage of child carers working in crèches, this presents the sector with a considerable challenge for the future quality provision of ECE, and may result in increased child-teacher ratios, as well as high staff turnover. In the **United States**, high turnover rates and difficulties in recruiting new teachers and staff is a key challenge for the ECE sector, where ECE teachers and support staff tend to be poorly trained and underpaid.

Some countries have attempted to raise standards in previous years such that ECE teachers are required to have as a minimum qualification, a bachelor's degree (**New Zealand, United States**). Requirements for teaching assistants vary considerably between countries, ranging between primary-level diplo-



mas to tertiary degrees. In **Portugal**, ECE teaching staff, nurses and social workers are generally in possession of a 4-year university or polytechnic training, and in-service training is the same as for teachers at other levels of education. Moreover, secondary education is obligatory for teaching assistants. In **New Zealand**, teachers are increasingly becoming qualified with three year diplomas or degrees. In Nigeria, the introduction of an early childhood education course in pre-service training has attempted to raise staff qualifications, although ECE staff qualifications remain alarmingly low: around 85 percent of ECE caregivers do not possess basic qualifications.

Generally, in-service training and professional development tend to be fairly short, if they are offered at all (e.g. in **Mexico**, where education staff teaching 3-6 year olds rarely receive professional training). In **Denmark**, around 95 percent of educators receive only two days of in-service training per year. Similarly in **Norway**, ECE staff members generally do not have the same access to continuous professional training as teachers working in primary education. By contrast, in **New Zealand**, in-service training is a requirement and a condition for maintaining teacher registration.

4.6 Working conditions and salaries of ECE teaching staff

Related to the lower qualifications of ECE teaching staff, in almost all of the countries included in the mapping exercise, teaching staff working in early childhood education tend to be underpaid and earn (much) lower salaries compared to teachers at the primary level or higher (**the Gambia, Ghana, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Togo** and the **United States**). In the **United States**, enforcement of minimum working standards across States is weak, and working conditions of ECE teaching staff is generally characterised by low wages and limited benefits. The status of teachers involved in early childhood education is considerably lower than teachers in primary and secondary levels: professional status tends to be associated with qualification and salaries, and teaching staff working in programmes that require more training and competence generally enjoy higher salaries and benefits. As qualification requirements and salaries of ECE teachers are comparatively lower, this fuels higher turnover in the profession (**Hungary, St. Lucia**, and the **United States**). Considerable differences may additionally exist in the salary and working conditions of teachers working in kindergarten and those working in child care (nurseries), as noted in **Canada**.



There is no substitute for an inspiring and qualified teacher.

In some countries, teachers may take on additional shifts, or additional employment outside of the education sector, to compensate for low salaries and limited benefits (**Mexico**).

By comparison in **New Zealand**, teacher's salaries are quite good as a result of a shortage of teachers in the sector, and services are funded in a way that encourages the employment of qualified teachers. In **St. Vincent and the Grenadines**, the Ministry of Education is making efforts towards paying the salaries of qualified teachers in order to attract more teachers to the profession. Also in **Norway**, education unions have focused their efforts to close the gap in pay levels between ECE teachers and teachers working at other levels of education. While salary levels for ECE teachers have been raised, the possibilities for salary progression through tenured positions are still much better for teachers working at the primary level or higher.

ECE teachers remain largely non-unionised, particularly in the private sector, as seen in **Ghana** and **New Zealand**. Moreover, salaries and conditions such as annual leave, hours of work, medical insurance, social security and professional development opportunities, tend to be poorer in the private sector (**Ghana, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria** and the **United States**), despite the growing private provision of ECE services in many countries.



5. SEVENTEEN CASE STUDIES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

5.1 Brazil

Key indicators

Data on early childhood education enrolment and statistics on teachers are available from the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research (INEP) School Census. In 2007, a total of 6,432,719 children aged 0-5 years were enrolled in early childhood education (crèches and pre-schools), a little over half (51 percent) of whom were boys, indicating that there exists gender equity in ECE enrolment in Brazil. In 2008, a total of 336,186 teachers were working in ECE (in both crèches and pre-schools), the large majority of which were female teachers (94 percent). Teacher-pupil ratios are on average 20 children per teacher.

There are many non-formal schools in Brazil that are not covered by the INEP's School Census, and these children and teachers have not been included in the above statistics. Most early childhood education services in Brazil are not registered (UNESCO 2007: 6).

ECE policy and practice: system level policy and legislation

The 1996 National Education Guidelines and Framework Law of Brazil states that the term 'early childhood education' refers to both care and education services for children aged 0-6 years (UNESCO 2007: 6). The right to early childhood education in Brazil is enshrined in the Constitution, divided and delivered between two age-specific groups; children between 0-3 years, who attend day-care centres/crèches and children aged 4-5 years who attend pre-school. Prior to 2005, children aged 6 years were included in the early childhood education programme, but since 2005 6-year olds take part in the obligatory fundamental education programme for children aged 6-14 years. Early childhood education has been part of the education system since 2000. Before then it was administered by the social sectors in the states and municipalities. Enrolment in early childhood education is not obligatory.

Since 1996, public ECE schools are a responsibility of municipalities. Guidelines on the national curriculum for early childhood education were

set by the National Council of Education in 1999, and all early childhood education services are required to follow these guidelines. While the education curriculum for ECE is determined by the National Council of Education, programmes are set by the Municipal Education Council and by the schools. The ten-year National Education Plan of 2001 aimed to increase the enrolment of children aged 0-3 years in crèches by 50 percent by the year 2006, and for children aged 4-5 years by 80 percent in 2011.

ECE provision and funding

Around 60 percent of ECE provision in Brazil is public (provided by the states and municipalities) and around 40 percent is privately provided (with or without fees). Private ECE schools are broadly divided into three kinds: community schools funded by the *Fund for the Development and Maintenance of Basic Education* (FUNDEB) or NGOs; low fee-charging schools in poor areas where the public sector does not provide schools; and, private schools in middle- and high-class areas that charge high fees.

From 2007 until 2020 the *Fund for the Development and Maintenance of Basic Education* (FUNDEB) is a government bill that establishes minimum per-child expenditure for all three levels of basic education in Brazil (UNESCO 2007) and thereby distributes to each municipality an amount of money proportional to the number of children enrolled in crèches and pre-schools. FUNDEB aims to reserve 20 percent of state and municipal tax revenue for basic education, including early childhood education. Funding for ECE has decreased as a result of the global economic crisis, compounding limited municipality capacity and funding available prior to the crisis.

Access and quality

In urban areas the level of access to ECE services is higher for children in both age groups (0-3 years and 4-5 years). In rural areas, overall access is considerably lower as children are less likely to attend ECE. There are very few crèches in rural areas, although according to a 2007 UNESCO report on early childhood education in Brazil, enrolment in municipal pre-schools is increasing, particularly in disadvantaged regions (UNESCO 2007). In poorer communities the level of access is varied, although the FUNDEB attempts to bridge the difference through individual support to children. For these marginalised groups there are also other social assistance programmes available to encourage access, such as the *Bolsa Família* (family scholarship) and the



Children's Fund (amounting to 6 percent of individual tax and 1 percent of corporate tax).

Enrolment in fee-charging ECE services is reported to be increasing in both affluent and poor regions in Brazil, although the quality in these services is varied (UNESCO 2007). Generally, children from wealthy families are more likely to attend for-profit ECE services of high quality.

The quality of ECE services is developing slowly in Brazil. Unions report that there are numerous crèches that act more as homecare institutions rather than places of education and care, particularly in poorer areas within larger cities. Pre-schools in disadvantaged regions are often staffed with under-qualified teachers, have fewer educational materials and run for shorter hours (UNESCO 2007: 9). The Ministry of Education and the National Education Council are currently in the process of developing a new policy for ECE that should result in better organisation and provision throughout the country. Education unions are also involved in these discussions. Not all ECE services have been integrated into the education sector, however, and are not all recognised as education institutions, in particular, day-care centres/crèches (ibid.).

Workforce: ECE staff

Teaching staff in ECE are divided into three groups: teachers with a basic or superior pedagogical diploma; professionals in other areas, with a basic or superior specific diploma (nutrition, medicine, pedagogy); crèche-auxiliaries in child-care. While qualifications are improving, ECE teachers generally lack specialised training and education (UNESCO 2007: 9).

With regard to ECE staff working in crèches, the large majority are teachers (98 percent) and only around 2 percent of staff are male. In pre-schools, the proportion of male staff is only slightly higher at 4 percent.

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service compared

Teachers' that work in early childhood education receive salaries that correspond to their level of qualification and years of service. In urban areas and the federal districts, teachers earn around double the salary of those teachers working in rural areas.

The salaries of ECE teachers' are reported to be lower in private schools, particularly in poorer areas and in community schools where teachers earn the

national minimum salary. In urban wealthier areas teachers' salaries may be 6 to 12 times higher than the minimum salary, depending on the level of school fees and the number of students per teacher.

In many ECE schools (both public and private), there is only one teacher per classroom and child-teacher ratios are high.

Outstanding features and promising developments in ECE

There are a number of promising developments identified by the unions in early childhood education in Brazil, including:

- Increased enrolment in municipal pre-schools, particularly in disadvantaged regions
- ECE included in the Constitution of Brazil that provides for the joint organisation and operation of education systems to be a combined effort of the federal government, states and municipalities, which is possible as a result of FUNDEB funding
- The growth in enrolment in the first age-group (0-3 years), both in municipality and community crèches, financed largely by the FUNDEB
- Municipal Family Scholarships that allow mothers involved in educational programmes to take care of groups of children within marginalised communities

Key challenges

A number of challenges face ECE organization and provision in Brazil, summarised as follows:

- Appropriately addressing inequity in the distribution and quality of ECE services, particularly in poor disadvantaged regions and communities
- Although by law, ECE falls under the education sector, the division of ECE provision between pre-school and childcare has meant that crèches often function as day-care rather than early childhood education centres, and moreover are poorly organized (too few crèches for the number of children aged 0-3 years) and many are still not integrated in the education sector and recognised as education institutions
- Initial and in-service teacher training is of a low standard, and training and education is not specialised towards early childhood education
- A general lack of funding in many municipalities, in particular in metropolitan areas.

5.2 Canada

Key indicators

Data on early childhood education enrolment and statistics on teachers are generally lacking at both the federal and provincial/territorial levels, largely due to the private nature of provision in Canada. Child-staff ratios vary by age and province/territory and in 2001 ranged from 3:1 to 8:1 for 1-year-olds, 7:1 to 10:1 for 3-year-olds, and 8:1 to 15:1 for 5 year-olds (OECD 2006: 298). Almost 98 percent of ECE staff are female.

ECE policy and practice: system level policy and legislation

Different levels of government hold responsibility for ECE services in Canada. Direct responsibility for social and educational programmes, including ECE programmes, rests with the provincial and territorial governments. The federal government holds responsibility for specific populations (such as Aboriginal people, military families and new immigrants or refugees), as well as maternity/paternity benefits and for the *National Child Benefit* (that provides low-income families with additional child benefits) (OECD 2006: 298).

Care and education are treated separately by the provincial and territorial governments, who hold primary responsibility for ECE programmes. Child care regulation and policies (for children under 5 years) fall under one domain, and public kindergarten policy and administration (for 5 year olds and older) under another domain. Provinces/territories additionally hold responsibility for income support programmes for low-income families, and training institutions for early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers (OECD 2006: 298). Municipal governments and other local authorities may be involved in ECE under the delegation of the provincial governments. For example, in Ontario, municipal governments have the authority, delegated by the provincial government, to provide and maintain ECE services at the local level that are focused on child care (ibid).

Regulatory policies vary across provinces and territories and fall under the competence of social and/or community services. Requirements generally specify the physical space and training levels of staff, maximum number of children and staff-child ratios. Child care is regulated as a private enterprise (non-profit and for-profit).

The 2003 *Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care* agreement between the federal government, provinces and territories, led to a clearer focus on early childhood development and learning, and federal funding to support provinces and territories on improving and expanding early learning and child care services (OECD 2006: 299).

In 2004, the federal government proposed the *Foundations program* “to ensure that children have access to high-quality, government regulated spaces at affordable cost to parents” (Childcare Resource and Research Unit 2007: 2). Five billion dollars over five years were committed to the programme, and the federal government transferred funds to each province/territory upon completion of an early learning and child care plan (ibid.). In January of 2006, a newly elected government ended this programme, cancelled the federal-provincial agreements and instituted the *Universal Child Care Benefit*, a \$100/month payment to parents for all children aged 0-6 years. The argument was that parents should choose what is best for their children and the government should provide parents with the resources to ‘balance work and family life as they see fit, whether that means formal child-care, informal care through neighbours or relatives, or a parent staying at home’ (ibid).

Union perspective: key policy issues

The primary focus of the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) is the provision of junior kindergarten (four-year-olds) and senior kindergarten (5-year-olds) children and teachers within schools. In their 2008 report, ‘Full-day Kindergarten: Moving Ontario Forward’, ETFO recommended that:

- All junior and senior kindergarten programmes are staffed by certified kindergarten teachers throughout the instructional day, and every junior and senior kindergarten class has at least one full-time educational assistant.
- All junior and senior kindergarten programmes are located in elementary schools, which provide access to physical resources, specialist teachers and professional support personnel, and which integrate kindergarten students with the school community.
- The Ministry of Education actively promotes play-based learning.
- The Ontario government facilitates the expansion of school-based hubs to coordinate children’s services.
- Formal and written reporting for junior and senior kindergarten be anecdotal only and occur in the third term.



ETFO also supports the call for more funding to expand child care services and to improve the salaries and benefits of child care staff.

ECE provision and funding

The federal government, ten provinces and three territories (fourteen jurisdictions) are involved in delivering early childhood programmes in Canada. All provinces/territories provide both public kindergarten and regulated child care programmes. In all regions, child care and kindergarten are separate mandates, so each jurisdiction has multiple child care, early childhood education and “child development” programs. Major ECE service types in Canada include: family day care homes, child care centres, pre-kindergartens (for children age 3-5 years) and kindergartens (for children age 5-6 years) (OECD 2006).

According to the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (2007), ‘In regulated child care, there is considerable provincial/territorial variation in supply and coverage, quality, financing, fees, teacher/staff training, wages and monitoring. Kindergarten programmes tend to be more consistent across Canada although there is variation in amount of provision (full or part-day), age eligibility, curricular approaches and educational expectations’.

Generally, (with the exception of Quebec) regulated child care services are not publicly funded. However, most provincial governments fund subsidies for regulated child care that is allocated directly to parents. The average parental contribution to public and community services, excluding Quebec is very high, at about 50 percent. By contrast, kindergarten is publicly funded for five year olds in almost all provinces/territories.

Access and quality

Access to ECE services in Canada is low (participation rates vary greatly depending on the province or territory) and is largely dependent on available places, eligibility for subsidy assistance and ability to pay fees (OECD 2006: 297). According to the report *Trends and Analysis 2007: Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2006* by the Childcare Resource and Research Unit in Canada (2007): ‘Access to regulated child-care has improved little in the past two years [referring to 2004-2006] with limited impact on the sizeable gap between need and provision’.

Across Canada, approximately 24 percent of children aged 0-5 years have access to a regulated space, the majority of which are provided by non-profit and community organizations. Centre-based community services account for 80 percent of regulated child care provision for children 0-12 years of age. Rates are higher in Quebec where 34 percent of 0-3; 48 percent of 3-4-year olds; and 50 percent of 4-5 year olds have access to licensed services. In Ontario, all children from 4 years onward have access to state funded pre-kindergarten and kindergarten (OECD 2006: 299).

For children over five years, there exists a well-established early childhood education network within the primary school system across Canada. Each province/territory provides publicly funded (usually part-time) kindergarten programmes in the year before primary education (OECD 2006: 299). In 2006, around 95 percent of 5-6 year olds across Canada were enrolled in state-funded kindergartens (ibid). Kindergartens are better resourced and organised, with stable funding, trained teachers, and structured programming and monitoring, compared to child care.

A limited subsidy system is available for children from low-income families, with varying and complex eligibility criteria, accessed by 22 percent of single parents and 5 percent of married mothers.

Workforce: ECE staff

Credentials for the early childhood workforce are divided according to the "education" or "care" designation of services.

With the exception of two territories, all jurisdictions have minimum qualification requirements for staff in child care settings. In regulated child care, 66 percent of early childhood educators have a two-year ECE credential or more, and 29 percent have one year or less of ECE training. Almost 98 percent of staff in child care settings are women.

Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs provided by the provincial/territorial public education systems employ teachers with a 4-year degree, generally in primary education. There are no specific requirements for kindergarten teachers to have specific training in early childhood education. Around 81 percent of elementary school teachers are women.



Assistants in both kindergartens and child care settings are not required to have formal qualifications.

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service compared

There are substantial differences between the working conditions of kindergarten teachers and child care staff with regard to salary, sick leave, medical insurance, disability insurance, retirement pension, life insurance and unionization. Generally, kindergarten teachers have better working conditions.

Outstanding features and promising developments in ECE

The OECD (2006) identified the following as significant strengths in Canadian early childhood policy and practices:

- The enactment of remunerated parental leave for almost a year in 2001.
- Advances made by Quebec in developing a publicly managed, universal early childhood system.
- Growing collaboration between Federal and Provincial governments through signed multilateral agreements that move toward a clearer focus on child development and learning.
- The existence of a well-established kindergarten early education network for children over five years which include: stable funding, trained teachers, structured programming, monitoring and regulation.
- The growing contribution to non-profit, community organizations in providing regulated child care.

Key challenges

- Racial and ethnic minorities are not adequately represented in the ECE workforce.
- Aboriginal children suffer from poverty and low participation in early childhood programmes.
- The quality of early childhood programmes varies greatly and is for the most part mediocre to the poor.

5.3 Denmark

Key indicators

A quite long parental leave means that children generally stay at home until they are around 10-12 months old. In 2006 the total enrolment in ECE day-care centres² in Denmark was 323,063 children. These figures include chil-

dren enrolled in public day-care in private homes that accounts for 49 percent of the enrolment of 0-2 year olds. The total number of enrolled children in ECE has risen slightly to 326,390 children in 2008. Pupil-teacher ratios are low in Denmark; in 2007 there were approximately 8 children per 1 pedagogue, allowing the teacher to concentrate adequately on each child.

The number of educators working in ECE has risen in Denmark from 27,699 teachers in 2006 to 29,306 teachers in 2007. The large majority of ECE teachers in Denmark are female. In 2006 women made up 93 percent of the teaching staff in ECE and in 2008 they accounted for 94 percent of teaching staff.

ECE policy and practice: system level policy and legislation

Early childhood education is an integral part of the Danish (tax-paid) welfare society and is financed largely by taxes and supplemented by parental fees. ECE falls under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs, while the responsibility for administration and financing of ECE is held by the municipalities.

Independent legislation on early childhood education exists since 2007. The objectives of ECE in Denmark are to promote children's personal and social development, learning and well-being; to offer families flexibility in order to reconcile family and working life; to prevent exclusion of, and offer special attention to, children with special needs and to promote continuity between different services for children.

Union perspective: key policy issues

One of the key challenges to the provision of high quality ECE is that of insufficient resources, and a lack of qualified teaching staff; according to BUPL³ (the Danish National Federation of Early Childhood Teachers and Youth Educators) 65 percent of the staff have a bachelors' degree in education/

² *Day-care centres is used as a generic term for day nursery schools for children aged 0-3, for kindergartens for children aged 2-5, and day-care centres that cover all age groups, i.e. from age 0-10, and after-school centres for children aged 6-10. Day care centres are not part of the education system, but are considered as places where children can participate 'on their own terms in the creation of child life' (BUPL 2006: 3).*

³ *BUPL, the Danish National Federation of Early Childhood Teachers and Youth Educators, is the trade union for pedagogues in nurseries, kindergartens, age-integrated childcare centres, out of school care and leisure time centres as well as leisure time and youth clubs.*



pedagogy, while around 35 percent have received just a short training, or have no training at all. Working conditions and salaries are lower than those of teachers at other levels of education.

There exists a dichotomy of views on the purpose of ECE that raises some debate in Denmark, whether it is a right of the child to attend ECE or rather a solution for working parents.

ECE provision and funding

ECE provision in Denmark is decentralised to the municipalities at the local level (98 in total), who are in charge of both ECE centres and primary schools. In total, there are approximately 6,000 ECE centres in Denmark, and between 40-80 children enrolled in each of them. Around 97 percent of all ECE centres are provided by the public sector. Some of them are run as independent services, but fall under public regulation. Another 2 percent are services run by parents or an association, and only 1 percent of ECE centres are private. Despite this low figure, private provision of ECE has been on the rise during the past years in Denmark.

The municipalities receive a block grant per annum to run local services (schools, roads etc), including ECE. Additional to the block grant, municipalities receive taxes from citizens, and in the case of ECE, parent fees as well.

The current liberal-conservative government, which has been in place since 2001, has cut public expenditure for ECE as part of their policy. As a result, parent fees were raised considerably, but decreased somewhat (from 30 percent to 25 percent of the costs) as a result of critique expressed on the government policy. Parent fees were expected however to be raised again to 30 percent to cover the introduction of free meals beginning January 2010.

BUPL considers that ECE provision should, as is the case with primary education, be free of charge in the future.

Access

ECE enrolment facilities are, in principle, available for all children. Enrolment of 0-2 year old children is around 66 percent (up from 59 percent in 2004), as the majority of children stay at home until they are 10-12 months old. Enrolment of 3-5 year olds is considerably higher at 97 percent (up from 94 percent in 2004). According to a report by BUPL published in 2006, 80 per-

cent of all children aged 1-3 attend nursery school (which forms part of the ECE system). Additionally, 80 percent of all children between the age of 6 and 10 attend after school centres that fall under the Danish day care system.

In rural areas, children aged 0-2 are more often enrolled in public childcare facilities, whereas in urban areas children in the same age-group are more often placed in ECE centres.

While enrolment of children from ethnic minority groups is generally lower than that of children from ethnic Danish parents, this difference has diminished considerably over the last few years. In some municipalities, ethnic minority children may be offered a special intervention, for example, ECE staff may speak with them in their mother-tongue.

Children with special needs are generally integrated into ordinary ECE centres, and if needed, taught by specialists.

Quality issues

BUPL considers that adequate financial resources for ECE, and well trained teaching staff are important factors in determining the quality of ECE, as well as adequate time for planning, carrying out tasks, reflecting on and evaluating work being undertaken and documentation. BUPL believes that the quality of ECE can be strengthened through research into all aspects of ECE (for example, the role of pedagogues in ECE).

Workforce: ECE staff

In Denmark, in 2006, there were around 60, 000 educators employed in day care centres, engaging in pedagogical activities with children. Around 65 percent of all teaching staff in ECE hold a bachelor's degree from a university college, similar to teachers at the primary school level. ECE training is a little shorter than general teacher education, which covers four years, whereas ECE training takes 3.5 years. ECE educators have a broad qualification that allows them to be employed, not only in ECE centres, but also centres for handicapped persons, and centres for the elderly (BUPL 2006: 3). Around 35 percent of ECE teaching staff in Denmark has had no, or only a brief training to work in early childhood education.

On average, educators in ECE undertake seven days of educational activities a year for their professional development. Heads of ECE centres have



an average of 15 days per year of professional development, and all will receive a specialised training during the next years. Around 95 percent of educators only have an average of two days a year for in-service training, the costs of which are usually covered by their employers. In-service training for ECE educators is considered to be so short because there are often no substitutes for teaching staff who have gone for training.

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service compared

Salaries of ECE educators are on average lower than the salaries of primary school teachers; the former earn a monthly net salary of 3,350 Euros (before taxes) compared to 3,900 Euros earned per month by the latter. On average, teachers in primary school spend 18 hours of an average full time working week (37 hours) in front of the class, compared to ECE educators who have direct contact with children for 30 hours a week.

Successful examples and promising developments in ECE

The concept of children's 'free play' plays an essential role in Danish ECE. The 'child perspective' is also central to ECE, whereby perception of, and interaction with, the world is considered from the viewpoint of the child, and not solely from the educator. Additionally, nature and the environment are at the focus of ECE pedagogy, and spending time outdoors is an important feature of learning and play. Activities will often take place at, or in, for example, playgrounds, parks, forests and at the beach. The engagement of parents in ECE, through formal structures such as parent boards, as well as informal daily discussion between educators and parents, is a common feature of the Danish ECE system.

'Age integration', whereby children from nursery years (0-2) are placed in the same ECE centre as children in kindergarten (3-5 years) referred to as a 'children's-house' or a '0-5 centre', is a common feature of ECE in Denmark. The transition from ECE to school and leisure centres for 6 year olds receives considerable attention.

BUPL considers that international testing systems, such as PISA, will negatively impact the holistic focus of ECE, and will encourage the Danish government to reform the ECE structure, for example, through the introduction of management instruments.



Play and exploration are an integral part of early childhood.

Key challenges

BUPL considers that reduced expenditure for ECE from the national government and local municipalities will put the quality of ECE provision at risk in the future. Additionally, BUPL believes that benchmarking, testing and increased documentation of all activities requested by the government is placing a strain on ECE educators, and has been causing undue stress. Increased initiatives for privatisation of ECE by the national government have increased evaluation practices in ECE centres. Private for-profit ECE centres are on the rise, whereas in recent years it was not possible to establish them.

In some municipalities, town councils offer ECE as a childcare service at primary schools, but without the conditions that are demanded in the act on ECE. This is considered a less-costly solution compared to offering ECE, but often results in high fees for parents.

Teacher attrition is increasing in Denmark; many of the current ECE educators in the profession will retire in the coming years, and combined with a decline in the number of young people entering ECE education, this will result in a serious shortage of teaching staff in ECE.

5.4 The Gambia

Early childhood education in the Gambia was initiated in the late 1980s by private stakeholders, NGOs and local organisations, as a result of an increase in demand for child care centres. A multi-sectoral approach was later adopted in the provision of ECE. Despite the increasing availability of early childhood education in the Gambia, its coverage is still very low (the gross enrolment rate of pre-primary education stands at 23 percent, only 3 percent higher than in 2002).

Key indicators

Figures for enrolment of children in early childhood education and statistics on teaching staff in the Gambia are only available for the year 2006, in which a total of 47,442 children were enrolled in ECE, a little over half (51 percent) of whom were girls. In 2006 teaching staff totalled 1,532 and 55 percent of these were female, indicating a gender balance in the staff.

ECE policy and practice: system level policy and legislation

Since 2003 the entire discipline has been referred to as Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD). The provision of early childhood education is intended for children aged between 0-6, where ECD Centres cater for 3-6 year olds and clinics and day-care centres for 0-2 year olds. The Ministry of Education provides technical assistance for ECD centres, while the Ministry of Community Development supports day-care centres and the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs supports clinics. The overall administrative and policy responsibility for IECD lies with the Ministry of Local Governments, which oversees a national multisectoral working group (UNESCO 2006). Early childhood education is not part of the basic education system that covers primary and lower secondary education. Moreover, the majority of ECE services are private.

In the new National Education Policy for 2004-15, the Government of The Gambia announced plans to establish ECD centres for 3-6-year olds on the grounds of primary schools in the most disadvantaged areas of the country. This pro-poor policy of the government, included plans to develop a training programme for early childhood teachers working in private centres at the College of Gambia (the country's only teacher training institution) and to develop ECD centres in the poorest areas (UNESCO 2006a). Additionally,

the idea was to employ teachers working in primary schools to also work in the adjacent ECE centres.

The ECD centres are intended to focus on child development, as opposed to education or schooling. Largely, the ECD centres function as playgrounds where the role of teachers is mainly limited to childminding (UNESCO 2006a).

Union perspective

ECE provision that involves multiple sectors under the multi-sector framework lacks coordination between the different sectors, according to the union (GTU). Additionally, a lack of funding and resources means that a number of policy aspects have not been appropriately addressed, and in the majority of ECE centres, facilities and infrastructure are poor and need improvement. ECE provision is still largely private, which means that access is limited only to more affluent populations who can afford to pay for the services. Despite good intentions, the majority of ECE teachers/facilitators remain untrained.

GTU continues to advocate for greater public sector participation in terms of providing funding for infrastructure, training provision and resource materials. Furthermore, the union highlights the need for ECE policy to become more inclusive and to better address children's needs.

ECE provision and funding

Early childhood education is largely provided by the private sector in the Gambia, although NGOs, local communities and the government also assume responsibility of ECE provision. The Roman Catholic Mission and the Christian Children's Fund are examples of organisations that have contributed towards the expansion of ECE provision.

Funding of ECE in the Gambia is a shared responsibility between the central government, local authorities, NGOs (such as Action Aid International) and UNICEF. Because multiple sectors are involved in ECE, this has boosted funding from the public sector, as well as other local and international agencies and foundations that provide financial support.

Access and quality

Access is largely limited to those families who can afford to pay the fees for



enrolment in ECE centres. Poorer communities are still generally unable to access ECE, despite the National Education Policy of 2004-2015 targeting the disadvantaged areas of the countries. ECE provision remains concentrated in urban areas, and very few programmes have been implemented in rural areas where largely NGOs are active (such as the Faith-based 'Christian Children's Fund'). Rural provision of ECE is generally limited to day-care facilities for children aged 0-3 years old.

The quality of ECE services is varied; some of the private centres are better organised and resourced, whereas a number of both public and private centres lack basic facilities such as sanitary facilities, adequate water supplies and appropriate nutrition. Poor conditions of service are de-motivating factors for teachers, and often less qualified teachers end up employed in poorly equipped schools.

Workforce: ECE staff

ECE-staff working in centres and schools in the Gambia comprise teachers, nurses, nannies, facilitators, volunteers, and community development workers. Generally, the majority of ECE staff is female, although statistics are not available to support this claim, except for the teaching staff, 55 percent of whom are female. The Gambia seems to be one of the countries with the largest proportion of male teachers in the world (45 percent).

Few training facilities are available for ECE teachers, and programmes are not standardised. Some faith-based organisations have training centres for teachers and also provide in-service programmes to teachers working in their centres. The College of Gambia also provides an ECE training course for ECE teachers.

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service

Salaries for ECE teachers are much lower than those of teachers working in mainstream education, and ECE teachers have far fewer career prospects.

Promising developments in ECE and challenges

There have been some successful developments in policy on ECE provision in the Gambia, however, in practice, this has not always been as successful. Despite the provision of pre-service training for ECE teachers, as well as the development of an ECE training programme at the College of

Gambia, there are still a number of un- and under-qualified teachers working in ECE centres. Low salaries and inadequate incentives have been one of the major causes of unqualified staff increasingly being employed in ECE services. Inadequate teaching and learning materials further impede the delivery of quality education.

ECE is still largely run by private institutions who act as service providers, rather than focusing on the holistic development of children. Supervision and monitoring of ECE services are minimal.

5.5 Ghana

Key indicators

Figures for enrolment in early childhood education in Ghana and statistics on teaching staff are only available for the year 2006, during which 1,169,237 children were enrolled in ECE, 55 percent of which were girls, revealing a fairly balanced enrolment of boys and girls. The total number of ECE teachers in 2006 was 40,796, the large majority of whom were female (82 percent). Child-teacher ratios are very high in ECE in Ghana, ranging between 26 - 34 children per teacher.

ECE policy and practice: system level policy, legislation and implementation
Early childhood education forms an integral part of the national education system in Ghana and is protected by legislation that was passed in 2004. There are three levels of ECE, including crèche for 0-2 year olds, nursery for 2-3 year olds and kindergarten for 3-5 year olds. The two years of kindergarten forms part of the basic education system and is compulsory and free in public schools under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. Crèches and nurseries fall under the mandate of the Ministry of Social Welfare. At the local, regional and national levels, designated officials from both ministries supervise the ECE centres, and ECE committees have been established at the district and regional levels to support implementation. Additionally, the Ministry of Women and Children has a central coordinating role.

ECE provision and funding

ECE services in Ghana are provided by the central government and the private sector, as well as local communities, NGOs and local governments. While



overall private sector provision of ECE accounts for approximately a third of all services, at the crèche and nursery levels, 75 percent of these services are accounted for by the private sector.

In the public sector provision of ECE, funding is a shared responsibility between the central government, local authorities and parents. Public ECE services are free of charge, which includes tuition, materials and feeding. By contrast, in the private sector costs are borne by parents in full. Over the last decade, funding by the central and local governments for ECE has gradually increased. The government also supports the private sector through the provision of, for example, free text books.

Access and quality

There are wide rural-urban disparities in access to early childhood education in Ghana; ECE centres are generally lacking in rural areas, as well as in disadvantaged urban communities. Entry fees in private ECE centres also limit access for many children whose parents cannot afford these costs. Additionally, children with special needs are often not catered for in ECE centres.

The quality of ECE provision is hampered by high child-teacher ratios, low qualifications of teachers and a lack of appropriate facilities in a number of ECE centres. Most urban private and public centres have good infrastructure and trained teachers. In rural areas, teachers working in ECE centres are generally better trained and paid than teachers working in rural private centres. Child-teacher ratios are lower in private ECE centres (around 26 children per teacher) than in public centres, where both in rural and urban areas there are approximately 34 children per teacher.

Workforce: ECE staff

Gender parity in ECE is skewed towards women, 80 percent of teachers are female. Around 65 percent of all teachers in the public sector, and 75 percent in the private sector, are untrained. Teacher training is considered to be of low quality, and more focused on in-service training. Teachers are required to pay for in-service training despite the fact that these training centres are run by the government. University level training has only been recently introduced, in 2005.

Most of the teachers working in private ECE centres do not stay in the centres for very long. The majority of teachers are young female high school graduates who are preparing for higher education.

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service

The salaries and conditions of service of teachers working in public ECE service compare unfavourably with teachers working at the primary level. Most of the teachers working in ECE centres are not qualified, and thus earn considerably lower salaries. Teachers working in private ECE centres tend to be paid less for the same qualifications, and few teachers in the private sector enjoy social security, leave and medical insurance.

Successful examples and promising developments in ECE

The success of ECE implementation in Ghana is, in part, due to the strong commitment of the government to invest in the development of a national ECE policy and to regulate the implementation of the policy, for example, through the establishment of a national ECE committee overseeing this implementation. The introduction of university level courses on ECE in two universities has helped to enhance teachers' qualifications. In addition, teachers' unions' support of the development of ECE, as well as efforts to unionise teachers working in the private sector who are largely non-unionised, reveals a commitment from the unions.

Key challenges

Key challenges to the development of early childhood education structures in Ghana include a lack of infrastructure in some rural areas, and disadvantaged urban communities, high costs in private ECE centres, largely non-unionised teachers in the private sector, and a large proportion of unqualified teachers employed in ECE.

5.6 Hungary

Key indicators

The participation rate for the 3-5 year age group is just above 86 percent. The average duration of participation of children aged 3–7 in pre-primary education is just over 3 years, which is the highest average value in Europe (Eurydice 2006/7).

ECE policy and practice: system level policy and legislation

Pre-primary education falls under the administration of two ministries: the Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, which is



in charge of ECE for 0-3 year olds in centre-based care (crèches), and the Ministry of Education and Culture, which is responsible for the much larger kindergarten education system in place for 3-7 year olds. The kindergarten education system is considered as the first stage of public education (OECD 2006: 343).

Pre-school education is governed by the Education Act. A national education program is required for religious and private kindergartens. Kindergarten education is compulsory for every child who has reached the age of 5 years.

Union perspective: key policy issues

In Hungary, mothers have the possibility of state support for a period of 36 months after the birth of their child, and up to 3 years, at which age the child is able to access kindergarten. In the current context of the financial crisis, such support is unable to be maintained, and intended increases in the rate of access to ECE for 0-3 year olds are not able to be implemented.

Funding allocated by the state for ECE is calculated per child, and this amount is supplemented by local authorities. There has been no increase in the level of funding allocated by the state per capita, and local authorities do not preside over the funds to complement the funding for early childhood education. As a result, the number of children in groups has increased or groups have been merged.

ECE provision and funding

Public provision of early childhood education in Hungary is divided between crèches (targeting 0-3 year olds) and kindergartens (the so-called óvoda) intended for 3-7 year old), which are largely financed by local authorities and the state. Centre based care for children aged 0-3 years takes place on a much smaller scale than kindergarten provision. Municipalities often cannot afford to fund services for children under three years (OECD 2006: 345).

Around 90 percent of total ECE expenditure in Hungary is directed at maintaining public provision, and the remaining government funding is directed to the small non-profit sector, such as kindergartens run by voluntary organisations and churches (OECD 2006: 347). In 2006, the government provided between 25-30 percent of costs, local authorities around 60 percent and parents the remaining 10-15 percent (generally the cost of food). Fees are subsidised for parents (ibid).

Access and quality

Enrolment is generally high in kindergartens in Hungary, where, by comparison, the capacity of crèches is less sufficient and access for children below the age of three to ECE services remains limited, despite efforts to increase it over the past years. In small settlements in rural areas in particular, ECE services are often lacking due to low funds available to local authorities (Hungarian administration is highly decentralised). Grants are allocated to low-income families, such that their children are able to attend early childhood education from the age of three years, although in reality this access is not always guaranteed.

Provision of ECE to children with special needs is varied across the regions. Previously, public policy encouraged segregated education for children with special needs or disabilities, but since the early 1990s, children are increasingly integrated into mainstream child care provision. However, this integration is a slow process, and segregation of children with disabilities and special needs continues to be a common feature in ECE in Hungary, leading to the exclusion of these children.

Workforce: ECE staff

Early childhood education staff in Hungary is almost exclusively female. Staff working in kindergartens generally have a tertiary level degree, and around 60 percent of assistant staff are trained (OECD 2006: 347). In crèches, child care workers are generally qualified (secondary vocational level). Basic training for crèche staff is expected to be raised to a post-secondary level and tertiary levels to be combined with kindergarten training, following the Bologna process addressing parity in education qualifications (OECD 2006: 247). Kindergarten training colleges were integrated with universities a number of years ago as a measure to improve the quality of the pedagogical training.

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service compared

Qualified teachers have access to the same pay scales as teachers in primary education, although in many cases the average salary is lower for ECE teaching staff. Weekly working hours are in some cases, higher than at other levels of education; statutory working hours are 40 hours per week.

Training courses are provided to teachers in nursery once every 7 years. Teachers can apply for participation in training courses in the meantime.

Key challenges

Enrolment in training colleges has been declining over the past decades, and combined with an ageing staff, as well as a shortage of child care workers in crèches, this poses a challenge for the staffing of child care centres and kindergartens in the future. Candidates are not attracted to the profession because of high workloads.

A lack of funding for early childhood education will negatively affect the quality of education in future years. Continued efforts need to be made to integrate children with special needs and disabilities into mainstream crèches and kindergartens, and to focus attention on access for Roma children, who are often excluded from educational services or segregated into special needs schools.

5.7 Mexico

Key indicators

In Mexico, only around 3 percent of children aged 0-3 years enjoy access to early childhood education services, the majority in the Federal District and other large cities. Of this three percent, only about 30 percent are enrolled in centre-based programmes (that form part of the 'direct' approach to ECE focused on the children), which are largely delivered by various government agencies, universities, unions and other bodies. Smaller, community-based centres are emerging as well, generally, as part of activities of community-based organisations. The other 70 percent of children accessing ECE receive 'indirect' programmes that focus on family care and parental services, largely run by the government.

Child-staff ratios of between 30-40 children per teacher were noted in 2006, particularly in urban areas (OECD 2006: 384).

ECE policy and practice: system level policy and legislation

ECE services for 0-3 year olds are seen as education, but do not form part of the basic education system. Pre-school education (*Educación preescolar*) for children aged 3-6 years is a governmental responsibility in Mexico. As part of the Law of Obligatory Pre-schooling of 2002, strongly supported by

the National Teachers' Union (SNTE), pre-school education for 3-6 year olds was intended to be made obligatory by the end of 2009, and to fall under the auspices of the federal and state ministries of education. Currently, pre-school education is obligatory from the age of four.

ECE provision and funding

In terms of organisation, there is not one ECE system, or one body responsible for overseeing early childhood education. Mexico is a federal state with 32 administrative districts and 2, 443 municipalities incorporating a number of local governments. A number of government bodies share responsibility over early childhood education, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development, the National System for Integral Family Development and the National Council for Educational Promotion, as well as a number of private organizations.

In 2006, over 80 percent of expenditure on early childhood education in Mexico came from public sources and around 19 percent from parental contributions.

Access and quality

Access to early childhood education for children aged 0-3 years is very low, only around 3 percent of children in that age group have access to ECE services. Rates of access to pre-school education for 3-6 year olds was around 69.3 percent in total in 2006 (OECD 2006: 378). In 2006, general pre-school programmes in urban and rural areas accounted for around 88 percent of the total number of 3-6 year olds enrolled. The indigenous pre-school programme enrolled around 8.4 percent, and community pre-schools covered around 4 percent of 3-6 year olds and targeted children in rural communities with less than 500 inhabitants (OECD 2006: 381).

About 10 percent of pre-schools are private. Enrolment in private pre-school education for children aged 2-6 years is around 30 percent in the Federal District, and only 2 percent in Oaxaca.

Inequalities in access to ECE services remain, particularly for children in remote rural areas who have far fewer opportunities to take part in formal ECE programmes than children in urban areas.



While variation exists across the country in terms of the quality of early childhood education, there remains considerable room for improvement to the quality of ECE services provided. The majority of ECE staff working with 0-3 year olds do not have professional pedagogical training, and there exists a wide variation in the level of qualifications. According to the OECD (2006), the level of education of teachers working in ECE can range from incomplete primary education to higher level education and professional qualifications. This is in comparison to teachers working at other levels, who on average have 14 years of formal schooling.

Adequate pre-service training for ECE staff is a necessary condition to improving the quality of early childhood education services in Mexico.

Workforce: ECE staff

The ECE workforce in Mexico is composed of both teachers and caregivers. In terms of level of education and professional training, there exists a large disparity between ECE staff working with 0-3 year olds and teachers working with children 3-6 years old. Government regulations stipulate that since early childhood education is multidisciplinary, public centres can employ staff from a variety of backgrounds, including psychology, nutrition, health, as well as education (OECD 2006: 378).

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service compared

Salaries for teachers working in early childhood education are relatively low. Many teachers work double shifts or may take on additional employment outside of education. In addition, teachers receive limited benefits. Education staff working with children aged 3-6 years generally face a lack of professional training.

Outstanding features and promising developments in ECE

With the adoption of the Law of Obligatory Pre-schooling in 2002, the Mexican government committed itself to the development of early childhood education provision in Mexico, as well as raising the levels of qualification of teaching staff. If more resources are set aside for the enforcement of this law, in addition to provisions regarding increased access for children under the age of three, a strong foundation could be set for a sound ECE system.

The development of special programmes targeting specific groups of children (e.g. indigenous populations, children of migrant workers, etc.) illustrates a commitment to the inclusion of marginalised groups, and ensuring equal access to education in Mexico.

Key challenges

The Mexican education system lacks a national set of common goals for early childhood education. As a result of a heavily decentralised administrative system, a variety of government institutions, organisations and private bodies are responsible for the provision of ECE, resulting in widely differing standards and levels of quality in different regions and schools. Early childhood education expertise at the state and federal levels needs to be strengthened, and greater coordination across the sub-systems developed, in order to oversee the implementation of quality ECE services.

Despite access for 0-3 year olds improving over the last years, barriers to access need to be addressed, particularly in rural areas and for children of women working in Mexico's informal sector, in order to raise enrolment from the current 3 percent.

Adequate pre- and in-service training is essential for the delivery of quality early childhood education. In order to strengthen the ECE system, teachers' salaries should be improved, training requirements increased and career incentives development.

5.8 Nepal

Key indicators

In 2008, a total of 881,245 children were enrolled in early childhood education in Nepal, a little over half of whom were male. The large majority of ECE staff in Nepal are female. Early childhood education teaching staff are not recognised as teachers, but initiators. Groups are large; on average there are approximately 35-40 children per teacher.

ECE policy and practice: system level policy and legislation

ECE in Nepal is protected by the Education Act. The Education Department of the Ministry of Education is responsible for ECE, and prepares the cur-



ricula and arranges training programmes for teachers (initiators), as well as managing and supervising the ECE structure in the country. In Nepal, there are two levels of ECE: Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres that are for 3-4 year olds, and pre-primary classes for four to five year olds.

Union perspective

Although an ECE policy that included provision for infrastructural development of ECE centres was developed in 2005, according to the union, its implementation has not been well supervised by the government. Many of the government schools are permitted to establish ECE centres, following the success of ECE in some districts; however, many of these schools are not well equipped with infrastructure to work adequately with young children.

ECE provision and funding

ECE is provided by the central government, as well as communities, NGOs and the private sector. According to the government, there are two kinds of Early Childhood Development Education: school-based pre-primary classes (targeting 4-5 year olds), and community-based ECD (child development) centres (for 3-4 year olds). In addition, there are many private kindergartens that are not under the auspices of the National Department of Education (UNESCO IBE 2006). Approximately, 70 percent of ECE provision is private and largely based in urban areas. There is an increased enrolment of children in private schools, as they often also provide ECE for children aged 0-3 (nursery and kindergarten combined), which public schools-based ECE centres do not offer.

Funding for ECE and pre-primary classes is a shared responsibility of central government and local communities. Additionally, there are over a 1000 community and school-based ECE centres that are directly supported by international agencies, such as UNICEF, Save the Children, Plan International and World Vision (UNESCO IBE 2006). In private provision of ECE, costs are largely borne by parents through fees. Although the government has increased funding for ECE in Nepal, it is still relatively low.

Access and quality

Access to ECE is impeded by a number of factors in Nepal, including a lack of ECE centres in certain parts of the country, and in particular, for private

ECE centres, the cost of attending is a major barrier to access. A very limited percentage of children have access to private, fee-paying pre-school establishments that are almost exclusively based in urban areas (UNESCO IBE 2006). There are no specific support provisions of ECE available for marginalised communities or disabled children.

The quality of ECE centres is limited by a lack of adequate infrastructure and facilities, which are poorly supervised by the government. High child-teacher ratios (up to 40 children per teacher) compromise the quality of ECE delivered, as teachers face difficulties in focusing on each child in a satisfactory way. Furthermore, teachers working in ECE may often be unqualified, and in some cases the government even appoints students with a high-school certificate as 'initiators' in ECE centres.



ECE provision is expanding in Nepal.

Workforce: ECE staff

There are considerable differences between teaching staff in public (government supported) and private ECE structures. Teaching staff in government supported ECE centres largely comprise initiators, with few or no



teaching assistants and other support staff. In private ECE centres/schools, teaching assistants and additional support staff are more readily available to the teaching staff and to support operations of the centres. Furthermore, teachers are generally more qualified in private ECE structures, whereas teachers in government supported ECE centres tend to receive in-service training, which the union considers not to be very effective.

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service

Differences between salaries of ECE teachers working in public and private ECE centres are considerable. ECE teachers working in government-supported ECE centres receive 'incentives' but not salaries. Incentives amount to around US \$25 per month, half of which is provided by the government and the other half by local communities. In private ECE schools teachers may receive much higher salaries, although there are extreme variations in salaries of teachers between private ECE schools as well: in some lower-standard private ECE centres, the pay scale of teachers may be very low.

Successful examples and promising developments in ECE

While ECE provision in Nepal is still in its early stages, the development of policies on ECE by the government, the establishment of a separate department in the Ministry of Education and increased enrolment of children in ECE centres, are promising for the future development of ECE provision in a country where these structures are still fairly weak. Teachers working, both in government-supported and private ECE centres/schools are largely unionised, including those teachers who are not officially recognised as teachers by the government, but are so by the union.

Key challenges

The key challenges and obstacles for the early education system in Nepal are broadly related to availability, access and quality. There are not yet very many ECE centres/schools in Nepal, particularly in rural areas, where there is a general lack of infrastructure. Additionally, in rural areas there exists a tendency for parents to neglect early childhood education for their children, as many have themselves received no education.

High costs of ECE provided by private schools create barriers to access for many parents to send their children to these centres/schools. A number of teachers working in private ECE provision are not unionised, and both in

government-supported and private schools, there are considerable numbers of teachers who are under- or un-qualified and receive very low salaries.

Unions would like teachers working in government-supported ECE structures to be recognised as teachers, and as such receive a basic salary similar to that received by primary teachers.

5.9 New Zealand

Key indicators

The total enrolment in early childhood education in New Zealand in 2008 was 198, 784 children, a little over half of whom were boys. Around 98 percent of four year olds take part in ECE programmes. The total teaching staff in 2008 comprised 16, 861 teachers and only 221 of these were male, revealing a considerable gender imbalance in ECE staff. Child-teacher ratios were around 11 children per teacher, although for children under two, the ratio was 5 children per teacher. An increased enrolment in early childhood education in New Zealand reflects a growing labour market participation of parents. The biggest increase has been for children aged between 0-3 years.

ECE policy and practice: system level policy and legislation

Early childhood education is an integral part of the national education system, and all services for children from birth, fall under the auspices of the Ministry of Education.

Care and education services are integrated in New Zealand; the whole early childhood education sector has an educational focus. The ECE sector is guided by a Strategic Plan introduced in 2002 and to be carried out until 2012. It emphasises *quality*, *participation* and *collaboration*.

Quality initiatives have focused on teacher qualifications, but also on professional development (in particular on embedding the curriculum). *Participation* initiatives have meant growing numbers of children enrolled in ECE programmes. For example, around 98 percent of four year olds are involved in ECE programmes. Children who are still mostly excluded from ECE, include children from low-income families, children from indigenous (Maori) families and migrant groups, particularly Pasifika. Projects that have focused on enrolling these groups have had mixed success.



Collaboration has involved a 'Centres of Innovation' programme, which has aimed at spreading best practice throughout the sector. However, this programme has recently been cut as part of recession-fuelled funding cuts.

There is no entitlement to early childhood education, but funding subsidies have encouraged the private sector, in particular, to expand their offer of services. Community services have generally not had the capital to expand at the same rate.

Regulations cover matters such as facilities and premises, but also staff qualifications, ratios, group size and the delivery of the curriculum.

Union perspective: key policy issues

There are concerns about a weakening of the qualified teacher targets. By 2010, 80 percent of teachers were expected to be qualified, and 100 percent by 2012, but the government is expected to announce a lower threshold. However, the argument in support of qualified teachers has largely been won within the sector, and now most people agree that this is desirable. The low rate of graduate output is rather a hindering factor in achieving the target of fully qualified teaching staff.

Despite high participation in early childhood education programmes, there exists no government planning or provision of services, and as a result, large areas of the country are undersupplied, and services are often not adapted to meet the needs of Maori and Pasifika children, or children from migrant families. Reaching families that currently miss out on ECE programmes is expensive and involves targeted planned services. By merely providing funding subsidies and leaving the provision of services to the market, NZEI Te Riu Roa (the New Zealand Education Institute) considers that the government is not fully committed to improving participation rates.

Collaboration between different services is a difficult task. Although the *Centres of Innovation* Project, which involved participating ECE centres in action-based research, in conjunction with academic partners, was successful in spreading best practices across the ECE sector, it has been discontinued as part of spending cuts.

ECE provision and funding

The government funds and regulates ECE provision, but does not provide ECE services, rather services are provided by a mix of community groups and private businesses. They include half-day and full day kindergartens, full day centre based education and care, Maori and Pasifika 'language nests', parent led centres, home-based education and care and playgroups. Overall, 63.7 percent of services are community based and 36.3 percent are private.

Most enrolments (60 percent) are in full day centres, around 60 percent of which are businesses: a mixture of private owners, small and large chains and corporate chains listed on the share market. Community services are provided by not-for-profit incorporated societies or charitable trusts or run by organisations such as local authorities or universities. Full day services are the fastest growing part of the sector.

Home-based services are expanding rapidly (from a low base). Licensed home-based services are run by unqualified educators, overseen by a qualified visiting teacher, regulated and follow the national curriculum.

The government funds services by way of a per-child per-hour subsidy (which is not means-tested) for up to 30 hours per child per week - that covers about 70 percent of the total costs of early childhood education. The remaining 30 percent is covered by parental fees. Around 80 percent of three and four year olds have access to 20 hours free education under a recent policy initiative. Services continue to expand to satisfy the unmet demand this policy has created, and the proportion of three and four year-olds benefitting from this policy continues to grow.

Funding for early childhood services has grown markedly over the last 10 years. At the end of June 2002, funding was set at \$409 million, and by 2009 it had grown to \$1.1 billion. An additional \$70 million over the next four years was announced in the latest budget. This increase has been caused by three main factors. Firstly, the move to pay parity for kindergarten teachers with their colleagues in primary and secondary schools, which saw salaries increase by 61 percent between 2002 and 2006. Another factor was the introduction of the 20 hours free education policy for three and four year olds in 2007, for which \$94 million was allocated in the first year. The third factor has been the increase in participation rates, caused by growing



labour participation rates by the parents of young children, coupled with increasing awareness of the benefits of early education.

Access and quality

Around 80 per cent of three and four year olds have access to 20 hours free education under a recent policy initiative of 2007. Services continue to expand to satisfy the unmet demand this policy has created, and the proportion of three and four year-olds benefitting from this policy continues to grow. Despite expanding services, there is an undersupply around the country, with access to services more difficult in some rural areas and in the faster growing population centres. Places for children under two years of age are scarcer, although demand has also risen for places for three and four year olds with the 20 hours policy. Children from low-income families, indigenous children (Maori) and migrant children, mainly Pasifika, are most likely to miss out on ECE programmes.

The community sector has difficulty expanding because of a lack of capital, and limited grants available for buildings. The grants that are available are targeted to under-represented groups such as Pasifika or Maori language services, but are insufficient to meet the needs. The private sector is likely to expand more quickly, but for the shortage of qualified teachers, which is considered a short-term issue because of ongoing efforts to move to a more qualified workforce. The private sector tends to cater for working parents wanting full-time full-day places, and to offer limited flexibility.

There have been some specific programmes to encourage children from disadvantaged families to participate, with an intensive one-on-one approach from members of the same community, but there is no comprehensive data about the success of these initiatives as yet. The reasons why these children do not access services are complex and include poverty, language and cultural barriers, a lack of awareness of the advantages of ECE, and differing child-rearing philosophies. There is some support for the setting up of 'playgroups' in minority languages. In addition, there is some specific funding available for services serving poor or disadvantaged communities.

Children with special needs are catered for in early childhood programmes, with 4 percent of children under five years qualifying for special assistance.

There is a variety of support available through different agencies depending on the nature of the needs – including support workers employed by the Ministry of Education. However, there are tight criteria and hours are limited. These workers are lowly paid and rarely have job security. There exist little good data about enrolment of children with special needs and the union suspects that these children are less likely to be enrolled than their peers without the same needs. Some services prohibit children who are not toilet trained for example, and others say that children with special needs can only attend if they have a support worker.

The quality has improved markedly in recent years. The union's view is that things are heading in the right direction with a move to qualified teachers, teacher registration, professional development initiatives, improvements in assessment and documentation of children's learning, a mandatory curriculum, a focus on self-review, greater awareness of lifelong learning and of evidence-based teaching approaches etc. The sector and the community generally support the professionalisation of early childhood education, although still recognising the value of parent-led services such as Playcentre or Kohanga Reo (Maori language nests).

Workforce: ECE staff

The ECE workforce is predominantly female, with less than 1.5 percent of teachers being men. Its ethnic composition is 72.5 percent Pakeha or European, 9 percent from Pasifika nations, 8.5 percent Maori, 8 percent Asian, and 2 percent a mixture of other nationalities. European/Pakeha teachers appear to be over-represented compared to their numbers in the population as a whole, while all the other groups are under-represented.

Teachers are increasingly becoming qualified with three year diplomas or degrees. The proportion of qualified teachers with a degree was around 25 percent of all qualified teachers in 2008 but this is set to increase with many tertiary institutions moving to degrees and away from diplomas. Increasingly, graduate diplomas are becoming common as more people with other degrees enter ECE teaching. In addition, several universities are moving to four-year degrees.

Teacher training is at a similar level to that for primary teachers, and is moving to a similar level as that for secondary teachers, who commonly have



a three year degree and a one year diploma. After initial teacher education, teachers are required to complete an advice and guidance programme over two years which includes professional development, as part of gaining full registration. In-service training (professional development) is common and is required as a condition for maintaining teacher registration.

Teachers gain a three year degree or diploma level qualification and are registered to teach in all parts of the education system. Increasingly, teachers are choosing the degree over the diploma, and the country is likely to shift to a four year qualification. There has been a gradual shift towards 100 percent qualified teachers. The funding system still provides an incentive for qualified teachers. However, graduates are not entering the profession quickly enough to satisfy demand.

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service

In theory, salaries are the same for all ECE teaching staff (services are funded to pay the same rates), but there is no effective mechanism to ensure that early childhood teachers across the sector are paid at the same rates. Under the bulk funding arrangements, although services are funded to pay rates at the same level as in the Kindergarten Teachers Collective Agreement, service providers are not required to pay salaries at that level.

Generally though, teachers' salaries are quite good because there is a shortage of teachers and services are funded in a way that gives them incentives to employ qualified teachers. In the growing private sector, starting rates are high but tend not to recognise skills and experience. In the private sector, conditions such as annual leave, non contact time, hours of work, professional development opportunities and time for meetings are poor.

Early childhood teachers remain largely non-unionised, particularly in the growing private sector.

Outstanding features and promising developments in ECE

Education and care are integrated for children from birth to five, and fall under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. The ECE sector is moving towards a fully qualified registered teaching workforce, as part of a ten-year strategic plan "Pathways to the Future: Nga Huarahi Arataki", which has as its key goals, quality, participation and collaboration.

The early childhood curriculum, *Te Whaariki* (which translates roughly to a woven mat), has a socio-cultural focus and follows a credit based, holistic and emergent curriculum model. This curriculum is now mandatory for all services that receive government funding.

Historically, the early childhood education system has had a high level of funding, which has grown by 270 per cent in the past seven years.

According to NZEI Te Riu Roa, teachers have a commitment to professionalism and to self review and work in a climate of collegiality and continuing commitment to learning. All early childhood services are monitored, as are schools, by the Education Review Office which reports on each service every three years. Teachers report a high level of job satisfaction.



ECE helps to equalise opportunities for indigenous children and ethnic minorities.

Key challenges

NZEI Te Riu Roa commends the commitment to a fully qualified registered teaching workforce by 2012, but states that the current National Government



(conservative) is likely to water down this target, and has already said for children under two, qualified teachers are not as necessary. Maintaining and realising this target is likely to be a key challenge.

Although services are funded to pay the same salaries to early childhood teachers as those paid to primary and secondary teachers, there is no effective mechanism to ensure this happens across the sector. In addition, the growth of 'market share' of the private sector, which is almost completely non-unionised, magnifies this problem. NZEI Te Riu Roa's challenge is to unionise this group. Overall, only around one third of early childhood teachers belong to a union.

ECE participation rates are high, but those children who could benefit most, still miss out. Sustained interventions, coupled with the provision of culturally appropriate services for Maori Pasifika, and migrant groups, particularly refugee children, are needed. Because the government does not provide services and there is only limited capital funding available for new services, there is no mechanism to make sure these populations are provided for in a timely manner.

The 20 hours free policy for three and four year olds has been a positive initiative, but the current government has changed the name of the policy to 20 hours (removing the word 'free') so the concern is that funding rates are likely to lag behind inflation and that services will be charged over time.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that current legal minimum child to teacher ratios of one to five for children under two, and one to ten for children over two (and one to fifteen for children over two in half-day services) are too high for quality. The union would like to bring these ratios down, which would have implications for both funding and teacher supply.

5.10 Nigeria

Key indicators

Figures on enrolment in early childhood education in Nigeria are only available for 2006, during which a total of 2,315,978 children were enrolled, a little over half of whom were boys (52 percent). Group sizes are large in Nigeria, for every teacher there are approximately 37 children.

ECE policy and practice: system level policy and legislation

Early childhood education forms part of the education system in Nigeria, and falls under the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Education, the Universal Basic Education Commission and Boards, in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and local governments. At the federal, state and local levels, commissions and boards monitor and control ECE.

Early childhood education in Nigeria is targeted at three to six year olds, and is divided into three stages: crèche, nursery and kindergarten. ECE is compulsory and free to children who will attend primary school. Until recently, ECE was largely private and not freely accessible.

As a result of a government policy requirement that every public school should have a pre-primary school linked to it, considerable progress has been made in early childhood education provision during the past four years. However, the number of children enrolled in ECE centres remains low: around 2.3 million children are enrolled, which amounts to 21 percent of children aged 3-6 years (UNICEF Nigeria).

ECE Provision and Funding

Early childhood education is provided for and funded jointly by the federal government, state and local governments, as well as by the private sector, local communities (parents) and NGOs. The private sector still plays a more active role in the provision of ECE, despite increased public funding for ECE since 2004.

Public ECE enrolment is free of charge, whereas in private ECE the costs for teaching and learning materials are borne entirely by parents. The National Union of Teachers (NUT) in Nigeria considers that funding of public and private ECE services needs to be coordinated, to prevent the charging of exorbitant tuition fees in the private sector.

Access and quality

The total level of access to ECE is 21 percent, with large variations between rural and urban areas, mainly as a result of inadequate provision of ECE in rural areas. Access to early childhood education is limited for many families by fees, particularly in private centres. Furthermore, there is limited access for children with special needs in public ECE centres.



The quality of ECE is generally better in private centres compared to public centres, and also in urban rather than rural areas, where there is better school infrastructure and more qualified teachers in general. Numerous public ECE schools lack appropriate equipment and infrastructure conducive to quality education.

Workforce: ECE staff

Early childhood education staff in Nigeria are largely female, only 10 percent of so-called 'caregivers' working in ECE are male. Over 70 percent of the teachers are not trained, specifically in early childhood education methods, although they may have general teaching qualifications. Generally, however, caregivers working in ECE centres are unqualified: around 85 percent do not possess basic qualifications, and over 50 percent have had no formal education (UNICEF Nigeria). The inclusion of an early childhood education course in pre-service training is one attempt to raise staff qualifications.

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service

Teachers working in public ECE generally receive the same salary as teachers working in primary education. In contrast, in private centres, teachers may face lower salaries and poorer conditions of service.

Successful examples and promising developments in ECE

The commitment of the government to the development of early childhood education in Nigeria can be seen in the increased investment in ECE services, the gradual but consistent implementation of ECE policy and regulation of services by the federal, state and local governments.

Key challenges

The key challenges to the successful development of an early childhood education system in Nigeria include a number of factors: access to ECE in Nigeria remains low (at about 21 percent of the ECE age group) and largely limited to high-income families. As yet there is a lack of specialised training available to teachers working in ECE and qualifications of ECE caregivers remain alarmingly low. An additional major issue in Nigeria's ECE system is the lack and poor state of infrastructure, equipment, learning facilities and resources (UNICEF Nigeria).

5.11 Norway

'In Norway, an integrated system of services for children from 0 to 6, with a well established and extensive system of publicly funded *barnehager*, has existed for many years. Underpinning the system is a clearly articulated vision of children, both individually and as a social group, of their place in society and their relationship with the environment' (OECD 2006: 399).

Key indicators

In 2008, a total of 87.2 percent of all children aged 1 to 5 years were enrolled in early childhood education, which was a 2 percent increase from 2006, when 80.4 percent of the children were enrolled. The large majority of teaching staff in early childhood education are female (92 percent). For children aged 0-3 years, the child-staff ratio is 7-9 children per trained pre-school educator, and for children aged 3-6 years, the child-staff ratio is 14-18 children per trained ECE teacher, although several non-trained support staff may also be present (OECD 2006: 395).

ECE policy and practice: system level policy and legislation

Early childhood education forms an integral part of the national education system in Norway, but is neither free of charge for parents nor compulsory for children. The public sector is responsible for the regulation of ECE policy, as well as the major part of financing of ECE services. As from 2009, every child in Norway has an individual right to ECE from the age of 1 year.

The early childhood education system is regulated by national laws, but organised locally by the municipalities (435 kommuner or municipalities in total) who hold administrative responsibility for the implementation of the national regulations and to ensure that the Framework plan – the national curriculum – is followed. Many municipalities have unified school and early childhood services into one department and that has resulted in closer coordination across ECE and primary education. The Ministry of Education and Research holds the responsibility for early childhood education, for schools, out-of-school care and the training of teaching staff (OECD 2006: 395).



Union perspective: key policy issues

The *Union of Education Norway* (UEN) supports the main objectives and actions of the Governments ECE policy. However, UEN has expressed concern about the strong national focus on meeting the need for more ECE centres without a complementary strong focus on ensuring that there are enough qualified teachers to meet quality standards. One of the main key policy issues in ECE in Norway is how to ensure that the focus on establishing enough ECE institutions does not lead to the deterioration of the quality standards of ECE. Recently, there have been a number of granted exemptions from the qualification requirements for ECE teaching positions, without the development of sufficient plans for educating enough early education teachers. UEN indicates that there exists a shortage of 4,000 ECE teachers in order to balance the child-staff ratio.

The UEN additionally advocates that requirements for staff qualifications should be more ambitious, and that the standard that stipulates that 33 per cent of ECE staff should be qualified teachers should be raised to 50 per cent of teaching staff. Moreover, the union highlights the importance of increasing the attractiveness of the profession through the assurance of decent salaries and working conditions, thereby encouraging the recruitment of more qualified teachers and retaining those already in the profession. Teachers working in private ECE centres often do not have the same levels of salaries and working conditions as ECE teachers working in the public sector. UEN argues that is in part due to the financial situation of private centres, but also due to the unwillingness of some owners of private ECE centres to sign collective agreements.

ECE provision and funding

Familiebarnehager or family day care and *barnehager* have half-day and full-day programmes for children aged 0-6 years of age. The public sector is the main provider and financer of early childhood education in Norway, but around half of the ECE centres are privately owned and run. Private providers of ECE are varied, some of the centres are based on parental initiatives, others are founded on religious beliefs or alternative pedagogy, and some are run by private companies. Public municipal *barnehager* cater for 57 per cent of children, and private *barnehager*, which generally are more numerous but smaller, cater for 43 per cent of the children (OECD 2006: 396).

Rates of provision of early childhood education vary by age groups; in 2006, for 0-1 year olds child care was generally organised at home by parents and only around 3 percent of children were in centre-based care, for 1-3 year olds, 48 percent were cared for in ECE services, and in the 3-6 year age group, 88 percent of all children were cared for in ECE services (OECD 2006: 396).

The municipalities are responsible for the implementation and provision of early childhood education, and receive allocated funding from the central authorities. There has been a considerable increase in ECE funding over the last decade as a result of an increased demand for ECE provision, regulations for teaching staff and increased political awareness. The ECE system does however still rely on parental contributions, although this is set at a maximum of no more than 20 percent of costs (OECD 2006: 394). Union of Education Norway advocates that ECE must be made free of charge.

From 2011 onwards, the funding regime for ECE will be restructured, and funding will no longer be allocated to the municipalities specifically for ECE, but rather ECE funding will form part of the overall municipality budget, and subject to the budget priorities and responsibility of the local authorities. UEN anticipates, and is concerned that in the future, as a result of this restructuring, funding for ECE will not be prioritised by the municipalities.

Access and quality

Access to early childhood education is generally available in Norway. It is rather larger municipalities and cities that face problems in meeting the expansion of ECE services, both in terms of physical capacity and the recruitment of enough qualified teachers. Particularly for ECE services targeted at children in the 0-3 year age-group, where the reduction in parental contributions and the expansion of ECE in general has led to an increase in the demand for ECE.

Increasing attention is addressed to strengthening the inclusion of children with a minority language background into the ECE system. Support is provided to enable barnehager to accommodate children with disabilities, children from low-income families and children from minority groups (OECD 2006: 397).



One of the prominent features of the Norwegian ECE tradition is that it takes a holistic view of combining education and care, play and learning. ECE institutions support the development of children on their own terms. The *Framework plan* – the national curriculum– that must be used by all *barnehager*, emphasises that both local cultural values and national cultural heritage are reflected in the childhood environment and activities (OECD 2006: 398).

Workforce: ECE staff

Approximately a third of the ECE workforce are qualified ECE teachers, who have a 3-year tertiary level training from one of the national university colleges or private colleges. There are no formal qualification requirements for ECE support staff/assistants, the majority of whom hold secondary education/vocational diplomas, or are trained youth workers. Pilot projects and initiatives are in place to strengthen in-service training for ECE staff. However, ECE teachers do not have the same access to continuous professional training as teachers working at other levels.

There is a strong gender imbalance in ECE staff, only 8 percent of the ECE workforce is male.

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service compared

Overall, the status, pay and working conditions of teachers working in early childhood education compare unfavorably to working and pay conditions for primary level teachers, the union (UEN) reports. The level of teachers salaries working in early childhood education continue to be lower than for teachers working at other levels of education. During the past years, education unions in Norway have focused their efforts on closing the gap. While starting salary levels are now higher for ECE teachers and comparable to other levels, possibilities for salary progression through tenured positions are still much better for teachers working at the primary level and higher. Equal wage and working conditions in ECE need to be achieved in order to retain teachers in early childhood education, as well as to attract new teachers (particularly male teachers) to the profession.

Successful examples and promising developments in ECE

An outstanding feature of Norway's ECE system, is that early childhood education is considered an integral part of lifelong learning and thus of

the national education system. A remarkable development in the ECE system has been the transfer of its policy and funding from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs (BFD) to the Ministry of Education and Research (OECD 2006: 400).

The revised Framework Plan that was implemented in August 2006, contains a new Kindergarten Act that sets the statutory right of children to early childhood education, 'giving children a legal right to participate in all questions concerning their daily lives in ECEC' (OECD 2006: 398).

Key challenges

Key challenges raised by Union of Education Norway include making early childhood education free of charge for parents and to increase the number of trained teachers working in ECE.

5.12 Portugal

Key indicators

In 2006/2007 a total of 247, 826 children, of whom 51 percent were boys and 49 percent girls, were enrolled in both public and private early childhood education in Portugal. A total of 16, 607 teachers were working in ECE in that year and 97 percent were female, revealing a large gender imbalance in teaching staff. The child-teacher ratio was 15 children per teacher. In nursery schools run by the Ministry of Education, no more than 25 children can be assigned to one teacher, and for groups of three year olds, no more than 20 children are permitted per teacher.

ECE policy and practice: system level policy and legislation

Pre-primary education is considered by law as an integral part of the education system in Portugal. The overall objectives of ECE is the holistic development of the child and his/her potential (emotional, social, intellectual and motor skills), which is to be undertaken in close cooperation with families (who have the right to participate in the development of education plans and objectives).

The 1997 Framework Law of Pre-primary sets the definition, policy, aims



and implementation strategies for pre-school education, and defines early childhood education as the first stage of primary education in the process of lifelong learning. Under the terms of the Framework Law, pre-primary education can take various forms that complement and interrelate to one another.

Early childhood education in Portugal is both public and private, and the overall responsibility is shared by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MSTT). Both state and private kindergartens are under the supervision of the Portuguese Ministry of Education, which defines the normative features of pre-primary education (organisation, evaluation, monitoring and pedagogy) and funds kindergartens for 3-6 year olds. The MSTT in turn, regulates and funds ECE provision for 0-3 year olds, and supports low-income families' access to ECE (e.g. provision of free meals and subsidies to families) (OECD 2006: 402).

Early childhood education has become gradually more decentralised over the last years. The Regional Directorates of Education are responsible for the overall implementation of national ECE policies in the regions (such as the coordination, monitoring and support of kindergartens, as well as management of human, material and financial resources). Increasingly, policy and organisational matters fall under the auspices of municipalities, in particular, concerning the training, employment and remuneration of non-teaching staff.

Union perspective: key policy issues

FNE - Federação Nacional dos Sindicatos da Educação – notes the considerable developments that have taken place in early childhood education. FNE maintains that it is difficult to harmonize the diverse working conditions and salaries of teachers that have resulted from the devolved responsibility for ECE to various institutions and levels, and varying sources of funding.

ECE provision and funding

Pre-primary education is optional and is provided for children between the ages of three and six (the compulsory school age in Portugal is six years). Because nursery school provision in the public education system is not

available for all children aged 3-4 years, priority is given to five year old children who are about to enter primary education.

For children aged 0-3 years, centre-based crèches and family day care centres are provided for 8-9 hours daily, the former having an 11 percent coverage. Almost 90 percent of children aged 0-3 years are cared for by their families or are cared for in informal child care arrangements. For children aged 3-6 years, *jardim de infância* (kindergartens) are provided for 5-6 hours daily (OECD 2006: 401). Around 60 percent of children from the age of 3 years attend *jardim de infância*, rising to 90 percent for the 5-6 year age group (ibid.).

Of the total expenditure on education, around 6 percent is spent on pre-primary education. Most of pre-primary education funding is public (92 percent) (OECD 2006: 404), and comes from central and local government funds combined. The maintenance of buildings is largely a responsibility of local authorities, whereas central government holds responsibility for teachers' recruitment. According to the OECD report *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*: 'private provision is mainly non-profit, as only non-profit providers can receive public funds' (ibid.: 404). Around 69 percent of ECE centres are public, while 31 percent are private.

Access and quality

According to FNE, the organisation and provision of early childhood education in Portugal has greatly improved over the past decade. Specific support programmes are in place for children from minority groups and children with special needs.

Workforce: ECE staff

Initial training of early childhood education teachers is conducted in state or private teachers training colleges. By law, teachers working in ECE should possess a *licenciatura* degree. Crèches are generally staffed by so-called *educadores* who are in possession of a 4-year university or polytechnic training, as well as nurses and social workers working in ECE centres (who are also in possession of tertiary level qualifications) (OECD 2006: 401). The in-service training requirements for nursery teachers are the same as those for teachers in compulsory and upper-secondary education. Unions were successful in negotiating that ECE teachers receive the



same level of training as teachers working at other levels, and as such, teachers working in kindergartens (*educadores de infância*) generally have a four year university or polytechnic training. Secondary education is obligatory for teaching assistants.

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service compared

Within the public sector, ECE teachers working under the Ministry of Education are subject to the same conditions of service and salaries as teachers in primary education. Teachers who fall under the authority of other institutions may be subject to less favourable working conditions and lower salaries (e.g. teachers working in the social child care sector).

Key challenges

FNE continues to advocate for equal access to early childhood education for all children, and for lowering the compulsory school age to 5 years. FNE considers that the government has paid less attention to the development of ECE services because they continue to be optional and not compulsory. FNE would like to see early childhood education as a compulsory phase of lifelong learning.

5.13 St. Lucia

Key indicators

The most recent statistics on enrolment of children and teachers working in early childhood education in Saint Lucia are from 2007, during which a total of 5,334 children were enrolled, and 515 teachers were working in ECE centres. All of these teachers are female. Child-teacher ratios in St. Lucia are low, there are on average 11 children per teacher.

ECE policy and practice: System level policy, legislation, implementation and provision

Early childhood education in St. Lucia is not an integral part of the education system; however, the Education Act has been amended to establish a framework for providing services to children from birth to five years. The Ministry of Education is responsible for operating 21 government-owned

ECE centres, which provide a subsidised service, as well as monitoring 119 privately owned and operated ECE centres. ECE services are thus mainly provided by the private sector, and the government owned and operated centres represent only 15 percent of the ECE sector.

Early childhood education programmes in Saint Lucia are divided into three categories: government managed programmes, targeting birth to five year old age groups; privately owned and operated programmes targeting the same age group; and home visiting programmes that are specifically for birth to three year old age groups in marginalized communities (e.g. the Roving Caregivers Programme).

A draft Early Childhood Policy is currently awaiting ratification. Currently there is some disparity between policy and practice as the policy action plan has not been institutionalised.

ECE funding

Funding for ECE in Saint Lucia comes from a variety of sources and bodies, including: parents (school fees), government subvention and technical assistance to private institutions, government budgetary allocation to the ECE sector (in 2008/9, this amounted to 13.7 percent of the education sector budget) including the sponsorship of the 21 government owned ECE centres, funding from the Bernard van Leer Foundation (NL), UNICEF, the Poverty Reduction Fund and Basic Needs Trust Fund (local agencies).

Currently, the government is considering using existing space in primary schools to provide ECE access to pre-schoolers. The government would furthermore like to increase investment in the ECE sector to create accessible and affordable ECE services to all children.

Access and quality

While ECE programmes are available to all children from birth to age 5, access may be limited by some parents/caregivers inability to afford ECE enrolment fees. Additionally, there is some disparity in the level of services provided between rural and urban areas (all of the government schools are located in rural areas).



The Roving Caregivers Programme (community out-reach programme) is an informal early childhood education programme targeting 0-3 year olds who do not have access to ECE services in marginalised communities. The core objectives of the programme are early stimulation of children and parenting education, to support the optimal growth and development of children at an early age. The programme operates pilot projects in 30 marginalised communities located in various parts of Saint Lucia. Around 360 children have participated in the programme.

The quality of ECE services provided is mainly affected by a lack of resources and appropriate facilities in some centres.

Workforce: ECE staff

Teaching staff in ECE centres in Saint Lucia are all female. Teachers and caregivers working in ECE centres are trained locally, and some are trained in Trinidad and Tobago. Around 60 percent of caregivers are untrained. Teacher training is provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as SERVOL, an ECE teacher training programme financially supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation). Opportunities for in-service training and other professional workshops are available on a regular basis.

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service

Salaries of teachers working in the ECE sector are much lower than those of primary school teachers, which explains why many qualified teachers prefer to work in primary schools and fewer qualified teachers work in ECE centres. Salaries in the ECE sector are paid from school fees and periodic fundraising projects. The government provides the salaries of those teachers working in the government-owned ECE centres.

Successful examples and promising developments in ECE

The amendment of the Education Act in 2007 that assigned the responsibility for the management of the ECE sector to the Ministry of Education and Culture was an important step in the formal development of an ECE structure, as well as the development of an assessment and certification tool, and training centre, to upgrade the qualifications of teachers working in ECE.

Key challenges

Key challenges to the optimal development of ECE services in St. Lucia include steps towards retaining teaching staff in ECE centres in order to reduce high staff turnover. Upgrading of ECE facilities is required in some schools to improve the quality of education delivered. Overall, the ratification and implementation of ECE policy and standards is necessary to further develop the ECE structure.

5.14 St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Key indicators

In 2008, a total of 3,522 children were enrolled in early childhood education in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and a total of 389 teachers, all of whom were female, were working in ECE centres. These figures represent a very slight increase from 2007.

ECE policy and practice: System level policy, legislation, implementation and provision

Early childhood education is an integral part of the national education system in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, although provisions to protect ECE by legislation are not yet in place. ECE policy has not yet been implemented and is awaiting ratification by the government, resulting in an obvious gap between policy and practice.

The ECE sector is mainly supported by private providers who account for 87 percent of all ECE services in the country, and receive government financial support for the funding of ECE provision.

ECE funding

Funding for early childhood education is composed of school fees paid by parents, government subvention, and sponsorship from local authorities and NGOs, funding from the European Union, UNICEF and the schools' individual fundraising efforts.

Access and quality

As in St. Lucia, the Roving Caregivers programme provides early childhood



education for children in the 0-3 year age group and parental support through home visits in disadvantaged communities in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The quality of ECE services varies between centres and is affected by limited funding for adequate furnishing in some of the centres, as well as appropriate qualifications of ECE teachers.

Workforce: ECE staff

ECE staff in St. Vincent and the Grenadines comprises teachers and additional administrative, cleaning and cooking staff. Some ECE centres are provided with teaching assistants from the Youth Empowerment Service (YES) programme, if this is requested. All teachers working in ECE centres are female, and are trained locally at VINSAVE and some at SERVOL (an ECE teacher training programme financially supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation). In-service training is largely in the form of training offered to teachers working in early childhood education. There are initiatives in place to offer ECE training at the undergraduate level.

Through the Roving Caregivers Programme (RCP), students complete a certification in the area of Early Childhood Care, Education and Development in the National Council on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NCTVET) programme.

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service

ECE teachers have to rely on school fees and fundraising efforts by schools to pay for their salaries. The Ministry of Education is making efforts towards paying the salaries of qualified teachers in order to attract more teachers to early childhood education centres.

Successful examples, promising developments and key challenges for ECE

Promising developments in early childhood education in St. Vincent and the Grenadines include increased professional training of education staff to raise qualifications, extending access to all children, particularly in rural disadvantaged areas through special programmes, and renovating existing space within primary schools to accommodate ECE classes.

For the successful implementation of early childhood education, the policies and standards framework needs to be ratified by the government. A



lack of coordination of the transition of children between private nurseries, ECE centres and kindergartens should be tackled.

5.15 Togo

Key indicators

Data on enrolment in early childhood education in Togo are available for the year 2006, during which 12,773 children were enrolled in ECE, 51 percent of these were girls, and 49 percent boys, in the 2-5 year age group. In 2006, the large majority of teachers were female (88 percent). Student-teacher ratios are moderate in Togo, there are, on average, 17 children per teacher.

ECE provision and funding

The National Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, which is part of the Ministry of Education, is responsible for ECE provision in Togo. Early childhood education is free in Togo. ECE services are provided jointly by the central government (around 21 percent), churches, private individuals (66 percent) and local communities (11 percent). There exists no regulated child care centres for 0-2 year olds.

Access and quality

Access to ECE services is generally low in Togo, with approximately 30 percent coverage. Access varies between different areas of the country; there are considerable differences in access between rural and urban areas (there is only 8 percent coverage in rural areas), as well as the north and the south, where in the latter, accessibility is much higher. Around 60 percent of all ECE centres are located in two main cities, and 60 percent of the private centres are located in the capital, Lome. Many of the ECE centres are fairly small and are unable to take on large numbers of children, which means in some centres accessibility is limited by a lack of space. Private provision of ECE is accessible to those families who can afford to pay enrolment fees.

The recent closure of the teacher training centre has meant that more unqualified teachers are employed in ECE centres, which may affect the quality of education delivered. Around 88 percent of all teachers are not trained.



Workforce: ECE staff

The majority of ECE staff are not qualified, with many holding secondary level diplomas.

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service

Teachers' salaries vary according to qualification and training, which indicates that teachers without proper qualifications and training are earning much less and since the majority of teachers are unqualified, they earn very low salaries. ECE qualified teachers earn salaries comparable to those of primary teachers. Many teachers leave the profession due to poor remuneration and working conditions.

Key challenges

A number of key challenges to the establishment of a successful ECE structure are noted in Togo, and include very low participation levels of children in ECE, in part due to a lack of ECE centres in rural areas in the North of the country, as well as the entry fees for private ECE centres that make up over 60 percent of all centres. Many ECE centres lack proper infrastructure, and the majority of teachers are untrained, which is further compounded by the closure of the teacher training college. There is a very low representation of male teaching staff in ECE centres, and many teachers working in private centres are not unionised. Togolese authorities need to seriously consider reopening the teacher training college as soon as possible. Otherwise the prospects of meeting the education for all goals, including the ECE goal by 2015 will remain a pipe-dream.

5.16 United States

Key indicators

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, centre-based early childhood education programmes in the United States cover day care centres, Head Start programmes, pre-school, nursery school, pre-kindergarten and further early childhood programmes (US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2007).

The table below provides an overview of the percentage of pre-primary children (aged 3-5 years) who were enrolled in ECE centre-based programmes. The table shows that in 2005, a total of 57 percent of children were enrolled in ECE centre-based programmes. A difference in rates of participation of children from poor and non-poor families was 13 percent in 2005 (60 percent of non-poor children, and 47 percent of poor⁴ children). The level of family income and maternal education are main indicators for children's participation in early childhood education (OECD 2006: 426); children whose mother had a bachelor's degree or higher were more likely to be enrolled in ECE programmes (73 percent in 2005), than children whose mother had a secondary school diploma or lower.

Percentage of prekindergarten children ages 3–5 who were enrolled in center-based early childhood care and education programs, by child and family characteristics: Selected years, 1991–2005

Characteristic	1991	1993	1995	1996	1999	2001	2005
Total	53	53	55	55	60	56	57
Poverty status							
Poor	44	43	45	44	51	47	47
Nonpoor	56	56	59	59	62	59	60
Mother's education							
Less than high school	32	33	35	37	40	38	35
High school diploma or equivalent	46	43	48	49	52	47	49
Some college, including vocational/technical	60	60	57	58	63	62	56
Bachelor's degree or higher	72	73	75	73	74	70	73

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2007) *The Condition of Education 2007*

ECE policy and practice: system level policy and legislation

Early childhood education policy in the United States is traditionally characterised by limited government intervention in family matters, and 'a high value placed on individual responsibility; consideration of the family as a private unit; and volunteerism rather than statutory enactment of social welfare policies' (OECD 2006: 427). Currently, there is no national early child-

² Poor is defined to include families below the poverty threshold; non-poor is defined to include those families whose incomes are at or above the poverty threshold.

hood education and care system in the United States; there is no national coordinated policy framework and no federal state department responsible for children's services.

As such, the policy and provision of child care services is largely a responsibility of each State, and increasingly states take leadership in the development and implementation of pre-kindergarten services. Yet policies and the allocation of resources vary greatly across and within states. For example, in 2004, 10 states provided no state funding for ECE. Some states encourage local government and community participation in the development of early childhood policies through the formation of local planning groups who must raise their own funding, while other states 'assume nearly complete fiscal, regulatory, and policy-making responsibilities for early childhood education' (OECD 2006: 428).

The Federal Government, does however, take care of broad ECE goals and the funding of services for children considered 'at risk' (OECD 2006: 426), such as the federal "*Head Start*" programme, as well as other federal programmes that provide or support ECE for children under 5 years.

Private for profit businesses, funded largely by parents, account for the greater proportion of ECE programmes for children under 4 years.

Union perspective: key policy issues

Both the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) have indicated a number of areas of concern with regard to early childhood policy and practice in the US. These areas include:

- low levels of education and training of the early childhood workforce and low-wages, lack of benefits and poor working conditions associated with low levels of education and training;
- inadequate funding for early childhood programmes;
- too few high quality early childhood programmes;
- lack of coordination (curriculum and standards alignment) between early childhood programmes and primary school programmes (transition);
- use of inappropriate (not conducive to children's development) instructional practices in school-based early education programmes.

ECE provision and funding

Early childhood education programmes in the United States consist of a wide range of part-day and full-day programmes that have an education and/or a social welfare focus (OECD 2006: 429). In 2006, private family day care and centre-based ECE constituted 90 percent of ECE provision for 0-3 year olds, two-thirds of which is non-profit and one-third for profit (ibid.). Today still, around 90 percent of ECE provision is private. For profit ECE provision can range from large franchising operations (child care chains) to individuals caring for two or three children in their homes.

'The most usual forms of provision outside of the home for children up to the age of 3 years are private, giving way gradually to publically-funded pre-kindergarten and kindergarten provision by the school districts as children mature' (OECD 2006: 429).

Overall, there are three broad types of ECE provision that operate alongside one another and also, in the area of funding, in competition with one another. These sub-systems include: the market-oriented, ***purchase-of-services system*** (largest system that serves children from birth to compulsory school age in private centres and family day care homes); the ***public school system*** (which is under the responsibility of each state and that offers half-day kindergarten classes for 5 year olds, as well as pre-school publicly-funded pre-kindergarten programmes for 3 and 4 year olds) and the ***Head Start and Early Head Start programmes*** (targeted federal comprehensive child development programmes that focus on the child and family. These programmes target children from 0-5 year olds and aim to increase the school readiness of young vulnerable children from very low-income families).

Funding

Total public expenditure on childcare for children aged 0-5 years was, in 2006, \$20.4 billion, which amounted to 0.2 percent of GDP (OECD 2006: 431). According to the OECD *Society at a Glance report* of 2005, funding received for pre-kindergarten education that has come from public funds (state and local government funds) was 0.4 percent of GDP in 2006 (OECD 2005). In general, federal funding is largely targeted at children with disabilities and children from low-income families.



Overall, about 34 percent of expenditure on pre-school education for 3-6 year olds comes from public sources and 66 percent from private sources, half of which is from households. Parental contributions make up a considerable amount of the costs of ECE, and parents may assume all of the costs of childcare. 'Overall, the federal government underwrites 25 percent of the costs, state and local government, 15 percent and parents, the remaining 60 percent' (OECD 2006: 426). On average, low-income families pay 18 percent of their total family income per child enrolled in child care, although they can benefit from free subsidies through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). However, many low income families make use of informal, unregulated arrangements.

Access and quality

According to education unions and other stakeholders, the quality of ECE services in the United States needs improvement. While there exists a great deal of variation between the various programmes, the low quality of some programmes is probably caused by high child-staff ratios, low staff education, weak licensing standards and low compensation and inadequate working conditions of teachers and ECE staff.

Workforce: ECE staff

The ECE workforce in the United States is made up of teachers and support staff. Compared to teachers working at the kindergarten through secondary level, where in many states teachers are required to have a bachelor's or master's degree and to have passed a licensure examination, ECE teachers' qualification requirements are far less demanding. Regulations and standards for licensing requirements (qualifications) vary greatly between states; no national system exists to set qualifications of early childhood educators.

In the majority of states, a two-tiered system is in place, with different standards for public and private settings. Teachers who work in child care centres, and most other settings for children prior to kindergarten, are typically not required to have a 4 year, or even a 2 year degree. In recent years, the expectations for ECE teacher qualifications have, however, significantly increased. Of the 44 states that fund pre-school initiatives, 23 states require that all lead teachers have a bachelor's degree, yet less than half of the states have set this as a requirement of lead teachers in private ECE

settings (OECD 2006: 431). Most of the states do, however, require a Child Development Associate (CDA) – a competency-based ECE credential – in private settings. The Head Start Programme has developed its own professional profile and relies primarily on CDA-trained teachers to lead the programmes. (This training is equivalent to half of a two-year, tertiary-level, professional diploma).

Professional development requirements, similarly, vary between states and weak regulation takes place in the private sector. In public pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, 27 states require teachers to participate in a minimum of 15 hours of in-service training per year. These requirements are lower in private settings.

The vast majority of the early childhood education workforce is female. Less than three percent of all ECE teaching staff is male.

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service compared

The working conditions of teaching staff in early childhood education in the United States is characterised by low wages and limited benefits. Typically, teachers working in public school programmes receive a much higher salary than those teachers working in private settings, where the vast majority of ECE teachers are employed. Pre-school teachers, on average, still earn less than teachers working in kindergarten through secondary levels.

Standards for working environments vary between states, although the enforcement of a sound working environment is weak in many states, as is the enforcement of licensing regulations.

The status of teachers involved in early childhood education in the US is markedly lower compared to the status of teachers in primary and secondary levels. Professional status tends to be associated with education and salary levels, with staff in programmes that offer more training and require more competence, generally commanding higher salaries and benefits. As educational requirements and salaries of ECE teachers are comparatively lower than those of teachers in primary and secondary levels, they are not always seen as professionals, which fuels higher turnover in the profession, impeding classroom consistency.



Outstanding features and promising developments in ECE

The *Head Start* programme, that provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and parental involvement services to low-income vulnerable children and their families, is an outstanding feature in the US early childhood education system. Almost 25 million pre-school children have benefited from the *Head Start* programme. The programme, however, lacks sufficient funding, and currently less than 10 percent of eligible families are being served by it. Increased funding, particularly pertaining to compensation and support for teachers and support staff, is needed to maximise the benefits this programme.

The Department of Defense Education Activity, used by the military service members and the Department of Defense civilian employees working abroad, has a solid ECE programme, called the 'Sure Start' programme, which provides health and nutrition, social and parental involvement services. The programme stresses that collaboration between families, schools and the community is a fundamental part of any ECE programme.

The United States' ECE system has shown signs of improvement, both in terms of funding and practice over the past decade. Currently, 41 states provide funding for pre-school programmes, spending approximately \$3.5 billion in 2005, compared to less than \$200 million in 1999.

The Obama administration's recent American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) includes considerable investment into *Early Head Start*, *Head Start* and *Title 1*, which funds educational services in low-income neighbourhoods. Additionally, the Obama administration has promised a \$10 billion investment in ECE through new initiatives such as the proposed *Early Learning Challenge Grant*.

Key challenges

According to the education unions, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Education Association (NEA), one of the main challenges to a successful development of an ECE system in the United States, is the American inclination to subscribe to a philosophy of limited government intervention in matters relating to the family. As a result of this social philosophy, there exists no overall national child or family policy, and neither is there a federal government department responsible for children's servi-

ces. What exists, as a consequence, is a mosaic of services, regulations and funding sources that have lead to uneven quality of services provided and inequality of access between low-income and high-income families, with the latter being able to afford largely privatised ECE services.

Overall, the quality of the ECE system is in need of improvement in the United States, particularly in neighbourhoods where there is a high concentration of low-income families, and access to ECE services is lower. Moreover, many states set regulation standards too low, in particular with regard to staffing requirements. Early childhood education teachers and support staff tend to be poorly trained (in both pre- and in-service training) and underpaid. This has resulted in high turnover rates and difficulties in recruiting new teachers and staff. Despite an increase in child care funding in recent years, the overall funding levels are still relatively low.

5.17 Venezuela

Key indicators

Data on enrolment in early childhood education in Venezuela are available from the National Institute of Statistics. In 2007, 1,047,811 children aged 3-5 years were enrolled in ECE. Figures for children aged 0-3 years were not available.

Approximately, 95 percent of ECE teaching staff in Venezuela is female, and only around 5 percent is male. According to the National Institute of Statistics in Venezuela, in 2007, total teaching staff in Venezuela was 87,317. Child-teacher ratios are on average 12 children per teacher.

ECE policy and practice: System level policy and legislation

Early childhood education is defined at the national level in Venezuela as: 'an ongoing process of development and learning in children that begins in early infancy and continues until the age of six or until entry into primary education, with the aim of facilitating the optimal development of socio-emotional, cognitive, linguistic, motor and physical potential, taking into account the socio-educational experiences, interests and needs of the child' (UNESCO IBE 2006b). Early childhood education in Venezuela is divided



between nursery education for children aged 0-3 years, and pre-school education for children aged 3-6 years. Nursery education is not compulsory, but is seen as an extension of the education process aimed at developing the development and learning of young children (ibid).

Under the new legal framework established under the Constitution of the Bolivarian Government of Venezuela in 1999, education is compulsory at all levels. Under this new constitution, the Ministry of Education and Sport extended educational capacity to children aged 0-3 years. Attendance in early childhood education is compulsory from the age of 3 years onwards.

ECE provision and funding

Early childhood education in Venezuela is provided broadly in two forms: in formal ECE centres for children from 0-6 years old, focused on comprehensive early childhood education and care, and informal care centres that similarly targets children aged 0-6 years old, and offer educational activities with the participation of teachers, parents, guardians or community social-workers in a variety of settings (community care centres, family environments, play centres). This second form of ECE service targets disadvantaged areas and vulnerable populations in rural, indigenous and border areas (UNESCO IBE 2006b).

State and municipality authorities play an important role in the provision of ECE services in Venezuela, although the central government is the main provider of ECE services.

Family-based and community based ECE programmes also operate in disadvantaged regions, and these are implemented by the National Autonomous Service for the Comprehensive Care of Children and the Family (SENIFA), which is attached to the Ministry of Education and Sport (UNESCO IBE 2006b).

Other public and private organisations involved in the implementation of ECE programmes, are the Children's Foundation, SENIFA, and private individual establishments.

Access and quality

Access to ECE services in urban areas is higher than in rural areas. Children in poorer communities in urban areas are less likely to attend early child-

hood education programmes. The central government has attempted to bridge this difference in access over the past five years by extending ECE services offered in disadvantaged areas.

The majority of children attend public pre-schools, although children from affluent families are more often enrolled in private for-profit schools. About 20 percent of all children aged 0-3 years attend public and private 'guarderías' (day-care centres).

According to the unions the quality of ECE services has improved during the past 5 years in terms of infrastructure and educational facilities.

Workforce: ECE staff

Three categories of ECE staff are discerned in Venezuela: teachers, administrative staff and assistants who are largely tasked with the preparation of meals, cleaning and assisting teachers with the children.

According to education unions, a growing enrolment in pedagogical training courses for ECE has been noted both in public and private universities. The education and training of teachers is focused on early childhood education, and in-service training is supported by the Ministry of Education. Many teachers have graduate degrees. Around 90 percent of staff in ECE services are female.

In informal family-based ECE settings, 'care mothers' look after small groups of around 10 children from their community, with the support of an official/appointed supervisor. In community-based ECE centres, groups of three 'care mothers' look after groups of children (UNESCO IBE 2006b).

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service compared

Teachers' salaries depend on the level of qualification and years of service. In many classrooms, two teachers are present, as well as additional support staff. Unions have noted that salaries of teachers working in ECE have declined in the past years.

'Care mothers' in informal ECE centres received a monthly sum per child for those days on which the community care centre is operational.



Outstanding features and promising developments in ECE

Outstanding features of ECE services in Venezuela include the training and working environment of teachers: the majority of teachers receive tertiary education and training focused on early childhood education. Within the classroom, pupil-teacher ratios are low as a result of the common presence of two teachers, as well as assistants.

Key challenges

Despite the outstanding features of early childhood education in Venezuela, a number of key challenges remain. Unions report that schools have very little administrative and pedagogical autonomy, and there is a continual risk that funding for ECE may decline (as Venezuela is heavily dependent on oil exports).

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to investigate ECE policies, systems, programmes and activities across the globe. Data was collected from 17 countries and an analysis of this data shows that early childhood education is receiving more and more attention and priority in many countries. There are positive examples of publicly funded ECE programmes, some of which are an integral part of the country's education system. More and more countries are striving to raise the qualifications of ECE staff, to improve their conditions of service and to encourage men to take up ECE as a career.

However, the ECE sector remains predominantly privatised, particularly for younger children (0-3 year olds). Many early childhood education systems are characterised by multiple providers and funders, some of which are government, private, community, faith-based and non-governmental organisations.

Access to ECE services remains generally low, particularly in developing countries, especially for the 0-3 year age group, poor and rural children, children with special needs and other vulnerable groups. There is a shortage of professionally trained and qualified ECE teaching staff in many countries and men are seriously underrepresented in the sector, with over 90 percent of the teaching staff being women.

The conditions of service for ECE teaching staff tend to be inferior to those of their counterparts in other education sectors and this might be linked to the generally lower levels of qualifications in the ECE sector in many countries. The quality of ECE services is perceived to be comparatively lower in rural than in urban areas, partly due to the uneven allocation or availability of resources, including qualified teaching staff.

Detailed information and data on early childhood education at global level is very scarce and mainly limited to OECD countries.

In view of the findings of this study summarised above and provided in detail in this report, the following recommendations are proffered:

- In some countries the split between child-care and kindergarten education needs to be bridged and policies, provision and funding better coordinated between various institutions and bodies. Ideally, early childhood education should fall under one domain (Ministry of Education or department).
- There is an urgent need to address access issues in all countries, particularly for children from low-income families, indigenous or minority groups. Public funding for ECE services needs to be increased to ensure more equitable access to services for all children, particularly those from low-income families. Also, intercultural programmes that reflect the cultural practices of indigenous and minority groups and language, are a necessity to ensuring their inclusion in education systems.
- Child-teacher ratios and quality standards should be regulated to ensure uniform standards within the sector, particularly between public and private centres, and to minimise differences between the quality of services provided in rural and urban areas.
- There is a compelling need to improve the qualification standards for ECE teachers in many countries, to upgrade their training and to ensure adequate salary levels, comparable to those received in other sectors, in order to retain staff and attract new teachers into the profession. Many countries also need to come up with a deliberate strategy or programmes to increase the number of men in the ECE sector.
- Taking into account the fact that teaching staff remain predominantly non-unionised in a number of countries, teacher unions should consider organising and representing teaching and other staff in early education.
- EI and its member organisations (teacher unions) should continue to urge governments to ensure that every young child has access to ECE services of good quality and to engage in advocacy activities, with a view to raising the status of early childhood education and that of staff working in the sector.
- Public authorities should provide holistic and comprehensive ECE services of good quality to all young children, free of charge. EI strongly believes that education is a fundamental human right and that early childhood education is an integral part of that right.
- Further research into various aspects of early childhood education needs to be undertaken at global, regional, national and local levels.

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