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The promotion of decent work for early childhood education personnel: The professionalization of a neglected profession

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I. Introduction

1. Since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) targets were proclaimed in 2000, [1] considerable progress has been made in regard to enhancing the well-being of young children (defined here as aged 0–8). But many of the global 2015 targets of the MDGs and EFA will not be achieved. Some 6.6 million children under the age of 5 died in 2012 (48 deaths per 1,000 live births), and 25 per cent of children under the age of 5 experienced moderate or severe stunting, a sign of chronic deficiency of essential nutrients. [2] In addition, an uncounted number of young children suffer from neglect and physical and psycho-emotional stress and abuse, and grow up in situations of extreme poverty, domestic and/or social violence, and lack of consistent, comforting care.

2. The role of early childhood development (ECD) [3] services and programmes in helping to overcome these challenges to the well-being of young children should not be underestimated. And as evidence accumulates concerning the importance of these services – from preconception parental education to the early grades of primary school – it becomes even more important to ensure their adequate supply and quality.

3. The increasing importance of ECD and its ongoing evolution make even more essential the improvement in the one factor that most determines the quality of ECD services: [4] their teachers, facilitators, caregivers, and other personnel who plan, manage and staff these services. Increasing their professionalism and status and making their working conditions more "decent" therefore is an essential element of any comprehensive ECD policy and programme.

II. The growing importance of early childhood development

A. The scientific evidence

4. "Early childhood" is now accepted as encompassing the period from conception to 8 years of age, thus including both the critical period of pregnancy when the health (both mental and physical) and nutrition of the mother are extremely important in the development of the young child and the often difficult period of transition from the home or good-quality pre-school to the primary school, thus giving attention to the need for success in the early years of school.

[1] The Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All of 2000 has as its first goal to "expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children".

[2] UNESCO: *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/4: Teaching and Learning: Achieving quality for all* (Paris, UNESCO, 2014), p. 45.

[3] In this paper, ECD is used to refer to the more general and multi-sectoral field covering care, development, and education of children aged 0–8. Later references refer to early childhood education (ECE), as do the ILO guidelines, and therefore to more formal programmes, services, and pre-school/pre-primary programmes for children aged 3–8.

[4] For the purposes of this paper, these services are pre-primary programmes for children aged 3–6, including, particularly, pre-schools and kindergartens.

5. The importance of early childhood has been reinforced by increasing evidence from a wide range of fields – neuroscience, genetics, economics, health, education – showing that early childhood is the most important developmental phase in the human lifespan, that preventive early interventions yield higher returns compared to later remedial services, and that such interventions have sustainable, long-term effects on the development of human capital, social cohesion and economic success. Evidence also shows that the most disadvantaged children – their disadvantage due, inter alia, to poverty, ethnic and linguistic minority status, gender discrimination, remoteness, disability, and HIV/AIDS status – experience the most dramatic gains from good-quality early childhood care and development (ECCD) programmes; but it is exactly these children who are least likely to be participating in these programmes. [5]

B. ECE data: Higher demand, higher enrolments, and more national policies

6. Further, more practical evidence concerning the increasing importance and visibility of ECD comes from data linked to both the increasing number of comprehensive, multi-sectoral national "policy instruments" (see below) and, partly as a result of these instruments, the increasing demand for, and the supply of, ECD services focused both on care for children aged 0–3 and on pre-primary/ECE for children aged 3–6.

7. In terms of actual enrolments, by 2012 the global gross enrolment ratio for pre-primary education had increased by 64 per cent to 54 per cent (identical for girls and boys). Especially remarkable were the improvements (albeit from a low base) in South and West Asia (a 150 per cent increase, from 22 per cent to 55 per cent) and sub-Saharan Africa (a 95 per cent increase, from 10.6 per cent to 19.5 per cent) and for developing countries (81 per cent) and middle-income countries (87 per cent). [6]

Table 1. Gross enrolment ratio in pre-primary education by region [7]

	World	Arab States	Central and Eastern Europe	Central Asia	East Asia	Pacific (Oceania)	Latin America and the Caribbean	North America/ West Europe	South and West Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa
1999	33	15	51	19	38	37	54	76	22	10.6
2012	54	25	74	33	67	73*	74	89	55	19.5

* 2010 data.

8. As mentioned above, these ratios refer only to enrolment in pre-primary education and not to a wider range of early childhood development services from preconception care and parental education to transition programmes into – and improvements in the quality of – the early grades of primary school. But they reflect an impressive 64 per cent increase in the sheer number of young children in pre-primary programmes from close to 112 million in 1999 to over 183 million children in 2012. Despite this increase, however, many young children, including 75 per cent in the Arab States and over 80 per cent in sub-Saharan

[5] Global Child Development Group: *Child Development Lancet Series: Executive Summary*, 2011, www.ecdgroup.com/pdfs/2011-Lancet-Exec-Summary-Final.pdf [accessed 10 Nov. 2014].

[6] UNESCO, 2014, p. 338.

[7] ibid.

Africa, still have no access to these programmes, [8] and in many countries, there is a large gap in enrolment rates between the richest and poorest quintiles of the population – more than twice as high for the richest quintile than for the poorest in East Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East, and the Caribbean; almost five times as high in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States; and almost ten times as high in sub-Saharan Africa. [9]

9. In terms of the pre-primary teaching force, there has been a considerable increase in its size over the past decade and more. As the ILO found in 2012:

> … employment growth [in ECE] was substantial in all regions except Central and Eastern Europe, with the previously under-served regions of South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa showing the largest percentage gains … . Compared to the trends in enrolment rates … , teacher employment growth exceeded the acceleration in numbers of children enrolled in the Arab States, East Asia and the Pacific, South and West Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean and North America and Western Europe, … . In much of the world, employment of ECE educators more than matched the often considerable enrolment growth, a further sign that, in terms of numbers alone, most governments have made considerable investments in training and hiring new ECE staff. [10]

III. The special role of pre-primary/early childhood education

A. What it does

10. Good-quality ECD programmes are both integrated and holistic, covering physical, social, emotional and cognitive development through the convergence of inputs from the sectors of health, nutrition, education and social protection, and, in the best of worlds, seamlessly ensuring the well-being of children aged 0–8. But it is becoming increasingly clear that the pre-primary/ECE experience covering the years before formal schooling and a subsequent successful transition to primary school are critical in determining the future well-being of the child.

11. Pre-primary education is considered particularly important for several reasons:

- Pre-primary programmes can help ease the often traumatic transition from the informal, family- and culture-oriented environment of the home to the formal structure and processes of the school.
- Extending pre-primary access to the poorest and most vulnerable children can boost their education and livelihood experiences in life.
- The more time children spend in pre-school, the better their performance in primary school – for example, in literacy, vocabulary and mathematics. Overall, results of

[8] UNICEF, *Inequities in Early Childhood Development: What the data say* (New York, UNICEF, 2012).

[9] P. Engle et al.: "Strategies for reducing inequalities and improving developmental outcomes for young children in low-income and middle-income countries" in *The Lancet*, published online, 23 Sep. 2011, www.lancet.com,.

[10] ILO: *Right beginnings: Early childhood education and educators* (Geneva, ILO, 2012), p. 43.

OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) suggest that the school systems that combine high performance and equitable learning opportunities for all students are also those that offer pre-primary education to a larger proportion of pupils, have smaller pupil/teacher ratios in pre-primary school, invest more per child at the pre-primary level, and, especially, provide longer periods of pre-primary education. [11]

- Pre-schools provide a place for the early informal assessment, intervention, and remediation of disabilities, developmental delays, and other special, unique aspects of a child's character.

- They can develop a child's sense of self, interactions with peers and adults, self-confidence, language competence, and critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

- They can promote essential pre- or emergent literacy skills, preferably in the child's mother tongue.

- In general, therefore, they can help get children "ready" for school in terms of a wide range of developmental factors – better health and nutrition, cognitive and linguistic skills, and socio-emotional skills – readiness gained by experience, knowledge and skills rather than merely by age.

B. The complexities of pre-primary teaching

12. Every child follows the same general stages of development, but each one does so at its own pace depending, inter alia, on its inherent characteristics, its health and nutrition status, its immediate environment, and the nature of the cognitive stimulation, social interaction, and – eventually – the direct teaching it has experienced. Evidence shows that throughout the process of development, educators, including parents as first educators and then teachers of the young child, must provide a safe and stimulating environment for children which promotes self-initiated, active involvement in learning; allows them to develop according to their own unique pace; provides the necessary materials and support to continue their development; and assists them through difficult transitions until their full potential – including full literacy – has been achieved.

13. But many young children, lacking the preparatory skills needed for learning, pushed too quickly toward full literacy before they have mastered pre-reading skills, overwhelmed by an overly congested and text-based curriculum, and without the necessary remedial support, and who fail to learn the basic skills, are labelled as "slow learners", fall further and further behind, repeat grades (or are automatically promoted beyond their abilities), and finally drop out (or, more correctly, are "pushed out") from the system – often in the very first years of school.

14. This development towards full potential, therefore, should not only be focused on literacy and other basic skills and knowledge. A large range of norms, values and behaviours necessary for individual well-being and social integration – self-reliance, self-confidence, and self-regulation; respect for difference and diversity; creative and critical thinking – are also essential outcomes of education.

[11] UNESCO: *Education for All Global Monitoring Report – Policy Paper 03: Expanding equitable early childhood care and education is an urgent need* (Paris, UNESCO, 2012), pp. 2–3.

15. This expansion of pre-primary programmes presents an opportunity for teachers of both pre-primary and the early grades, curriculum and materials developers, teacher educators, planners, policy-makers, and even politicians and parents to use the above analysis to design and support vastly improved and more coherent early literacy and early learning programmes and approaches. This is even more important because of the increasingly clear "understanding of the devastating consequences of the combination of a lack of good supports for early childhood development (including but not limited to access to ECD programs) and the lack of specific attention to the early years of primary school across most majority world countries". [12]

16. This suggests first of all that teaching–learning methods in pre-schools, even continuing into the early grades, must be play-based, child-centred and child-friendly, and interactive, encouraging children to read and explore language, and developing their curiosity for books. If not, the result is "many pre-school centres in countries worldwide using inappropriate methods in a misguided attempt to give their children an academic edge when they enter school. This is done through pushing reading, writing, and mathematics activities for which children are not yet ready rather than laying firm foundations in language, enthusiasm for learning, and interaction." [13]

17. In summary, the increasing recognition of the importance of ECD – specifically that reflected by an often rapid expansion of pre-primary programmes – and the increasing complexity of what is expected, even demanded, of these programmes, makes it even more imperative that ECE personnel are both more professional and are seen as being more professional, and experience decent conditions of work which permit them to fulfil their increasingly challenging roles.

IV. The professionalization of ECE personnel [14]

A. General roles and responsibilities of government bodies, employer organizations, trade unions and civil society groups

18. At least partly as the result both of the imperatives of global development agendas, such as the EFA goals, and of the increasing visibility of the arguments for ECD described above, many governments of the world have adopted ECD policies or policy frameworks (and, if possible, strategic and action plans) which, by their very existence, raise the visibility and enhance the importance of ECE and therefore, one hopes, the status and professionalism of ECE personnel. As of July 2014, one study showed 68 countries with ECE policy

[12] K. Bartlett and C. Arnold: "Transitions – Perspectives from the Majority World", 2009, unpublished.

[13] C. Arnold et al.: *Is everybody ready? Readiness, transition and continuity: Reflections and moving forward* (The Hague, Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2007).

[14] The examples provided in this section were largely taken from responses (mostly anonymous) to a survey questionnaire sent through a number of ECD-related networks.

instruments, with another ten reportedly completed (but for which no concrete evidence could be found), and another 23 said to be in process. [15]

19. A number of these are developed in a participatory manner, with involvement of all relevant government sectors and other stakeholders (non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics, the private sector, development agencies); are based on a rigorous situation analysis of young children (including hearing the "voice" of young children themselves as was done in the case of Myanmar's ECE policy); and lead to the development of whatever laws, regulations, structures and plans are needed to successfully implement the policy.

20. In some countries, both developed and developing, national governments, increasingly through ministries of education, are assuming primary responsibility for financing and managing pre-primary and early childhood education services, especially more formal kindergartens. This is often in the context of seeing kindergarten as an essential and integral part of formal basic education. A recent review prepared for the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* indicated that 39 countries, by law, have instituted compulsory pre-primary education, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean and Central and Eastern Europe, mostly for one year, and mostly with an entry age of 5. [16]

21. Myanmar, for example, has a new policy to make all grade 1 classes – which have an entry age of 5 – into kindergartens, thereby literally overnight making kindergarten as compulsory as grade 1 has been. In Tajikistan, also, a State Programme on Developing the Pre-school Sector 2012–16 was adopted to support the establishment of 150 ECE settings, a law on pre-school education and care was enacted, and the overall pre-school regulatory framework was improved with national standards, regulations, a new curriculum and ECE standards. In Azerbaijan, a 2007–10 State Programme on the Modernization of Preschool Education was accompanied by a new Education Law (2009) which guaranteed state provision of pre-school education for children 3–6 years old. A national strategy on education development (2013) prioritized pre-school education, with an increase of access up to 90 per cent, a new curriculum, and new professional development programmes. The national poverty reduction programme and the programme on the social and economic development of regions also prioritized ECE, giving supervision for public kindergartens to local authorities, introducing (and then relaxing) licensing and accreditation procedures for private kindergartens, cancelling taxes on private kindergartens, and retraining all pre-school teachers in the new curriculum.

22. Even where governments are unable or unwilling on their own to manage and finance expanded, even universal, ECE services, many will establish standards (for example, in regard to facilities, teacher numbers and qualifications, curricula) and/or provide resources (for example, materials, training, subsidies) to other ECE providers – communities, NGOs and other civil society organizations, local governments, and for-profit private organizations.

B. ECE content: Curricula and teaching methods

23. In the past, scant attention was paid to the quality of ECE programmes, and there was little incentive for standardizing, and then regularly improving, the content of any ECE

[15] E. Vargas-Baron: "Policies on early childhood care and education: Their evolution and some impacts", paper prepared for the *EFA Global Monitoring Report*, 2015.

[16] Personal communication from Joanna Härmä (UNESCO).

curriculum and the methods used to deliver it. In other words, given the wide range of ECE providers and ECE teacher training institutions (if any exist), even within one country there is often a lack of synergy and complementarity across the content and pedagogy of different ECE programmes – whether international in nature (Montessori, Waldorf), government-sponsored, or based on the particular context of local communities, faiths, or ethnic and linguistic groups.

24. This is changing, however, and one feature of some of the relatively recent ECD policies developed across the world – and one that can contribute considerably to the professionalization of the field – is the development of a recommended framework for ECE curricula and pedagogy useful in guiding essential content, good practice, quality standards, and continuity across the full range of ECD services.

25. Thus, for example, there is the Early Years Learning Framework in Australia, promoting a shared understanding of good practice; the alignment of curricula with Early Learning Development Standards and their promotion through new curriculum guides in Bhutan; new curricula for children aged 0–3 and 3–6 in Azerbaijan; and a strongly play-based curriculum and accompanying syllabi in Nauru. In Tajikistan, a new national ECE curriculum was revised and improved through a partnership among the Aga Khan Foundation, the Academy of Education and the Ministry of Education and Science. The curriculum was translated into Russian, Uzbek and Kyrgyz languages to be delivered to the regions with ethnic minorities, and then taught to teachers in a seven-day training workshop.

C. ECE financing

26. In general, government expenditures for ECE programmes are very low – and the quality of data in regard to such expenditures is extremely poor, partly because there may be more than one ministry funding such programmes. There are some developing countries which seem to have prioritized pre-primary education as a share of total education spending more than others: for example, Chile, from 8.8 per cent in 1999 to 13.3 per cent (the latest year); Peru, from 8.5 per cent to 12.4 per cent; and even Benin, 1.3 per cent to 2.4 per cent (which shows an almost doubling of the percentage albeit from a very low baseline). These figures, of course, say nothing about the amount of community, NGO and private sector financing of such education – not to mention the costs to parents. In some countries with free primary education, school fees for pre-primary keep children out of pre-school and lead their parents to enrol them in primary school below age – often knowing full well that they will stay in Grade 1 until they reach the official entry age.

27. Where funding has increased, it often goes, as in Azerbaijan, to the renovation or construction of new kindergartens, the provision of school meals and teaching resources, and, unusually, the cancellation of taxes on private kindergartens – or, as in Bhutan, to the provision of water, sanitation and health (WASH) facilities. In Nauru, enough improvements have been made that many ECE centres are considered to have better facilities than primary schools. In other cases, additional financing has allowed ECE staff to be made government employees and/or provided higher salaries and various other kinds of incentives and bonuses (as in Nauru). Tajikistan, with support from the Global Partnership for Education, is leading to the establishment of 450 ECE settings, the provision of professional development training to 900 ECE personnel and technical support to 450 state kindergartens. These quite visible impacts of additional financing for ECE have helped make the ECE profession a more attractive one and improved the public's perception of ECE. The fragility of such increased financing, however, is reflected in Australia where the previous government's strong commitment to, and financing of, ECD has been seriously reduced by the new administration.

28. As with the other neglected education subsector of literacy, there have been various global recommendations concerning what percentage of an education budget should be allocated to ECE (the ILO guidelines recommend 10 per cent). Although globally the estimate is 5 per cent, this is skewed by the high levels of funding and better data in developed countries; estimates usually average 1 per cent or less in regions such as South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. [17]

D. Preparation for the profession

29. Nothing is perhaps more important to the professionalization of ECE personnel than the quality and length of the initial pre-service education they receive and the academic qualification and official certification they gain upon its completion. As mentioned above, improving the education and increasing the skills of ECE personnel is important in convincing parents to enrol their children in pre-primary programmes. Cost aside, they will be more willing to do so if the quality of these programmes is evident. And the most important part of this evidence is the actual and perceived quality of the teachers.

30. Certainly compared to the beginning of the century, much greater attention – and based on much higher standards – is now being paid to the preparation of ECE personnel for their work. This is reflected in many ways:

- developing standard competencies which these personnel must achieve, often separate ones for those concerned with (say) 3–4 year-olds (usually focusing on "care") and those with 5–6 year-olds (with a stronger focus on "education");
- organizing better, more practicum-oriented, and more systematically accredited pre-service training courses;
- requiring more years of training and a higher qualification (a diploma rather than a high school certificate, a university degree rather than a diploma);
- setting in place more rigorous certification and licensing processes.

31. Data available from nearly 80 low- and middle-income countries in 2009 indicated that although one half of these countries estimated that 90–100 per cent of their pre-primary teachers were trained to national standards, nearly one quarter indicated that fewer than half of their teachers reached these standards (recognizing, of course, that the standards vary considerably across countries). [18] But in many countries, the new attention being paid to ECE is making a difference in this regard. A 2012 ILO paper concluded that "progress towards closing the gap in trained teachers is slow but sure in almost all regions and countries, reflecting no doubt the heightened political will and national investments to improve the quality of ECE". [19]

32. ECE personnel dealing with children under 3 years of age generally have lower qualifications and training requirements than those dealing with older children. This situation will not likely change significantly in the near future; programmes for children of this age group are most often community- or NGO-based and just do not have the

[17] Personal communication from Joanna Härmä (UNESCO).

[18] ILO, *Right beginnings: Early childhood education and educators* (Geneva, ILO, 2012), p. 33.

[19] ibid., p. 34.

resources for training – or paying – more highly skilled workers. A recent study on ECE centres in selected states in India found that 68.8 per cent of workers at private pre-school facilities had no training, as opposed to 11.5 per cent in state-run ECD centres known as Anganwadis (in the latter, most training was acquired in-service). [20]

33. What is changing is that those ECE personnel working more closely with primary-aged children are assumed to need more knowledge and demonstrate better practice and so are being better trained, with higher qualifications needed for accreditation. Thus, countries are moving from barely trained secondary school graduates as ECE personnel (still the norm in countries such as the Lao People's Democratic Republic), to post-secondary teacher certification and diplomas (Viet Nam and Ghana), to bachelor degrees with an ECE specialization (Malaysia and Bhutan). Argentina, for example, now requires four years of post-secondary education for ECE employment. Kazakhstan estimates that 55 per cent of its ECE educators have a bachelor's degree; Lebanon, 33 per cent. New Zealand now requires 100 per cent of its ECE teachers to be qualified – and the qualification level is increasing to four years of university education, similar to that for primary school teachers.

34. But in most countries, it seems, the education and qualification required for ECE personnel remain less than those required of primary school teachers – an important benchmark in the process of professionalizing ECE personnel. In Slovenia, for example, ECE teachers require three years of post-secondary training, and primary school teachers, five years (though, interestingly, the former may serve as the "second person" in grade 1).

35. But the equivalency between pre-primary and primary school qualifications is becoming more common, especially in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries but occasionally elsewhere as well. [21] Where kindergartens are becoming part of the formal basic education system and especially where they are attached to primary schools (as is the policy now in Myanmar), it is more likely that this equivalency will be reached.

E. Recruitment, deployment and retention

36. There have traditionally been distorted and inequitable recruitment patterns into different levels of teaching based on a range of factors such as sex, socio-economic status, ethnic/linguistic status, disability and location (for example, urban versus rural) with poor, ethnic minority, rural, and especially disabled candidates often discriminated against – as well as both men and women depending on the level of teaching and/or the cultural context. In some ways, this distortion is often even greater at the pre-primary level which should, in fact, be the best model of flexibility, inclusion and the celebration of diversity. In some cases, this discrimination is historical and/or cultural; men do not do the "mothering" job involved in ECD, people with disabilities do not fit the traditional view of teachers as "models of perfection", etc. In other cases, the discrimination is based on the lack of educational opportunities or motivation due to poverty, minority status (for example, lack of mastery of the national language), and remoteness.

[20] V. Kaul, A.B. Chaudhary, S. Sharma: *Quality and diversity in early childhood education: A view from Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Rajasthan* (Delhi, Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), 2014), p. 139.

[21] ILO, 2012, op. cit., pp. 38–40.

37. As a result, fewer qualified teachers are found in rural, remote and disadvantaged areas, with similar biases against ethnic/linguistic minorities who, although well-suited for mother tongue-based ECE programmes, are often seen as not qualified (or have not had an opportunity to get qualified) for more formal, national-language pre-schools, and the poor who are unable to afford what might even be rather modest diploma training costs.

38. Most particularly, the profession virtually everywhere is a female one – 94 per cent globally but with many countries with only 2–3 per cent males in the workforce (only sub-Saharan Africa has fewer than 90 per cent of women in their ECE workforce) [22] – with few attractions for men; the assumption that ECE is really an extension of the traditional, maternal caring roles of mothers and women; and, in many countries, considerable bias against men.

39. There are very few examples of explicit attempts to diversify the ECE profession. In Cambodia, for example, in order to adjust to the linguistic and ethnic diversity found in a few provinces, the Government has lowered the usual upper secondary school diploma required for teaching to lower secondary school – with special priority given to those serving in remote areas. [23] In Tajikistan, the expansion of ECE programmes in ethnic minority areas and the translation of new ECE curricula, teacher modules and teacher guidance into the languages of ethnic minorities will permit teachers from these minorities to more effectively do their work, and in New Zealand the percentage of Maori-speaking educators tripled in the five years to 2007. [24]

40. Several OECD countries are also explicitly promoting the recruitment of men into ECE programmes. In Norway, over 10 per cent of the ECD workforce are men (up from 3 per cent in 1991 and with an ultimate goal of 20 per cent); in Scotland, there have been recruitment campaigns since 2001 and over 1,500 men have undergone some childcare training; and New Zealand has regular annual conferences (organized by ECMenz) to try to get more men interested in the profession.

41. These trends all indicate the need for governments to have: much more comprehensive education management information systems with regard to ECE personnel, with data disaggregated along the categories discussed above; comprehensive national recruitment and development strategies; and special incentives to attract people from under-represented groups into the profession.

42. Linked to the issue of recruitment is that of teacher allocation or placement – the need, for example, to allocate the best of the new teachers to the most disadvantaged regions, preferably to a region where their mother tongue matches that of their pupils and with incentives provided to support their assignment. In Bhutan, for example, efforts are under way to ensure that new ECE personnel work in their native areas, in their own language and knowledgeable of their own culture; and in China, incentives are given both to new

[22] ibid., p. 46.

[23] UNESCO: *Sub-regional workshop on pre-primary teacher development in South-East Asia: A synthesis report (draft)* (Bangkok, UNESCO, 2014).

[24] ILO, *Right beginnings: Early childhood education and educators* (Geneva, ILO, 2012), p. 45.

graduates to move to rural areas and to redundant primary school teachers from rural areas (made redundant due to demographic changes and urban migration) to work in ECE. [25]

F. Professional and career development

43. As is the case for other types of teachers, in-service training of new and practicing pre-primary teachers is essential – both to ensure and enhance their quality, and to make available the newest information related to ECD and early learning is essential. This needs to include (following pre-service education, qualification and certification) the processes of induction, mentoring and probation in the teacher's first assignment and then has to move toward a systematic process of continuing career development – providing an opportunity for pre-primary teachers to progress through, and be promoted within, the education system, not necessarily out of pre-primary education but to higher levels of responsibility and remuneration within it.

44. As with pre-service education, personnel dealing with younger children (under 3 years of age) usually have fewer opportunities for continuing professional development and in-service training than those working with older children being prepared for primary school. Even when further training opportunities are available for these personnel, they are often not clearly and systematically linked to the pre-service training previously provided or to changes in the curricula, new pedagogical approaches, or new scientific knowledge which should, and could, have a considerable impact on their work.

45. But this, too, is changing: 50 per cent of ECE educators in Bhutan now take part in annual in-service training; in Cambodia, five days a year; in Viet Nam, two months a year during school breaks and weekends; and in Nauru, through distance education courses from Australia. In many OECD countries, ECE educators are required to have a certain number of days per year of training, provided locally or by the national government, often in order to raise or maintain professional qualifications. Such opportunities are still usually not equivalent to those provided to primary school teachers – and the logic of providing the same in-service training to kindergarten teachers and to teachers of the early grades of primary school has not been well understood. Thus, despite advances in recent years, professional development through in-service training remains the weakest link in the ECE teacher development chain. This is particularly the case for teachers in remote, rural and poor regions of a country. [26]

G. Employment terms and conditions [27]

46. As discussed above, the life of ECE personnel "caring" for younger children with regard to employment terms and conditions is not an easy one, usually with little training, low pay, long hours, poor working conditions and, ultimately, low status. On the other hand, for ECE "teachers" the years of training and the level of qualification required to become an ECE teacher have generally increased – and so have their wages. This is likely partly due as well to the greater valuing of the contribution of pre-primary teachers by providing them

[25] J. Sun et al.: "Achieving Goal 1: Policies and strategies to enhance the quality of early childhood educators", draft prepared for the UNESCO *EFA Global Monitoring Report*, 2015).

[26] ILO: *Right beginnings: Early childhood education and educators* (Geneva, ILO, 2012), pp. 41–42.

[27] In sections G–J, the data are limited and more random and anecdotal in nature despite the importance of the issues covered. More systematic research on these issues is therefore needed.

remuneration appropriate to their responsibilities – again, in a few cases (such as Australia, New Zealand, Portugal and United Kingdom) comparable to primary school teachers. This is more likely the case for pre-primary teachers more closely attached to government systems, with at least stable contracts and perhaps even civil service status which may or may not be accompanied by some kind of social security. It is less likely the case for those working in community- and NGO-managed pre-primary schools, especially in rural and remote areas, who are not civil servants and have low wages and unstable, irregular contracts (if any exist at all). This leads to the high turnover of teachers in such circumstances as better opportunities become available elsewhere. Other benefits, of course, can be provided such as in the Philippines where the Government provides an economic relief allowance, a uniform allowance, a year-end bonus, vacation pay and even a chalk allowance. [28]

H. Learning and teaching conditions

47. Learning and teaching conditions cover a wide range of factors including facilities, resources, materials, and other conditions of work such as working time. As mentioned above, there is evidence in many countries that as budgets for ECE increase, so do the resources for facilities and infrastructure – new or renovated buildings, better materials, school meals and WASH programmes. As kindergartens get established in primary schools, their facilities, such as libraries and sports equipment, also become available for use.

48. There appears to be no consistent pattern with regard to working time of ECE personnel. Pre-primary teachers may seem to have it easy, working with an often small number of young children, a few hours a day, perhaps even with an assistant of some kind to help. But in many countries, where services are limited and teachers are scarce, they may teach two different (perhaps quite large) shifts of pupils per day, with few resources and little support.

I. Evaluating ECE personnel

49. The longer pre-service training, higher qualification, and higher remuneration of ECE personnel being, in many cases, a relatively new phenomenon, have generally not led to the development of systematic and comprehensive processes of monitoring, evaluation, appraisal and career development – at least compared to primary education systems with much longer histories and stronger traditions. In many cases, assessment tools have not been developed, evaluators (the pre-school director and, even less so, any official ECE supervisor or inspector) have not been trained in monitoring and assessment methods (assuming they have been trained in ECE as well as their staff has), and the ECE subsector is often too underdeveloped for extensive opportunities for professional advancement. Even when assessment mechanisms have been developed, as with the national accreditation system in Australia, the results are not publicized so have little direct impact on raising the status of even well-assessed ECE professionals in the community.

[28] UNESCO, *Sub-regional workshop on pre-primary teacher development in South-East Asia: A synthesis report (draft)* (Bangkok, UNESCO, 2014).

J. ECE governance and social dialogue

50. There is very little evidence that ECE personnel are organized collectively in a sufficient way to make them a serious partner in any social dialogue or collective bargaining, let alone in the governance of ECE. Given the wide range of service providers in many countries and the relatively low status of such personnel in general, organizing them is not an easy task. Especially in developing countries, even when they become a more formal part of the basic education system, there is no guarantee that any existing teacher associations or unions, dominated by teachers from higher levels of education, will pay particular attention to the well-being of teachers in a subsector which is often seen as a competitor for government funding.

51. A further factor is teacher unions themselves, which traditionally have not organized this sector. Some unions have by-laws and constitutions which do not include ECE workers; others encounter difficulties in organizing private sector employees diffused in small enterprises. In some countries, unions are adapting to organize the ECE sector, such as in the United States, where the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has promoted legislation allowing early childhood educators in Vermont to organize. [29]

V. Recommendations

52. The above analysis has suggested a variety of recommendations in line with the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, as well as the ILO guidelines, which should be put in place by governments and other providers of early childhood education to enhance the professionalization of – and improve the working conditions of – ECE personnel. These include the following:

- Promote the development of more national ECD policies, strategies and action plans which clearly lay out mechanisms to enhance the professionalization of ECE personnel and improve their working conditions, including the provision of a larger percentage of the national education budget.

- To the extent possible, attempt to achieve parity between pre-primary and primary personnel in terms of qualifications, certification, remuneration and status.

- Ensure that ECE personnel are subject to more comprehensive teacher management and development policies from initial recruitment through pre-service education to qualification and certification, performance assessment and continuing professional development.

- Develop a comprehensive, seamless pre-primary curriculum and pedagogy, from daycare and childcare centres, through more formal pre-schools, and into the early grades of primary school, which covers not only the usual demand for literacy and numeracy, but also the wider range of non-cognitive skills and values essential for future learning and social interaction, preferably linked to child development/early learning standards.

- Ensure that any training ECE teachers receive is specific to young child development and early childhood pedagogy; pre-school and early grade teachers should receive both appropriate pre-service education (for example, a BEd in early learning)

[29] AFT: "Vermont vote paves way for early educators to organize", www.aft.org/news/vermont-vote-paves-way-early-educators-organize#sthash.TivSVGD9.dpuf [accessed 15 Nov. 2014].

focusing on child psychology and development, early literacy and numeracy, personalized and remedial instruction which takes into account individual differences in developmental progress, and the use of mother tongue as the language of instruction; such training requires consistent mentoring and well-designed practicums so that future teachers actually learn how to apply and put into practice theory in regard to early literacy (for example, storytelling and text comprehension rather than merely alphabet memorization).

- Enhance the capacity of training institutions which educate pre-primary personnel to ensure that they are up to date with the classroom curricula, include the latest scientific information with regard to young child development, and organize a large percentage of their training time in practical work in a range of ECD services.

- Develop mechanisms to increase the diversity of pre-primary personnel in terms of sex, ethnicity/language, socio-emotional status, and disability.

- Strengthen mechanisms of social dialogue between pre-primary personnel and employers (government or non-government) to ensure that the interests and perspectives of these personnel enter into negotiations about their status and working conditions.

- Promote collaboration between UNESCO and the ILO on improving coordination between agencies dealing with ECE, particularly in terms of promoting a play-based and child-centred curriculum, better teacher education, and the more systematic collection of data related to professional status and working conditions.

VI. Case studies

The Philippines [30]

53. The Philippines has one of the most extensive and supportive legislative and regulatory frameworks for early childhood development in the world. RA 10157 (section 4) – An Act Institutionalizing the Kindergarten Education Into the Basic Education System and Appropriating Funds (known as the Kindergarten Act) – was approved in 2012 and provides universal coverage of 5-year old children to prepare them for primary school. This was complemented in 2013 by RA 10410, The Early Years Act of 2013, which recognizes the ages from 0 to 8 as the first crucial stage of educational development and strengthens the early childhood care and development system. Further legislation made clear that pre-primary school was to cover all children aged 5 and primary school, all children aged 6.

54. Over 49,000 kindergartens now exist in the Philippines, almost 80 per cent of them are public and managed by the Department of Education; this coverage means that over 83 per cent of children who enter grade 1 of primary school have had kindergarten experience. But the quality of the system still requires improvement; among other factors, 52 per cent of teachers in kindergartens are not officially qualified (having passed a licensure/professional examination), and almost 80 per cent are on part-time contracts. Unusually, however, over 11 per cent are male. Another 2 million children aged 3–4 are enrolled in public day-care centres, with some 50,000 teachers, which are coordinated by

[30] Much of this material is taken from a questionnaire completed for a UNESCO/SEAMEO project on pre-primary teacher development in Southeast Asia, August, 2014.

the Early Childhood Care and Development Council – formerly an independent body but now under the Department of Education.

55. This legislative mandate and accompanying regulatory frameworks have been important in formalizing what was already considerable recognition within Filipino society about the importance of early childhood development. But day-care centres and kindergartens have continued to be seen as having lower status than that of formal primary school. This perception is changing, however, especially with regard to kindergartens, and further actions have been taken by the Government, with the support of powerful NGOs and development agencies, to further increase the status of this level of schooling. These actions include:

- a National Early Learning Framework of 2010 for 0–6-year-old children;
- Standards and Competencies for Five-Year Old Filipino Children revised in December 2013;
- a policy on the nationwide adoption and implementation of the National Competency-Based Teacher Standards–Teacher's Strengths and Needs Assessment (NCBTS–TSNA);
- the implementation of a programme on Individual Plans for Professional Development (IPPD) in 2009 as stipulated by a Department of Education Order which sets the direction for the continuing capacity building (in-service training) of Filipino teachers; such training, organized mostly during summer vacations, are non-credit but provide points which can be accumulated for applying for permanent positions or promotions, and focus on topics such as curriculum utilization, principles of teaching and learning, approaches and strategies for early learning, classroom management, and student assessment;
- a Department of Education Memorandum in 2013 on the Distribution and Maximum Utilization of Kindergarten Instructional Materials.

56. Most significantly, high standards for educational qualification have been put in place for kindergarten/pre-school teachers equivalent to the level required for primary school teachers. In order to be qualified, a kindergarten teacher must have obtained one of the following:

- Bachelor in ECE.
- Bachelor of Science in pre-school education.
- Bachelor in elementary education with a major in teaching early grades or with specialization in kindergarten, preschool or early childhood education.
- Special Education major with 18 units in ECE.
- Bachelor in secondary education with an additional diploma in ECE including practice teaching in kindergarten education.
- Bachelor of Arts/Science in a discipline allied to education such as psychology, nursing, music, arts, etc., with at least 18 units in ECE/child development.

57. Another aspect of the equivalency between kindergarten and primary school teachers relates to the starting base salary which depends on salary grade (based on educational qualification) rather than on the grade taught. Other benefits – an economic relief

allowance, a uniform allowance, a year-end bonus, vacation pay, even a chalk allowance – are also provided to teachers at both levels of the system. Both kinds of teachers are expected to work 40 hours per week and are also evaluated yearly by their school heads, administrators, and peers, with results used for promotion, further training and/or scholarships, incentives such as a productivity bonus, and greater security of tenure.

58. The official, regulatory framework for ECE and the general equivalency with primary schooling have been important in raising the professional status of ECE personnel and improving their conditions of work. But several challenges remain. The 52 per cent of kindergarten teachers not officially eligible to be hired as permanent teachers reflects what seems to be a mismatch between the pre-service training provided (which qualifies them as a teacher) and the licensure/professional examination (which can lead to a permanent post); not all graduates of the required degrees, therefore, are guaranteed to pass. These ineligible teachers earn approximately one third of what a kindergarten teacher in a permanent post earns and do not receive the other benefits listed above. Many teachers in private pre-schools also earn considerably less than their public school counterparts, partly because their employers are unable or unwilling to assist their teachers to meet the eligibility criteria. Limited opportunities for promotion within the kindergarten system also persuade many teachers to move into what is seen as the more flexible, welcoming and ultimately still higher-status primary school system.

New Zealand [31]

59. New Zealand has had a policy of integrated education and care since 1986 and a national curriculum covering ages 0–5 since 1996. ECE services – kindergartens, education and care centres, play centres and playgroups – are all independent of the Government, both for-profit and non-profit or community-owned services. But the Government does play an important role – setting policies, regulating quality standards and providing quality assurance of ECE services, administering a licensing system, providing subsidies for underfunded services, informing parents on the benefits of early learning, and providing grants to establish or expand services to improve access.

60. In the context of developing the national curriculum, which covers approaches to learning and domains of learning, a 12-year initiative from 2000 to 2012 was designed to implement several activities:

- a rationalized and diverse range of qualification courses for ECE teachers;
- the development of benchmark qualifications for the diploma level;
- the setting of quality standards for teacher education courses and professional standards for teacher registration;
- the regulation that 50 per cent of staff must be qualified and registered;
- funded incentives for services to employ up to 80 per cent of their teachers;
- the development of comprehensive teacher supply policies to raise the workforce qualification rates;

[31] Much of the material on New Zealand is taken from the Ministry of Education, New Zealand, 2013. PowerPoint on "New Zealand: Competencies of ECE teachers".

- targeted professional development.

61. Although the original plan was to make all ECE teachers qualified by 2012, this was later changed to 80 per cent with a current level (2012) of 71 per cent.

62. In the context of the reformed ECE curriculum for ages 0–5, which became a licensing requirement in 2008, there is also a robust teacher education and course accreditation process which involves the New Zealand Qualification Authority (to ensure credible and recognized qualifications) and the New Zealand Teacher's council – based on a diploma of teaching (ECE) or an equivalent level 7 or a one-year graduate qualification. Courses must cover not only the curriculum but also the country's cultural context and theories of pedagogy. Qualification can then be followed by comprehensive professional registration by the Teacher's Council where teachers must meet requirements outlining essential knowledge and skills, including the promotion of equitable learning outcomes for Maori children, a commitment to professional relationships and values, and criteria for building a supportive and stimulating learning environment. After registration, teachers get a "practicing certificate" that must be renewed every three years.

63. There is also further professional development for all teaching staff, funded by the Ministry of Education, targeted at services either performing badly or expanding rapidly, and providing services to Maori and Pacific populations and to groups from low socio-economic backgrounds. The focus is on literacy, numeracy and responsiveness to the identity, language and culture of different communities.

Colombia [32]

64. In 2009, Colombia passed Act No. 1295 on early childhood. This was followed by Act No. 1450 in 2011 which defined an ECD policy of "Cero a Siempre" (from zero to forever). A further decree in 2011 created an Intersectoral Commission for Early Childhood Comprehensive Care. In terms of regulations, the Ministry of Education has defined 12 technical references that range from teaching guidelines to guidelines for quality standards to qualifications required of ECE personnel. Most recently, a new decree created a Presidential Commission for Early Childhood. The major actors in the further promotion of ECD, besides the Intersectoral Commission and the Ministry of Education, now include the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Culture, the National Planning Department, the Department of Social Prosperity, the National Agency for Overcoming Extreme Poverty, and the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF) coordinated by the presidency.

65. A number of actions have been taken in Colombia in recent years to expand and increase the quality of pre-primary services and, in the process, enhance the professionalization and improve the working conditions of pre-primary personnel. The Government began from 2008 to concentrate more seriously on not only the pre-school grades but also on early childhood care for children aged from 0 to 3. The creation of the Intersectoral Commission for Early Childhood Comprehensive Care reinforced this commitment and led also to the insertion of ECE into the national development plan with specific legislation and subsequent public policies and public–private partnerships regarding early childhood development.

[32] The material in this brief is taken from responses to a survey completed by the Intersectoral Commission for Early Childhood Comprehensive Care of the Colombian Government and the International Center for Education and Human Development, CINDE, September, 2014.

66. These examples, reflecting strong political will and official government support, were an important beginning in the process of enhancing the status and professionalization of ECE. Other actions followed:

- the greater allocation of resources to ECD;
- a revision of the early years curriculum based on a better understanding of the concept of early childhood and the complexity of ECD;
- mandatory attendance in pre-school;
- the revision of some university curricula, with the assistance of the Intersectoral Commission, the Ministry of Education, and the ICBF, to design graduate programmes directed toward higher levels of qualification for pre-primary personnel;
- the expansion of the membership and mandate of professional organizations (such as the Federation of Colombian Educators (FECODE) to begin to address issues related to child development and early education;
- stronger methods of public communication and social mobilization around the value of early childhood education, the need for comprehensive care, and the significance and contributions of early childhood educators.

67. The impact of these various initiatives on the professionalization of pre-primary education and their working conditions included the following:

- expanded investments in ECE services leading to a higher quality of teachers by enabling more lowly paid and less recognized community caregivers to be better trained, more highly qualified, and with better conditions of job and wage security – and therefore to be seen as "educators";
- expanded opportunities for such ECE personnel to obtain in-service professional development and advance in their profession;
- the provision of expanded support to ECE programmes from nutritionists, psychologists, etc.;
- mandatory requirements and guidelines with regard to pre-primary infrastructure and facilities and in new child development centres and pre-schools, facilities similar to those of primary schools;
- the provision of more and better materials and resources through the Commission and public–private partnerships;
- the recruitment, training and certification of (and extra incentives for) pre-primary personnel from indigenous communities through the ICBF;
- the entry into the national discourse of issues around quality education and the importance of having highly qualified ECE personnel;
- social mobilization around the dignity of the early childhood teaching profession;
- equality in the length of tertiary training and the certification and salary provided to both ECE personnel (within the public system) and primary school teachers (assuming they have the same level of education and qualification).

Ghana [33]

68. Ghana long had the reputation in Africa of having one of the best education systems of the continent – a reputation damaged by two decades of political and economic decline which only began to be reversed towards the end of the last century. One aspect of this recovery was the approval in 2004 by the Government of Ghana of a national Early Childhood Care and Development Policy [34] which has, as its broad goal, "to promote the survival, growth, and development of all children (0–8)". This policy mandated that, by 2007, two years of kindergarten would be included in compulsory basic education; this led to a decision to provide 60 per cent of primary schools with two kindergarten classrooms and the further provision of pre-primary education in collaboration with the private sector and local NGOs and community- and faith-based organizations where public schools were not easily available. In many ways, this policy led to Ghana having one of the highest rates of coverage of early childhood education in Africa.

69. The early childhood education system in Ghana covers children from the age of 2 beginning with nursery school and continuing through two years of kindergarten until enrolment in primary school at age 6. The definition of early childhood up to the age of 8 indicates the nation's concern with successful transition from the home or from ECD programmes to the early grades of primary school.

70. Ghana has shown a remarkable increase in enrolment in ECD programmes, particularly in pre-primary education, with an absolute increase in the number of children in pre-primary rising from some 506,000 in 1999 to over 1,540,000 in 2011 – a 205 per cent increase. [35] This has led to an increase in the gross enrolment ratio in pre-primary education from 47 per cent in 1999 to a remarkable 114 per cent in 2011. Clearly, ECE has assumed an important role in Ghana's education system with an increase in status to match.

71. As mentioned above, this increase in status is largely due to the fact that the Government "mainstreamed" kindergarten into the education system by making it a compulsory part of basic education; this has been accompanied by a decrease in the percentage of enrolment in private institutions as government provision increased. But the huge increase in enrolment led to a large increase in demand for resources – teachers, infrastructure and financial support – that has not been easy to meet and therefore has resulted in crowded classes, poor sanitation and health facilities, and pressures on quality. These pressures have increased because of the lack of a comprehensive training agenda or syllabus for kindergarten teachers, the lack of comprehensive standards for kindergarten and the lack of adequate financing. Also, because expansion was implemented with relatively little attention to distribution, it has not resolved existing problems related to disparities within the country. This has meant that in rural areas, for example, there is an even greater lack of teaching–learning materials and poorer teachers, higher absenteeism rates and inadequate community involvement.

[33] S. Shaeffer: "The demand for and the provision of early childhood services since 2000: Policies and strategies", paper prepared for the *Education For All Global Monitoring Report* 2015 (Paris, UNESCO, 2015).

[34] Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, *Early Childhood Care and Development Policy*, Accra, Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, 2004.

[35] UNESCO, 2014, op. cit., pp. 336–337.

72. The official inclusion of kindergarten in compulsory basic education clearly has had an impact on the status of the ECE and therefore on the professionalization of ECE personnel. Other actions supporting this process have included the following:

- government monitoring of kindergarten quality standards;
- the New Education Strategic Plan (2010–20), which was designed to solve outstanding problems of disparities, quality and accountability at all levels of the system;
- teacher training which now includes degrees and diplomas in early childhood education at numerous higher-education institutions and is leading to a large-scale pre-service and in-service education programme for both pre-primary teachers and for pre-service Education College lecturers and in-service trainers;
- improved infrastructure, learning materials and resources;
- a review of the curriculum, the inspection system, and internal monitoring and evaluation, including the formulation of early learning development standards in revising the curriculum and creating assessment tools for kindergarten pupils;
- the strengthening of special education needs support.

73. Another major effort in relation to enhancing the status of ECE was a communications and advocacy strategy to create nation-wide awareness of ECD issues including among religious and traditional leaders. The Operational Plan of the New Education Strategic Plan (2010–20), for example, calls for an extensive, multimedia public-awareness campaign to "rebrand" kindergarten to be promoted via many kinds of media and community/church/mosque-based gatherings, in order to sensitize families about a less academic style of education, EC development standards, the cognitive benefits of kindergarten, the importance of parental involvement in kindergarten management, the need to gather more complete data on children from birth to 4 years of age, and the importance of locally made teaching–learning materials.

74. These actions have led to the expectation that all kindergartens will have:

- a happy, healthy and safe learning environment;
- an exploration/discovery-based curriculum and environment (both in class and outdoors);
- teaching and learning materials which make use of local resources and encourage play;
- specially trained teachers/educators skilled in early years education and who are provided with continuous professional development;
- teachers/educators who are able to holistically assess all 4- and 5-year-olds;
- a robust internal and external monitoring and evaluation system;
- environments which instil a sense of pride in the heritage and culture of the community;
- inclusive programmes for children from poor families, those in special need, and orphans, with only children with severe disabilities sent to special schools.

75. Finally, the Operational Plan recognizes the important role kindergartens can play in trying to assure that primary schools – and the Ghanaian system as a whole – attempt to foster the same kind of communication, creative thinking, reasoning and problem-solving skills meant to be acquired in kindergarten. This clearly reinforces the definition of "early childhood" to include children aged 0–8.

Viet Nam [36]

76. According to the Education Law of Viet Nam of 1998, early childhood education services range from crèches for young children to kindergartens, including home-based day-care centres, pre-schools and parental education programmes, which nurture and educate children from 3 months to 6 years of age. The goal of ECD is "to improve children's well-being physically, morally, intellectually and aesthetically, to lay the foundation of their personality and to help them to on to primary education". [37]

77. In 2010, a Prime Ministerial Decision on "Approving the Scheme on Universal Pre-Primary Education for Children Aged Five Years in the 2010–15 Period" was promulgated. [38] This is a detailed blueprint for making the universalization of full-day pre-primary education a first priority in pre-primary education, especially in terms of preparing 5-year-olds for grade 1 – at least 95 per cent of them by 2015. Included in the Decision are objectives (most with specific targets), "conditions", and standards related to a new pre-primary curriculum, better-trained and remunerated teachers, and better material resources including equipment and facilities.

78. Partly as a result of this increased attention to early childhood development, the demand for (at least) pre-primary education increased considerably between 1999 and 2011. In absolute terms, enrolment increased from almost 2,180,000 children aged 3–5 in 1999 to over 3,000,000 in 2011 – an increase of some 41 per cent [39] – and the percentage of children in private institutions decreased significantly indicating a more active role by the Government in the provision of pre-primary services. Of special focus in the government's policy are "mountainous, deep-lying, remote, border, and island regions" and ethnic minority children to ensure that they are prepared in the Vietnamese language before their entrance into grade 1. The national enrolment rate for children aged 3–5 years is 84 per cent, but for ethnic minority children, only 77 per cent; for 5-year-olds, the national enrolment rate in kindergarten/pre-primary is 98.6 per cent compared to 90.8 per cent for ethnic minority children. [40]

[36] S. Shaeffer: "The demand for and the provision of early childhood services since 2000: Policies and strategies", paper prepared for the *Education For All Global Monitoring Report* 2015 (Paris, UNESCO, 2015).

[37] Le Thi Anh Tuyet: *Early childhood education in Vietnam* (Hanoi, Early Childhood Education Department, 2006).

[38] The Prime Minister, Viet Nam: *Approving the Scheme on Universal Pre-school Education of Children Aged Five Years in the 2010–15 Period*, No. 239?QD-TTg (Hanoi, the Prime Minister's Office, 2010).

[39] Data from 2012–13 from the Ministry of Education and Training indicates this increased further to over 3,500,000 with a further decrease in enrolment in private institutions: 46 per cent of this enrolment was female, and 17 per cent from ethnic minority groups.

[40] Personal communication from UNICEF and UNESCO Viet Nam.

79. A principal obstacle to greater demand is the low level of qualifications and skills and general professional capacity of ECD caregivers – they are mostly secondary school graduates with little additional training. Also, few are funded by the State (most are on short-term contracts), especially in remote and mountainous areas. There is also a lack of teachers from ethnic minority groups and materials in ethnic languages. Quality appears to be low; recent Ministry of Education and Training data show that only 21 per cent of pre-schools reach national standards, with most of these in urban areas. [41]

80. A wide range of policies and strategies has been designed and implemented to increase the quality of ECD services, and the professionalization and working conditions of ECE personnel. These include:

- official support to compulsory education covering kindergarten to grade 13;
- making ECD a universal component of the National Education Strategy by the prioritization of kindergartens, particularly for 5-year-olds and for disadvantaged and rural, remote, ethnic minority populations;
- mandating kindergartens in all communities throughout the country;
- the requirement that teachers need to meet nationally standardized qualifications (increasing from secondary education certification to several years of post-secondary professional training) and receive annual in-service training;
- an increase in teachers' salaries;
- the nationwide application of Early Learning and Development Standards and national minimum standards for pre-schools by 2014;
- a renovated pre-primary education curriculum to make it more child-centred, integrated, flexible, play-based and individualized;
- a greater budget for ECD services in local socio-economic planning processes;
- ensuring coordination between the Ministry of Education and Training and other cooperating ministries – labour, war invalids, and social affairs; health; finance; and home affairs – as well as important quasi-NGOs such as the Women's Union.

81. Another important component of increasing the professional status of ECE personnel – especially in a nation such as Viet Nam – is the ability to shape public information through a range of strategies linked to promoting the visibility and public awareness of ECD. Thus, one important decision with regard to ECD calls for the State to raise the awareness about and responsibilities of authorities at different levels, sectors, families, and communities for the policy, purposes, and significance of universal pre-school education. This has been done through various communication forms and media (publications, tapes, newspaper, radios stations, seminars) and includes the promotion of pre-primary education in local development programmes and plans, and in the assessment of grassroots party organizations, local administrations and mass organizations (such as the Women's Union).

[41] ibid.