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## **Policies and Strategies to Enhance the Quality of Early Childhood Educators**

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# early childhood educators

## Achieving Goal 1:

### Policies and Strategies to Enhance the Quality of Early Childhood Educators

Commission number 1.5

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- ✦ Enrolment in pre-primary education has increased markedly between 1999 and 2009. While there has been a concomitant increase in the early childhood education workforce, there are concerns that this increase in quantity of services should not be associated with a decrease in their quality. A shortage of appropriately trained early childhood educators adversely impacts the quality of ECCE.
- ✦ In some countries, expansion has benefitted urban, easier-to-reach populations more than those in poor and rural areas. EFA Goal 1 focuses on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.
- ✦ There is a dearth of appropriately qualified early childhood educators with a severe shortage in rural areas.
- ✦ A range of different staff support early childhood education programmes including Educational staff, Care staff, Assistant staff and Administrative Staff.
- ✦ Early childhood educators have lower educational and professional qualifications and receive lower wages than primary school teachers in both developed and developing countries.
- ✦ Early childhood educators who work with the under threes receive less training, receive lower wages and have fewer opportunities for continuing professional development than those who work with the over threes. This is true in both developed and developing countries.
- ✦ The paucity of in-service training and opportunities for continuing professional development in the developing world is an issue that deserves much attention.
- ✦ Distance education can be a very effective method of providing pre-service and in-service training for early childhood educators in developing regions.
- ✦ Adequate consideration must be given to the early childhood teacher education curriculum.
- ✦ Partnerships among stakeholders (governments, NGOs, communities and families) can be effective in ensuring that high quality care and education is provided for children, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- ✦ Developing an appropriate country-level regulatory structure to monitor staffing issues in different types of ECCE programmes should be a priority.

## Abstract

The early childhood education workforce plays a pivotal role in expanding and improving early childhood care and education. However, there are many challenges associated with producing, attracting and retaining well-trained early childhood educators. This report begins by highlighting some of these challenges. Next, using examples from four regions, it illustrates how policies and / or initiatives related to early childhood teacher/carer education have addressed some of these challenges in the past decade. Effective government policies have to be context sensitive and these examples illustrate strategies that have enhanced both teacher quantity and quality in different parts of the world.

## Introduction

“Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children” is Goal 1 of the Dakar Framework of Action (UNESCO, 2000) which was adopted by 164 countries in 2000. The Dakar Framework acknowledged the importance of the quality of early childhood services and staff quality is a hallmark of Early Childhood Care and Education programme quality. A range of different staff support early childhood education programmes including Educational staff (e.g., kindergarten/pre-school teachers), Care staff (e.g. Child-care workers) and Assistant staff (e.g., cleaners who support Education and Care staff). According to a survey conducted in 88 countries in 1988, about 67% of employees in ECCE programmes were Educational Staff, 8% were Care staff and 25% were either administrators or assistant staff (Fisher, 1991). We focus on the Education and Care staff, whom we refer to as Early Childhood Educators in this report. We use the term Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) to refer to the range of services for children provided before primary school entry and acknowledge that different governments use of variety of terms<sup>1</sup>.

Figure 1 illustrates the changes in Gross Enrolment Ratios in pre-primary education from 1999 to 2011. Figure 2 shows the percentage change in total teaching staff employed in pre-primary education by region between 1999 and 2009, while Figure 3 shows changes in the percentage of trained pre-primary teachers by region for the same period. While different countries have widely varying requirements for certification as an early childhood

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<sup>1</sup> Typically the terms Early Childhood Development (ECD), Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) are used to refer to service for children up to the age of six while Early Childhood Education (ECE), Preschool Education (PSE), Pre-primary Education (PPE) and Kindergarten Education (KE) and used to denote services for children ranging in age from three to six years.

educator, it is clear the early childhood workforce has increased in size and in level of training over the past decade with the increase in participation in early childhood programmes.

Figure 1

Changes in Gross Enrolment Ratio in Pre-primary education across regions (1999 – 2012)

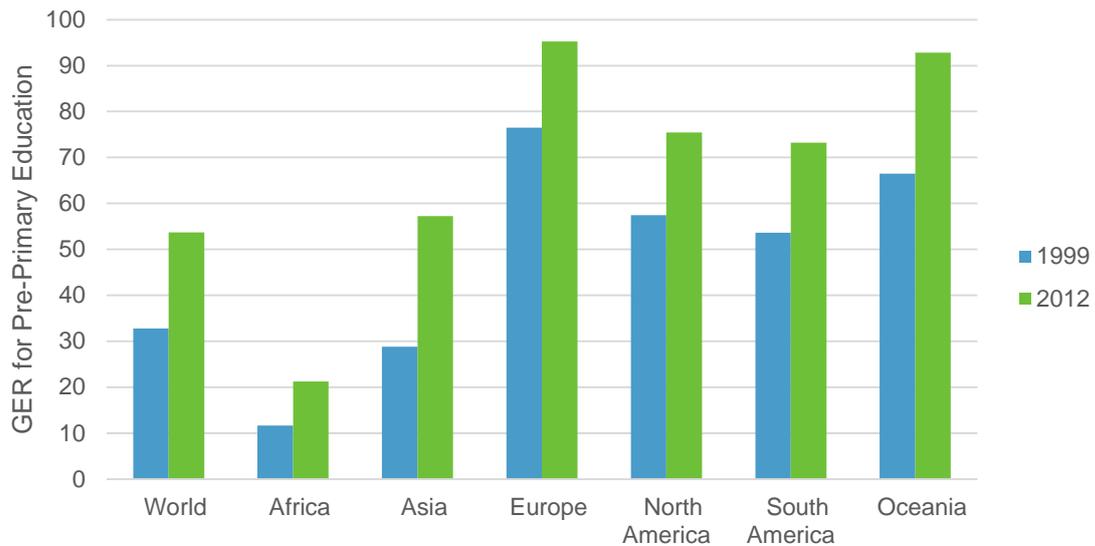
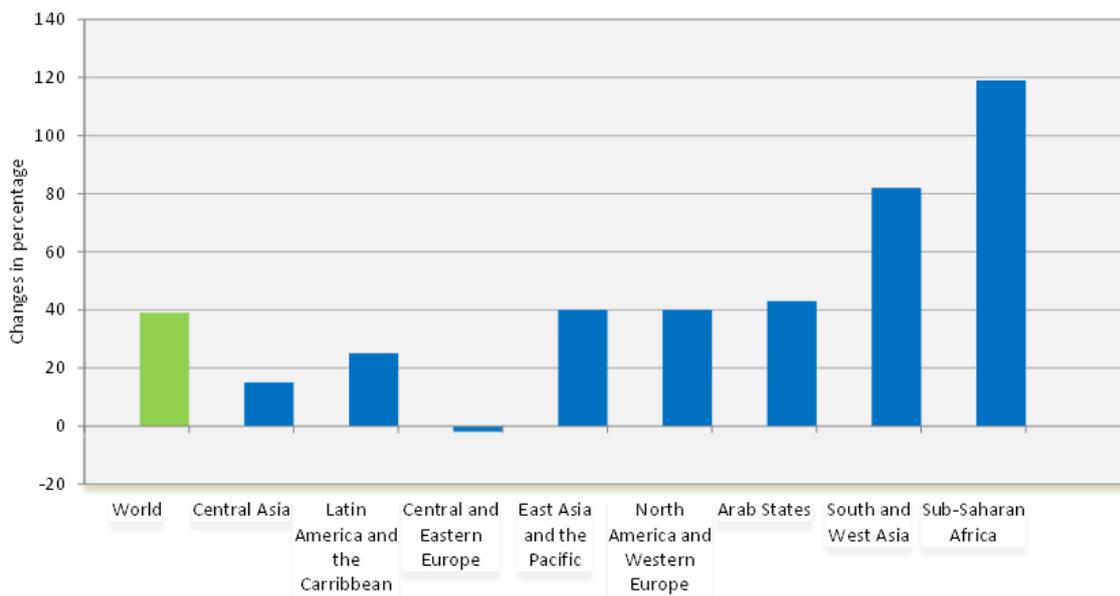


Figure 2

Changes in percentage in total teaching staff in pre-primary education across regions (1999 – 2009)

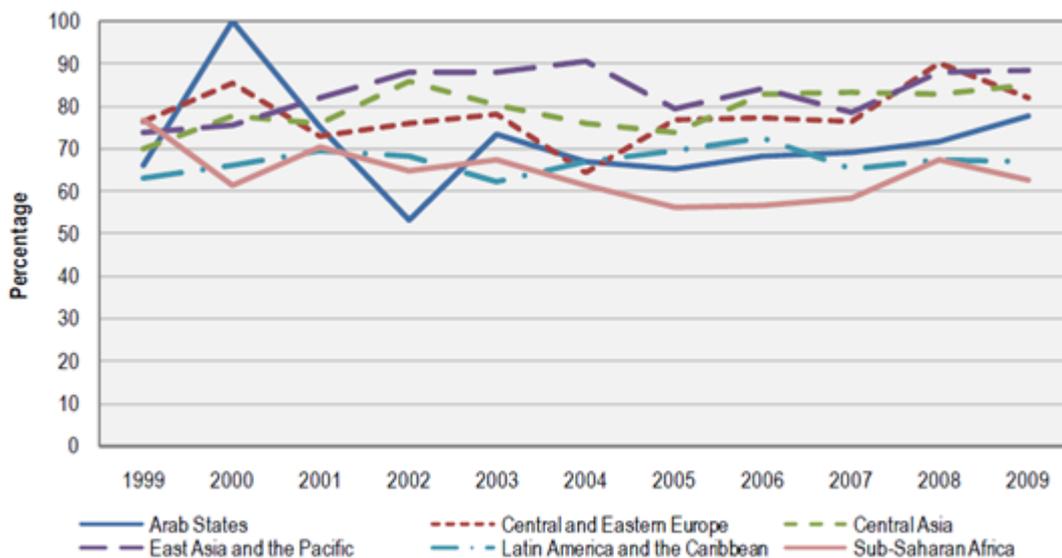


\*UNESCO-UIS estimation for many regions.

Source: UNESCO, 2011d; UNESCO-UIS, 2011.

Figure 3

Changes in percentage of trained teachers across regions (1999 – 2009)



Source: UNESCO-UIS, 2011, extracted from ILO, 2012.

The expansion in ECCE has also resulted in challenges in relation to the quantity and quality of the early childhood workforce. These include (i) attracting motivated and well-qualified teachers to work in rural and remote areas; (ii) addressing the lack of parity in pay and in conditions of service with primary education teachers; (iii) training educators to work in different types of programmes (kindergartens, child-care, community preschools, home-based); and (iv) preparing educators to cater for the needs of children of different ages and with special learning needs. In this report, we consider policies, programmes, and / or strategies effected between 2000 and 2011 to deal with these challenges. Using examples

that we assume can be generalized to other similar contexts, we illustrate how change was effectively implemented in four different regions of the world.

### Main challenges facing Governments in relation to the early childhood education workforce since 2000

#### *Challenge 1. Lower qualifications, status, and pay of early childhood educators compared to primary school teachers*

Early childhood educators have typically been perceived as “substitute mothers” and not seen in need of professional training. According to data collected from 23 developing countries between 2002 and 2004, four countries required early childhood educators to have a lower-secondary education qualification while eight expected them to complete upper-secondary education. In these countries, no further professional training was required (see Table 1). Further, the percentage of trained early childhood educators fluctuated from less than 25% to more than 95% based on data from 50 countries (UNESCO, 2008).

Table 1

Academic qualifications required of pre-primary teachers in selected countries and comparison with primary teachers, 2000-2005

Required qualification for pre-primary teachers	Country	Year	Required qualification for primary teachers <sup>1</sup>
Lower secondary	Burkina Faso	2002	Same
	Chad	2003	Higher*
	Guinea	2003	Higher**
Lower secondary / technical	Lao PDR	2002	Same
Upper secondary	Ecuador	2000	Higher**
	Niger	2003	Higher*
	Syrian A. R.	2003	Higher*
	Cambodia	2003	Same
	Oman	2004	Higher**
	Bangladesh	2003	Higher*
	Mali	2003	Same
Upper secondary / technical	Uganda	2004	Same
Post-secondary non-tertiary	Kazakhstan	2004	Higher*
	Lebanon	2003	Same
	Bolivia	2003	Same
	Kenya	2003	Same
	Lesotho	2003	Same
	Senegal	2003	Same
Tertiary	El Salvador	2003	Same
	Cuba	2003	Same
	Samoa	2005	Same
	South Africa	2003	Same

1. The number of asterisks ( \* ) indicates how many additional ISCED levels are required to teach primary school: \* = one level higher; \*\* = two levels higher.

Source: UIS database. Extracted from UNESCO, 2008.

Early childhood educators earn much lower salaries than teachers at other levels of education and this reflects the lack of recognition of ECCE and low status of ECCE teachers. In many developing countries, early childhood educators have relatively low standards of living and in some sub-Saharan African countries, monthly salaries for early childhood educators are less than US\$50 (UNESCO-BREDA, 2010). The situation in many developed

countries is better, but the salaries for ECCE educators are still slightly lower than those of primary school teachers. For example, salaries of early childhood educators in the public sector in Denmark, Kazakhstan and Norway are of 85-100% of primary school teachers' salaries (ILO, 2012). In the United States, preschool teacher salaries are lower than those of janitors, cooks or chauffeurs, and kindergarten teachers earn less than workers who require a similar amount of professional training and work in other industries (Barnett, 2003). The poor pay and low benefits together with lower qualification requirements has contributed to relatively high rates of turnover in the ECCE workforce. As early childhood programmes have had problems in recruiting and retaining good teachers, this has adversely impacted on the quality of early learning programmes. As a result, the availability of trained teachers globally has changed little between 1999 and 2005 (UNESCO, 2010). This is true for both developed and developing countries.

In developed countries such as Sweden, higher levels of education and professional training are required for pre-primary teachers and they receive relatively high salaries. However, even in these countries the education of young children is still considered less prestigious than teaching older children (Moss, 2004a). Similarly, early childhood education is also a marginalized profession in Australia (Fenech, Waniganayaka and Fleet, 2009).

Given the lower qualifications, status and pay of early childhood educators, several countries have implemented reforms to enhance the qualification levels and increase remuneration for pre-primary teachers. For example, Singapore formed the Preschool Qualification Accreditation Committee (PQAC) that developed a framework for early childhood educator training and accredited training courses in 2001 and additional training requirements were mandated in 2013 (Lim and Lim, in press). Although the standards among countries differ considerably, governments have been increasing the professional

training requirements for early childhood educators (e.g., Hong Kong SAR Government). This reflects an increasing recognition of the need to have an ECCE workforce with adequate professional training and an emphasis on the quality of early childhood education.

According to data available from nearly 80 low- and middle-income countries across the world in 2009, one third estimated more than 90% of the early childhood educators achieved national standards but nearly one quarter reported the figures in their countries were less than 50% (UNESCO-UIS, 2011). The percentages of trained pre-primary teachers were stable and relatively high from 1999 to 2009 in countries in the East Asia and Pacific region. However, the figures fluctuated markedly in the Arab states over the same period and declined in sub-Saharan Africa (see Figure 3). Although educational requirements differ by country, as shown in Table 2, in most countries in the Asia-Pacific region, a general teaching license or certificate is a necessary and some require a specific ECCE license and particular pre-service training after basic education is compulsory to obtain such license (Profeta, 2012).

Table 2

Educational requirements for obtaining an ECCE licence or certificate in the Asia-Pacific

Country	Educational requirements for obtaining ECCE license or certificate
Lao PDR	11+1 year, 11+2 years, 11+3 years
Malaysia	MOE preschool teacher: at least with a diploma
Myanmar	1 month teaching training
Vietnam	Diploma or college degree in early childhood education (2-3 years)
The Philippines	Government preschool teacher: ranging from basic teacher certificate to post-graduate certificate
Thailand	High school graduate with ECCD training or college degree in early childhood education
Cambodia	High school graduate or college degree in early childhood education (a 5-year-program)
Timor-Leste	2 years in teaching training program (in process in 2012)
Indonesia	College degree in early childhood education or psychology

Source: Profeta, 2012

On the other hand, data suggest increased remuneration of ECCE teachers in some countries in recent years. For example, in Moldova, the salaries for ECCE teachers doubled in 2008 compared to 2002/03 (ILO, 2011) and at least 14 states in the U.S. had initiatives to improve salaries or benefits for child care workers (Barnett, 2003). In Singapore, incentives (grants and scholarships) for teachers and caregivers are provided (Lim and Lim, in press). However, the salaries for the ECCE workforce in most countries are still relatively low. Strategies including establishing national minimum wage standards might be helpful for ECCE teachers but the first goal for developing countries should be having pay parity with primary school teachers. It is commendable that several countries including the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Portugal are taking steps to move toward wage parity among pre-primary, primary and secondary school teachers (ILO, 2012). Research has indicated that teacher-facilitators who receive stable, higher monthly wages tend to demonstrate higher quality teaching than those who receive largely in-kind support and lower salaries (Aga Khan Foundation, 2013).

### *Challenge 2. Insufficient training and opportunities for initial and continuing professional development*

Although there is an increase in the number of institutes providing pre-service training for early childhood educators all over the world (ILO, 2012), problems related to teacher training still exist. The considerable developmental differences between children under three years and those ranging in age from three to six years necessitates professional training which adequately considers age-linked variations in children's care and educational needs. In some OECD countries, there are different training curricula / programme for trainees who will work with the under threes and those who will work with older children.

In some countries, there is no specified or implemented policy with regard to the curriculum requirements for work with 3- to 6-year-olds. On the other hand, in many countries, ECCE educators receive the same training programme (if available) for both sectors (ILO, 2012). However, those working with younger children tend to have less training, ranging from no training to some post-secondary training. The situation is more complicated in less developed countries, where very limited pre-service training is available for pre-primary teachers. For example in 2007 there were no specific training courses for pre-primary teachers in Bangladesh, Chad, and the Syrian Arab Republic and teacher training requirements were only explicitly stated in a few countries (UNESCO, 2008). For example, pre-school teacher education in Ethiopia is a shared responsibility between the government, NGOs, and the private sector. There is no national preschool teacher education policy and it is not possible to gauge the quality of training programmes offered in multiple teacher training institutes. Teacher trainees may receive ten months of training in a single government institute but such training is not available in most regions which rely on private institutes to provide training. However, the majority of private institutes in the country lack appropriately qualified teacher trainers (ILO, 2012).

Opportunities and requirements for in-service training also vary greatly across countries and between those working with the under threes and over threes. In general, those working with young children have both less initial training and few opportunities for in-service education (ILO, 2012). The content of in-service training programmes is likely to differ from that delivered in initial teacher training programmes (OECD, 2009) and therefore cannot be considered as “refresher” courses. The paucity of in-service training and opportunities for continuing professional development in the developing world is an issue that deserves much attention.

In developed countries, there is a trend for governments to require at least a three-year Bachelor's degree for lead teachers in early childhood education programmes (ILO, 2012) and many countries are also exerting efforts to improve the in-service education of existing pre-primary teachers (UNESCO, 2008). Sweden, New Zealand and Australia have enhanced the initial training for early childhood educators. For example, Sweden increased the length of the university training course for preschool teachers and leisure time pedagogues from three to three-and-a-half years to be on par with the requirement for primary school teachers (UNESCO, 2002, cited in UNESCO, 2008). New Zealand set a target of having all ECCE teachers qualified by 2012. Hence the number and types of pre-service teacher education programmes increased and included a three-year full-time training program for ECCE in 1997 (EI, 2010). The Australian government expanded the number of university places to train early childhood educators and provided incentives for graduates to work in the child care sector (Rudd and Macklin, 2007). The qualifications required of early childhood educators in developing countries vary considerably from those in developed countries.

Developing countries want to meet EFA Goal 1, but there is a dearth of qualified early childhood educators. Hence many countries have employed unqualified staff from the community given the absence of sufficient funds to recruit qualified teachers. Budgetary constraints also adversely impact the ability to provide in-service training to unqualified early childhood educators (Fyfe, 2007). Clearly there is a need for such training and innovative methods have been effected to provide it. Pre-service and in-service training programmes and other forms of continuing support and guidance have been provided to increase the availability and quality of training for early childhood educators (ARNEC, 2011). In addition, participatory training (where parents and other family/community caregivers

are involved) and capacity building programmes to help communities create early childhood programmes have also been offered. For example, Madrasa Resource Centre preschools in East Africa used para-professionals, community or contract teachers, and such programmes can actually provide training for these potential early childhood educators to equip them with the skills necessary to effectively deliver ECCE programmes in different settings (Mwaura and Mohamed, 2008, cited in ILO, 2012). A Capability Building Program in Indonesia provides important in-service training for early childhood educators; it is assumed that early childhood educators will use / adapt the skills and pedagogical methods introduced during training in their classrooms (ARNEC and SEAMEO-INNOTECH, 2012, cited in Profeta, 2012). In India, a combination of pre-service and on-site training is recommended for the professional development of early childhood educators (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2012a, b, cited in Profeta, 2012). A polyvalent teacher training system has been introduced in Gambia and primary school teachers can be certified to teach pre-primary children under the system, which means that the primary sector helps take responsibility for ECD teacher training (Choi, 2006).

Distance education can be a very effective method of providing pre-service and in-service training for early childhood educators in developing regions. The rapid spread of the internet in developing countries enables fast and effective delivery of the curriculum. Further, students can get feedback from tutors and participate in discussion groups and on-line learning communities. Social interaction with peers allows sharing among classmates and can motivate students to complete courses. There are, of course, limitations associated with distance education courses in developing countries including bandwidth problems and instability of the internet. Further, students may have other responsibilities and distractions which prevent them from allocating time to their studies.

An example of an effective distance learning curriculum comes from Africa. The Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) uses web-based learning and benefits a large number of educators (Moss, 2004b). Distance learning programmes that can build on capacity among teacher educators in different countries help to overcome challenges that exist in many countries in terms of capacity for early childhood teacher education. Since the focus on preparing practitioners to work with young children by enhancing qualifications is a relatively new one, many countries are still catching up with regard to capacity at teacher education levels.

Against this background, there is also a need to examine the content included in professional training for early childhood educators. Usually, the formal training provided in tertiary education institutes includes foundational courses, courses on teaching and learning, practicum, general education courses and those that target basic IT or communication skills. The curriculum usually takes two to three years to complete in developed countries. Due to resource constraints, expanded short-term training is typically favoured in developing countries contexts. Hence content selection has to be prioritised. Adequate consideration must be given to helping learners understand different theoretical views on child development and early learning rather than an exclusive focus on pedagogical knowledge and skills. In-service teacher preparation programmes that are implemented in resource-constrained environments should also prioritise pedagogical content knowledge as those in most developed countries with higher quality in ECCE programming. Skill-based training is necessary but not enough since the teachers should also be capable of adapting their teaching methods to children of different ages and from different backgrounds (Kaplan and Lewis, 2013). The Teachers' Resource Centre in Pakistan developed a curriculum and specialized teacher training for early childhood education, with

a focus on both skill building and knowledge about ECCE. Elements of holistic development, the importance of play, commitment to parents, evaluation of learning, and creating an appropriate learning environment were included in the training and some trained teachers were required to replicate the training in their districts (Munoz, 2012, cited in Profeta, 2012). The training curriculum should also focus on methods of enhancing the quality of teacher-child interaction (UNESCO, UNICEF EAPRO & UNICEF ROSA, 2012).

*Challenge 3. Severe shortage of early childhood educators in rural areas.*

Children from poor and rural areas in developing countries are usually disadvantaged in terms of access to ECCE and the programmes they attend tend to be of lower quality ones compared to their urban counterparts. In fact, these children are in particular need of high quality ECCE because of family-related factors including the lack of developmental stimulation in the home. Although not the sole determinant, the shortage of early childhood educators in rural areas has exacerbated disparities between urban and rural areas in the quality of ECCE programmes. Data on teacher qualifications are not always available, especially in remote areas (UNESCO, 2012), but a study conducted in the OECD countries showed that the number of early childhood educators is greatly reduced in poor and rural areas (OCED, 2010, cited in Munoz, 2012). The situation is more noticeable in developing countries. Taken the example of China where 61% of children under six years live in rural areas (Wu, Young, and Cai, 2011). However, there are relatively few kindergartens with qualified teachers in rural China and a great number of preschool aged children attend pre-primary classes or the Grade 1 class in a primary school which are taught by teachers who do not have professional qualifications for pre-primary education (Rao et al., 2012a). However, efforts are now being made at the country and district levels to increase both the quality and quantity of early childhood educators in rural areas.

Against this background, focused efforts need to be exerted to recruit and retain qualified personnel to work in rural and other remote areas. In some countries, incentives are provided for those working in the remote and rural areas. For example, under the Teacher Quality National Partnership Agreement, there are reward structures for teachers and leaders who work in disadvantaged indigenous, rural / remote and hard-to-staff area in Australia (Council of Australian Governments, 2010). More importantly, there should be innovative and localized teacher training models for particular countries to supply more trained ECCE teachers for rural areas. For example, in Cambodia, mothers led by a 'core' mother serve as the ECCE staff in home-based early childhood programmes, which operate effectively for the rural Cambodia children; these mothers received refresher training for 6 days a year and get help from the teachers in community-based programmes (Rao et al., 2012b). A cascade model, in which the first generation of trained teachers become educators of the second generation (Griffin, 1999), may serve as an effective way of pre-primary teacher training in these areas

#### *Challenge 4. Lack of regulation and monitoring of staff in various ECCE settings*

There are different modes of funding and management of ECCE programmes across the world. Government –supported (public sector) programmes are directed towards children from vulnerable and disadvantaged families regardless of whether they live in urban or rural areas. Some programmes are funded, managed and monitored entirely by the government. Other programmes may receive financial subsidies from the government but be managed by NGOs or voluntary organisations. Other ECCE programmes rely on school fees and donations and are managed by private organisations.

Typically programmes funded by the government are monitored by the government and there are regular inspections but since there are a variety of funding and management

modes in ECCE programmes across the world, the regulation and monitoring of staff is not straightforward. One usually considers staff qualification / certification and the staff-child ratio. Again the range of different ECCE programmes makes monitoring of staffing difficult. For example, the same qualification requirements may not be mandated in different types of programmes serving the same age group in one country. There could be home-based programmes, community-based programmes, kindergartens and pre-primary classes held in primary schools and the reality is that early childhood educators in more formal settings have higher professional qualifications than those in non-formal settings (e.g., Rao et al., 2012b). Further, teachers in government-funded, public sector programmes are more likely to meet the qualification requirements or be more qualified than those working in profit-making private settings as the latter are more likely to hire teachers with the minimum qualification required to reduce the cost. For the government, provision of systematic regulation and monitoring of staffing issues becomes a difficult task due to variations in programmes (formal and non-formal), age of children served (less stringent staff qualifications are required for educating younger children), funding modes and in operation/management modes.

Another factor that has contributed to this regulatory challenge in developing countries is related to the lack of capacity for monitoring at the country level. There are just not enough adequately qualified personnel to monitor staff quality and supervisory visits are not frequent enough. Further, inspectors tend to go to remote and rural areas less often because of the time it takes to travel there and these early childhood educators need the most support. Another observation is that in many developing country contexts there is not enough follow-up after the inspection or supervisory visit. For example, there should be another visit within a month to ensure the early childhood educators is following advice (if

any) given during the monitoring visit and there should be opportunities for in-service training which are also typically lacking in rural and remote areas. Given the co-existence of a variety of ECCE programmes and levels of staff qualifications, developing an appropriate country-level regulatory structure to monitor staffing issues in different types of ECCE programmes should be a priority.

## Case Studies

### *China*

By integrating early childhood education in its national development plan, China has exerted efforts at both national and regional levels to improve access to and the quality of early childhood education in rural areas by enhancing the qualifications of early childhood educators in those areas.

Context. There has been an expansion of ECCE services in China due to remarkable economic growth and increasing recognition of the importance of ECCE. However, significant urban-rural disparities in both access to services and programme quality exist. It is estimated that around 32 million 3- to 6-year-olds from the rural areas do not have access to any pre-school education (Rao et al., 2012a) and most of these children usually attend only one-year of preschool compared to the three years of preschool education that children living in urban areas typically receive (Wu, Young, and Cai, 2011). Furthermore, programme quality in rural areas is much lower than that in cities and an important contributory factor is the severe shortage of qualified ECCE teachers in the poor and rural areas. In 2008, the ratio of full-time qualified ECCE educators to children in ECCE settings in rural areas was 1:51, while the corresponding ratio in towns / counties and cities was 1:25~28 and 1:16~19, respectively (Zhang and Liu, in press). It is extremely difficult to recruit qualified teachers in rural areas in China for a variety of reasons, including low pay and

status of early childhood educators. Graduates from senior or even junior high schools are employed in rural ECCE programmes and they usually do not have any professional training in ECCE (Li, 2006).

To improve the situation, the Chinese government launched a landmark policy that mandated one year of universal pre-school education in its national development plan and the development of ECCE in rural areas was particularly emphasised in its *National Middle- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)* (Ministry of Education, 2010). The State Council further issued ten specific guidelines in *Suggestions on Current Development of Pre-School Education (Suggestions)* (The State Council, 2010) to facilitate the development of ECCE. The *Suggestions* focus on the remuneration and qualifications of early childhood educators and are considered in the following sections.

*Actions at the National Level.* Facilitating the development of ECCE in rural areas is clearly stated in *the National Middle- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (Plan) (2010-2020)* (Ministry of Education, 2010) and improvement of the qualification of early childhood educators has been seen as one of the 10 key measures to achieve the goal related ECCE in the national development plan (The State Council, 2010). Particular attention has been paid to improve the remuneration, quantity, and quality of the early childhood educators in rural areas.

The *Plan* explicitly states that the wages of the early childhood educators should be increased and that their rights and interests should be protected. Further, recognition of early childhood teachers who have been working in the poor and rural areas in government-funded programmes for a long time is emphasized. With the fall in China's birth rate, there are more qualified teachers for primary and secondary schools than currently required. Hence the *Plan* encourages trained teachers who are no longer required for primary and

secondary education to be retrained to work in kindergartens thereby easing the shortage of early childhood educators.

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance issued a Notice on the *Implementation of the National Training Program for Preschool Teachers* in 2011. Earmarked funds have been distributed on an annual basis since 2011 to provide in-service training to principals, key teachers, and early childhood teachers who have moved from teaching in primary and secondary schools to early year education in the central and western areas of China. Notably, this training is provided for staff in both public (government-funded) and non-public kindergartens providing basic ECCE service in the community (普惠性民办幼儿园). The training is provided by universities that have established ECCE teacher training programmes and three main types of training are provided: (i) short-term intensive training for key teachers; (ii) professional training for the teachers who formerly taught in primary and secondary schools; and (iii) a 3-month full-time programme in a professional training institute or in high quality kindergartens for key early childhood teachers in rural areas in rural areas. At the same time, senior students majoring in ECCE and early childhood teachers in cities and towns have been encouraged to complete internships or teach in kindergartens in rural areas for a few months. When kindergarten teachers from cities and towns take up teaching responsibilities in rural areas, the kindergarten teacher from the rural areas can be released from teaching duties and undertake three-month full-time study. Such a programme is beneficial to both urban and rural early childhood educators. Distance education has been recommended for early childhood educators in rural areas who are not able to undertake full-time training for school-related or personal reasons.

Actions at the Regional Level. Regional governments have been requested to assume major responsibility to enhance access to ECCE in rural areas and its quality. They have been required to make 3-year Action Plans for Preschool Education for each county according to the local situation as stated in the *Suggestions on Current Development of Pre-School Education* (The State Council, 2010). Support for the development of ECCE, including enhancing the remuneration, quantity and qualification of the early childhood teachers in rural areas has also been provided at the provincial and/or city level. For example, vocational institutes take responsibility of teaching training for rural kindergartens in Jiangxi Province. Since 2011, students who want to work in rural kindergartens can request a specified kindergarten to pay tuition fees for a teacher training course. The students are then obliged to work for that kindergarten for a specified amount of time after completing the training (Xu, 2011). Incentives are also offered to the university graduates who are willing to work in the kindergartens in rural areas in Zhangjiakou (Zhou and Wang, 2011). Furthermore, partnerships have been established between model kindergartens and other kindergartens, especially those in rural areas, to improve teachers' teaching skills in Baoding (Chen et al., 2010). Establishing more teacher training institutes for early childhood teachers is an objective of the Three-year Action Plan for Preschool Education in most regions. There are also measures to provide specific financial support and to enhance the working conditions and benefits of early childhood educators, especially those in the poor and rural areas, in different provinces.

Expansion. Both the quantity and quality of early childhood educators in rural areas have been enhanced with the support from both the national and regional institutes. For example, in 2011, around 1,600 kindergarten principals and key teachers in Guizhou Province (Meng and Shi, 2011) and 917 in Gansu (Li, 2011) participated in the National

Training Programme for early childhood educators. Accordingly to the latest report, the Three-year Action Plan has benefited around 10 million preschool-aged children (China Education Network Television, 2014).

*Improving the remuneration, quantity, and quality of rural early education teachers.*

The measures taken by the national and regional governments in China illustrate the ways a country with severe urban-rural disparities to improve the situation. Teachers' remuneration was increased by adopting and implementing relevant legislation. Various approaches to attract university graduates and redundant teachers from other levels of education to serve in the early education sector have increased teacher supply in rural areas. More importantly, professional training is offered at different levels in multiple forms to benefit more teachers in rural areas. This has improved teacher quality and should, in turn, affect programme quality.

The following example from Poland illustrates how teacher quality can be maintained and enhanced in non-traditional ECCE programme that are scaled-up.

*Poland*

*Context.* Like many other countries, Poland has a number of different ECCE programmes including kindergartens, preschool classes and preparatory classes (zero grade). In 1999, the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) for pre-primary education (3- to 6- year-olds) was 49 and this increased to 71 in 2011 (UNESCO, 2013). Preschool education in Poland has been compulsory for 6-year-olds and 5-year-olds from 2004 and 2011, respectively. From September 2015, all 4-year-olds will also have a legal entitlement to ECCE. In 2013, a three-year Bachelor's degree was the minimum level of initial qualification for staff working with older children in centre-based settings (European Commission /

EACEA / Eurydice / Eurostat, 2014) although many teachers want to achieve the Master's level qualification achieved after five years of tertiary education (Urban, 2009).

In 1991, the post-communist national government transferred responsibility for the financial management of preschools to local governments. This was accompanied by a decline in preschool participation. Between 1990 and 1999, the number of preschools in Poland declined by 29% (urban 22%; rural 38%) and preschool enrolment declined by 16% (urban 14%; rural 24%) (Levitas, Golinowsha and Herczynski, 2001). In 2002, there were no preschools in 869 of 2156 rural municipalities (Ogrodzinska, n.d., Rosciszewska-Wozniak and Karwowska-Struczyk, nd) and in 2003 the Comenius Foundation for Child Development initiated the Where There are No Preschools (WTANP) project to provide high quality preschool education for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in small, rural communities.

WTANP Programme. It was felt that the traditional kindergarten was not suited to rural municipalities and the WTANP programme is based on the "itinerant teacher" model from Portugal and the Polish rural preschool centre model from the 1920s (Ogrodzinska, n.d; Urban, 2009). The programme is noteworthy because of the following features: mode of service (an alternative form of preschool education); method of teacher selection; teacher training component; system of quality assurance; partnership with other stakeholders; and emphasis on both teacher quantity and quality.

Preschool centres were set up in existing buildings in villages and operated for 9 to 20 hours a week. There were 10-15 children in a group, managed by one teacher who was assisted by a parent. The advantage of this approach was that it provided employment to preschool teachers who were unemployed because of the closing down of preschools in rural areas. This comprehensive approach specifically catered for rural communities and

included: training modules for teachers, work plans for teachers, educational materials for teachers and has a system of monitoring which includes monthly supervision on pedagogy and enforcement of teaching standards in centres (Urban, 2009). Initial and in-service training was individualized and there was an emphasis on continuous evaluation and improvement.

Expansion. In Phase I (2002-2004), the program was implemented in 20 municipalities and 50 centres served 500 children. The programme was funded by the Comenius and Bernard Van Leer Foundations. In Phase II (2004-2007), the Ministry of Education supported a pilot programme with 900 centres and 11,000 children in 300 municipalities based on the WTANP model. The programme was funded by the European Social Fund and Polish government. By Phase III (2007-2013), there were preschools in 90% of the municipalities as a result of the WTANP programme.

Evaluation. Indicators of programme efficacy that have been cited include (i) improved access to preschool education for disadvantaged children; (ii) better school readiness of children who have attended the programme; (iii) public satisfaction with the programme (Rosciszewska-Wozniak, 2010; Urban, 2009). Further the programme is now supported by the European Social Fund and the Polish government and has inspired other NGO programmes. The pioneering WTANP has contributed to the recognition of alternative forms of preschool education and the WTANP curriculum was awarded a first prize for best preschool curriculum by the Ministry of Education and the innovative and simple way of recording teaching and learning processes was recognized (Rosciszewska-Wozniak, 2010). The Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the EU considered the WTANP initiative as a model programme to be spread in the EU countries (Rosciszewska-Wozniak

and Karwowska-Struczyk, nd). That stated, the Polish teachers' union has been critical of so-called alternate forms of preschool education (Urban, 2009).

*Maintaining teaching quality in the context of rapid expansion.* The WTANP project illustrates how you can increase access to preschool education and maintain teacher quality. All selected educators had professional qualifications to teach in preschools but they received an additional 100 hours of initial training (Ogrodzinska, nd) and there is a quality monitoring system where each centre is visited once a month. The Comenius Academy has 27 trainers who have provided training to about 1,300 teachers a year, in recent years (Rosciszewska-Wozniak, 2010). The system of quality assurance (standards, mentoring system, and internal evaluation) for the WTANP centres has been pivotal to maintaining programme quality

### *East Africa*

The Aga Khan Foundation has been successfully supporting teacher preparation for over almost 30 years, in early childhood education programmes that operate across East Africa. Recent reviews of these programmes suggest that they have resulted in some of the highest quality, affordable, culturally appropriate and sustainable preschools in the region (Mwaura and Mohamed, 2008). Through its early childhood programmes, the Aga Khan Foundation is committed to working with members of the communities in which children are raised, supporting the Foundation's education philosophy that "(E)ducation is most relevant and inspiring when it connects young people to the world around them" (Aga Khan Academies, 2014) as well as its more general belief that "a humane, sustainable environment must reflect the choices made by people themselves of how they live and wish to improve their prospects in harmony with their environment" (Aga Khan Developmental Network, 2014).

In 2012, the Aga Khan Foundation supported over 230 community-based Madrasa preschools in Kenya, Uganda and Zanzibar (Aga Khan Foundation, 2013). Developed in the 1980s, in response to severe disadvantage experienced by Muslim children in disadvantaged communities, the Madrasa ECD Programmes have expanded to cater for over 90,000 children from both Muslim and Christian backgrounds (Aga Khan Foundation, 2013).

The Madrasa preschools are coordinated by Madrasa Resource Centres (MRCs), located in each country. These MRCs have collectively trained over 4,500 teachers working in a range of contexts, including Madrasa preschools as well as other preschools and a number of primary school teachers. The Madrasa ECD Programme has received considerable research interest, including a tracer study conducted in the early years of the programme (Wamahiu, 1995) and more recent evaluation studies that have compared outcomes among children who have attended Madrasa preschools with children who have attended others types of preschooling (Mwaura, Sylva and Malmberg, 2008), as well as longitudinal assessment of MRC attendance on later cognitive development (Malmberg, Mwaura and Sylva, 2011). Each of these studies has concluded both that quality of the Madrasa preschools is relatively high in comparison with other preschool programmes, and that children who attend the Madrasa preschools experience long-term benefits in terms of cognitive outcomes.

Management and governance of the Madrasa ECD Programme includes overall administration by staff at the Aga Khan Foundation regional level, as well as by MRCs in each country, which constitute a project director and a Madrasa national board. The MRCs are responsible for coordinating a series of 'sensitizing' activities with communities where Madrasa preschool programmes are introduced, with the goals of mobilizing, motivating and empowering community members to participate in their children's early education. As

part of this series of activities, consultation with community members includes listening to community priorities and assessing existing capacity in order to ensure that preschools are technically, financially and organizationally sustainable (Mwauza and Mohamed, 2008). This initial process can take up to one year to complete, and involves the community not only in activities that are designed to increase awareness of the benefits of early childhood education, but also in the role of community members in more widely supporting the well-being and growth of young children (Mwauza and Mohamed, 2008).

Once a community has expressed and demonstrated commitment to the preschool programmes by, for example, providing a structure for the preschool, female members of the community are selected to be trained as teachers for the preschools. Since the establishment of the Madrasa preschools in the 1980s, training has gradually increased from three months full-time training to a 2- year programme that involved one month of initial orientation, followed by 78 weeks of work-based training, followed by the most recent pattern of three 3-week sessions (total nine weeks), with one year of on-going work-based support and training (Evans and Bartlett, 2008).

Underlying principles of both the teacher education and curricula associated with Madrasa preschools include a concern with:

- Building on positive local cultural values, languages and beliefs (training focuses on supporting staff to understand and appreciate local cultures, particularly in terms of needs and priorities of families and communities; local stories and languages; child-rearing practices; able to recognise and build on locally-available resources – human and material)

- Nurturing skilled trainers knowledgeable in ECCE theory and evidence, but importantly, also in appropriate practices (promoting links with families and parents; knowledgeability about other services including health and primary education)
- Providing multiple opportunities for guided practice and development of skills.

The insights offered by this example of teacher training relate to the considerable extent to which teacher education is connected to the local context, in response to the specific needs and goals of the Madrasa ECCE programmes. When teacher education is far removed from the daily, lived realities of teachers (as is the usual case for teachers who are working in resources-constrained, or remote environments), it is less likely to result in relevant training that supports high quality provision. In this case, the teacher education offered involves a carefully planned combination of introductions to theoretical approaches to early childhood care and education, as well as more contextually-specific guidance. The training also places considerable emphasis on on-going mentorship and professional development. According to Rashid and Bartlett (2009), key features of the Madrasa programmes are that the teacher education involved both centre and field-based training; teacher trainees are strongly supported through on-going, regular mentorship visits; teacher education includes a strong focus on providing teachers with skills in materials development, using locally-available materials and resources, and the preschools are strongly supported by a local management committee that has strong links with the community.

Of particular interest to this report is the finding that specific aspects of the training that teachers received as part of their enrolment in MRC programmes (for example, training in the use of locally available, low-cost materials within a child-centred programme)

appeared to be related to positive outcomes for children (Malmberg, Mwaura and Sylva, 2011). This finding supports the contemporary argument that early childhood programmes, hence teacher preparation, must be grounded in and informed by local contexts.

Other than the strong evidence of child outcomes that have been reported as a result of the Madrasa preschool programmes, their orientation also fits with the post-2105 focus on sustainable development goals, through their focus on cultural and traditional values as central to effective early childhood practice. As Bi Swafiya Said, the First Trainer, Director and Co-Developer of the Madrasa Programme, has explained: “Many early childhood programmes are initiated without the understanding of the communities’ actual needs or consideration of culture, religious beliefs or traditional values. As a result, many communities do not participate in the programmes as fully as expected.” (Evans and Bartlett, 2008, p.6).

This next case is of interest because it provides an example of the potential offered by collaborations between NGOs, government bodies and communities in supporting teacher preparation.

### *Brazil*

Brazilian policy indicates a strong, ostensive commitment to the provision of formalised ECCE. In 2006, changes to the Constitution resulted in Early Childhood Education (ECE) being redefined to refer to all children aged between birth and five years. In 2009, the formalisation of ECE became further institutionalised, when preschooling for 4- to 5- year-olds became part of the compulsory education system. As part of a raft of targets set for the education system, Brazil achieved an enrolment rate of 80% for 4- to 5- year- olds in 2010. However, as Yamaguchi (2013) suggests, significant regional disparities are hidden behind this aggregated statistic. In 2008, while the rate of enrolment for children living in the

country's highest income bracket was 94%, the rate for children living in the lowest income bracket was 73% (many of these living in rural areas of the country) (Yamaguchi, 2013).

Also included in the reforms were targets related to upgrading teacher qualifications. The 2001 National Education Plan (Plano Nacional de Educação: PNE) included a target of achieving a 70% rate of licensing among early childhood teachers, with a minimum of higher education qualifications. These were ambitious goals, considering that in the year 2000, less than 20% of early childhood teachers were educated to higher education level and holding appropriate teaching licenses. As of 2007, this rate had been increased to 43% (Yamaguchi, 2013). Once again, these aggregated data hide regional disparities.

Despite the considerable commitment shown by the government of Brazil in terms of policy and targets, there remains a high level of concern about early childhood education in the country, particularly with regard to ensuring high quality provision, in both rural and urban settings (Kramer, 2014). Various commentators and authors have for some time expressed concern about the quality of ECCE programmes in Brazil, related to factors including disparities across urban-rural, community and ethnics divides; deficiencies in early childhood preparation and a general lack of government investment in ECCE (Azevedo de Aguiar, Barker, Nascimento and Segundo, 2007; Education International, 2010; Kramer, 2014). In partial response to these concerns, the World Bank, in collaboration with the Mauricio Sirotsky Sobrinha Foundation and UNESCO, launched the Millennium Fund for Early Childhood Development in Brazil in 2003 (Terra & Schneider, 2007). Among the various goals outlined for this project, provision of in-service training and professional development for early childhood educators is a priority and some innovative approaches to supporting early childhood educators have developed as a result of this partnership.

According to Azevedo de Aguiar, Barker, Nascimento and Segundo (2007), the project is underpinned by a concern with promoting the status and self-esteem of early childhood educators, by not only providing professional development to educators themselves, but also providing institutional structures and training opportunities through which these educators are supported in achieving quality ECCE. This involves building partnerships and, particularly, raising awareness regarding the importance of ECCE and early childhood practitioners among community members and programme administrators:

“The dynamics of the Millennium Fund for Early Childhood should be perceived as a series of concentric circles. Qualification of ECCE professionals is both the core issue and the starting point...ECCE professionals become protagonists of their own professional change and development.....having the active and effective support of the Local Council (Paiva et al., 2009, p. 37)”.

The project is centred around “Educational Boards”, which target professionals working in philanthropic or “communitarian” early childhood settings, and are funded and managed cooperatively by “strategic partners” (external funding bodies) and “local partners” (ECCE institutions and local suppliers / contributors to the local Education Boards, and Municipal staff). These “Boards” are essentially model ECCE classrooms where early childhood practitioners gather regularly for professional sharing sessions and workshops. Paiva et al (2007) describe one such Board, where professionals from up to five different ECCE centres, facilitated by a trained ECD Technical Coordinator, met at the Board every week for 4 hours to discuss written reflections on their teaching and thoughts about pedagogical approaches that had been taught as part of the programme. These professionals met weekly over a period of 12 months, completing a total of 360 hours of studies and professional practice. Studies were supported by a series of instructional

materials and a website dedicated to the project. According to an analysis of the Boards presented by Paiva et al (2007, p. 37), these Boards are “now already institutionalized and perceived as a public space for permanent in-service training and other educational events to be held in the community”.

The insights to innovation offered by this concept of Educational Boards relate (i) to the concept of partnership and collaboration between agencies that underpins this approach; and (ii) to the approach of mentorship and on-going professional development that is becoming increasingly acknowledged in teacher education, and also reflected in the Aga Khan Foundation case study described earlier. In-depth studies of this initiative are required in order to assess their long-term impact and sustainability, but in the meantime the approaches described represent important efforts to address issues associated with cost and provision of teacher education that have been previously mentioned elsewhere in discussions of challenges associated with raising teaching quality and qualifications of early childhood educators in resource-constrained environments (Pearson and Voon, 2011). They also, importantly, fit with contemporary approaches to teacher education that are espoused in better-resourced, Westernised contexts, where the importance of shared teacher reflection, dialogue and in-service professional development are increasingly espoused among leading educators (Darling-Hammond, 2012).

### Conclusions: Key Priorities for Policies Related to a Post-2015 Agenda

This report considered the evolution of policies and strategies on early childhood education teachers and carers from the perspective of achieving EFA Goal 1. The following conclusions and recommendations are made against the preparation for the post-2015 development agenda.

- There has been an increase in access to ECCE and increase in the number of early childhood educators since 2000. A corollary of this is that there has been an increase in the number of institutes providing pre-service training for early childhood educators all over the world (ILO, 2012). **Hence efforts have been exerted to enhance early childhood teacher quality since 2000.**
  
- Most teachers in rural, remote and / or disadvantaged areas still have no opportunities to receive professional training before they enter the workforce and those working with younger children also lack professional training. Further, in-service training opportunities for the early childhood educators are rare. Clearly both in-service and pre-service training needs should be addressed. The contents in the training package should also be carefully selected, especially for intensive short-term training programmes. **Government should therefore provide pre-service and in-service training opportunities for early childhood educators, especially for those working in the disadvantaged areas and those working with younger children.**
  
- While the benefits of ECCE have been accepted, not enough policy attention (and funding) has been given early childhood education by governments. Governments have not typically enforced a minimum qualification requirement for entrance into the early childhood workforce or provided guidelines for early childhood teacher education curriculum when training is offered by multiple providers. **Governments should therefore stipulate minimum qualification requirements for early childhood educators.**
  
- There is still no parity in terms of qualifications of early childhood education compared to teachers in primary and secondary schools. This is true in both many developed and almost all developing countries. **Enhancement of early childhood teacher quality and**

**achieving qualification and wage parity between early childhood and primary school teachers should be prioritised.**

- There is a shortage of qualified teachers in the poor and rural areas. It is not enough to simply hire more teachers – they have to be well-trained and supported in the early childhood education setting. Further, an urban-rural disparity in terms of the availability of qualified early childhood educators is evident in both developed and developing countries contexts. Hence, **governments and non-governmental organisations should implement context-sensitive strategies, at both national and regional levels, to increase the quantity and quality of the early childhood educators in the poor and rural areas.**
- The regulation and monitoring of the quality of staff in early childhood settings needs is challenging given the different forms of early childhood programmes in a country as well as financial and human resource constraints. **Government should establish contextually relevant mechanisms to monitor teacher quality and take appropriate follow-up actions as necessary.**
- Promising methods of enhancing teacher quantity and quality were highlighted in case studies from China, Poland, East Africa and Brazil. **Evidence-based methods should be scaled-up and applied to similar contexts.**

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