Educating the Young Child 5
Advances in Theory and Research, Implications for Practice

Sue Clark Wortham *Editor*

Common Characteristics and Unique Qualities in Preschool Programs

Global Perspectives in Early Childhood Education

Common Characteristics and Unique Qualities in Preschool Programs

EDUCATING THE YOUNG CHILD

Volume 5

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Sue Clark Wortham
Editor

Common Characteristics and Unique Qualities in Preschool Programs

Global Perspectives in Early Childhood Education

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Preface

There has been a growing need for information on quality preschools and childcare programs in an age of growing numbers of preschool programs around the world, especially during the last two decades. International reports such as those issued by the World Health Organization and UNESCO (see Chap.2) documented the relationship between quality early childhood programs on children's health and success in school. Even as early childhood educators are seeking tools to improve program quality, emerging countries are establishing preschool programs for the first time. They are seeking guidance on how to develop quality early childhood programs in individual regions or within an entire country.

The interest in information on quality programs led to two actions to address the issue. First, an international symposium was sponsored by two international organizations: The World Organization for Early Childhood Programs (OMEP) and the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI). The symposium of early childhood experts from more than 30 countries held outside Zurich, Switzerland resulted in the development of basic global guidelines that described indicators of quality in various aspects of preschool programs. Second, ACEI developed an assessment based on the Global Guidelines titled the ACEI Global Guidelines Assessment (GGA). With these accomplishments, the stage was set for two types of efforts using the GGA.

One effort that is ongoing is the validation of the GGA for existing programs to use to self-assess their progress and plan for improvement. The second effort has been to use the Global Guidelines to help locations that are beginning programs for the first time to learn what quality characteristics are desired in preschool programs. Many of the chapters in this book include data on the process of administering the GGA that can be used for analysis in the validation process. Other chapters focus on the initiation of programs and how they are unique to the culture and educational practices of a country (see Chap.1). The chapter authors either are American authors who work internationally, immigrants from another country who have immigrated to the United States and have continued their ties to their birth country, or citizens of another country who participate in the work with other authors. The chapters give us insight into how the early childhood programs in a country are affected by the

language, culture, government, and history. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the book and prepares the readers for the many stories woven into the chapters.

Beyond Chap. 1, the book is divided into six parts. **Part I: Background**, contains Chap. 2 that explains the work completed toward establishing reliability and validity of the GGA.

The following five parts of the book generally follow the topics covered in the GGA. **Part II: School Environments**, includes chapters that focus on unique environment characteristics that are affected by program approaches in individual countries. **Part III: Curriculum Content and Pedagogy**, focuses on unique characteristics in the curriculum of preschool programs in individual countries, while **Part IV: Children with Special Needs**, addresses how countries serve children with atypical development. **Part V: The Early Childhood Educator**, describes commonalities and differences in educator roles between countries. **Part VI: Family, School, and Community Partnerships**, discusses efforts of very different countries to establish relationships between parents, community elements, and the school that will benefit the children. Chapter 1 extends the information and makeup of this book with more information on the six parts and individual chapters in each section.

Sue C. Wortham

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Chapter 1
Looking at Early Childhood Programs from a Global Perspective

Sue C. Wortham

Introduction

This book tells many stories about early childhood education in many countries. It started with an idea that evolved and expanded into more ideas about understanding early childhood education in a global setting. Another story is about how a set of basic guidelines for early childhood education became an assessment tool for self-evaluation of early childhood programs that have been used in various countries in different languages. A parallel story is how the guidelines were used to introduce quality early childhood programs in other countries. And, finally, the book tells stories about early childhood educators and very young children in diverse locations, speaking many languages, representing unique programs, and reflecting local cultures. This is the most important feature of the book—the children, the teachers, the families, and the different cultures. Nevertheless, the first step is to describe how an idea became an international early childhood collaboration among early childhood specialists representing individual countries.

Origins of Interest in a Global Understanding of Early Childhood Programs

Early childhood educators in the twentieth century were most interested in the nature of early childhood programs within their own state, region or nation. Toward the end of the century when perceptions became more globalized, there was a growing awareness of preschool programs in other countries. More importantly, interest was growing about the nature of these programs and developing countries trying to begin programs were seeking guidance on how to evaluate the quality of their programs. This chapter describes an international effort to begin the process of addressing these

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interests and needs by developing global minimum standards that could be useful for early childhood educators and caregivers in various regions of the world.

The names of early childhood professionals who have worked on this effort from 1997 to 2010 are too numerous to mention. The accomplishments of many appear in the chapters that follow. However, the original idea came from Dr. Leah Adams, then President of the United States Committee of the World Organization for Early Childhood Education also known as OMEP. Dr. Adams approached Sue Wortham, then president of the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) with her ideas for developing guidelines for early childhood education from a global perspective. Her thoughts were that although many developed countries had national standards, many other countries were just beginning the process of establishing preschools and would welcome having some basic guidelines for program quality. After the initial meeting in 1997, both OMEP and ACEI agreed to support the effort and planning for developing global guidelines began.

Planning an International Symposium to Develop Global Guidelines

Between 1997 and 1999, the ACEI and OMEP organizations began discussing and planning for a symposium to develop global guidelines. Both organizations had planning committees to accomplish the following steps: (1) Ruschlikon, Switzerland was selected for the meeting; (2) both groups contributed ideas for the organization of the symposium; and (3) processes for inviting delegate applications, determining keynote speakers, and procedures for processing and housing delegates in hotels in the Ruschlikon area. Leah Adams and Ulla Grob-Mendes co-chaired the OMEP efforts, while Sue Wortham headed the planning at ACEI. The International Symposium for Early Childhood Education and Care in the twenty first Century was held on July 5–8, 1999 at the Gottlieb Duttweiler Institute at Ruschlikon, Switzerland. From 29 countries 83 participants attended and participated in the development of the *Global Guidelines for Early Childhood Education and Care in the 21st Century*.

The Organization and Work of the Symposium

The symposium was conducted over a period of four days to investigate the possibilities of global agreement on basic guidelines for quality in preschool programs. Working groups of 9 to 12 delegates were assigned one of the following document categories:

- Overall Philosophy, Goals, and Policies
- Environment and Physical Space
- Curriculum Content and Pedagogy
- Early Childhood Educators and Caregivers

- Partnership with Families and Communities
- Young Children with Special Needs
- Accountability, Supervision, and Management

As the groups worked together and spent periods of reporting their progress to the participants as a whole, they were able to come to agreement on the most basic components of early childhood education. The groups gave each other feedback and suggestions for improving their work. During the course of the symposium, several insights emerged. The delegates, regardless of nationality, were strong advocates for children and their families. Their shared visions for the world's children included the involvement of families and communities in the care and education of the children, coordination of resources, and recognition of family and cultural diversity. They also believed in equitable services for all children.

Outcomes of the Symposium

The documents produced by the Working Groups were extensive. The contents of the seven papers overlapped in many areas of content. Common concerns of all delegates emerged, regardless of which topic the group had been asked to address. After the end of the symposium a working team of editors reviewed the documents and worked to eliminate duplication and to provide a more concise summary of the work produced by the working groups. By the end of 1999, a document was produced by ACEI and OMEP titled *Early Childhood Education and Care in the 21st Century: Global Guidelines and Papers From an International Symposium Hosted by the World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) and the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI)* (Association for Childhood Education International and World Organization for Early Childhood Education (ACEI/OMEP) 1999).

The global guidelines were originally designed to: (1) provide the bases for developing a concise list of statement to be distributed to national government leaders; (2) serve as a catalyst for policy discussions and curriculum development; and (3) to guide early childhood educators in self assessing their own child care and preschool programs (Barbour et al. 2004). In reality, much of the first work was conducted at grassroot levels and later was recognized at national levels.

Development of the Global Guidelines Assessment and Applications of the Global Guidelines

A first draft of an assessment tool was piloted in two early childhood centers in San Antonio, Texas and in California. Subsequently, Professor Maria Olivia Herrera piloted a Spanish translation at two sites in Concepcion, Chile. In 2001 the assessment was further piloted in Los Angeles, North Carolina, Nigeria, South Texas, Beijing,

and Botswana. The first pilot studies revealed that there were variations in interpretations of guidelines statements. In addition, some of the indicators were found to be unclear, and most importantly, there were many areas of overlap still remaining between the categories of the assessment.

At the 2002 ACEI International Conference, a working group reviewed proposed revisions and contributed additional suggestions to improve the assessment. The refined instrument was formatted to incorporate space for participants to insert information relevant to site self assessments. In October 2002 the ACEI Executive Board approved the appointment of a Task Force for Global Guidelines in Early Childhood Education. This group has continued the work of publicizing, disseminating, and implementing the assessment now titled the *ACEI Global Guidelines Assessment* (GGA). A more formal pilot study was conducted in 2007 and 2008 in four countries to begin the process of developing validity and reliability (Sandell et al. 2010). Evaluation of the results of that study continue. Meantime, a multitude of additional studies have been conducted and reported at ACEI conferences. (See also Chap. 2.) The GGA has been translated into eight languages in addition to English. Translations in Spanish, French, Chinese, Greek, Korean, Russian, Italian, and Swahili can be found on the ACEI website at acei.org.

Using the Global Guidelines to Initiate Early Childhood Programs

Although the major body of work stemming from the Global Guidelines has evolved through the use of the GGA, some important initiatives have begun to assist in starting preschool programs in developing countries. A first step in introducing preschool programs is to conduct training for future preschool teachers. Workshops for teacher training in developing countries based on the Global Guidelines have been conducted in Haiti, Guatemala, Kenya, Uganda, Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Sierra Leone (Fig. 1.1).

As a result of all of the accumulated work on using the GGA and the Global Guidelines for 10 years, there is abundant information about the countries that have participated. The preschool programs in these countries have many common qualities found in the GGA, but they also have unique characteristics and qualities that help us to understand the effects of location, geography, weather, and family conditions on how young children develop and learn. The stories to be told about countries in this book include some of the common qualities they share but also the unique qualities of each individual country's preschool program.

Overview of the Book

Common Characteristics and Unique Qualities in Preschool Programs: Global Perspectives in Early Childhood Education is divided into five parts:

Fig. 1.1 Three young boys in rural Guatemala. (Photo courtesy of Marshal Wortham)

- Part I: Background
- Part II: School Environments
- Part III: Curriculum Content and Pedagogy
- Part IV: Children with Special Needs
- Part V: The Early Childhood Educator
- Part VI: Family, School, and Community Partnerships

Part II to Part VI parallel the categories of the global guidelines and the Global Guidelines Assessment (GGA). The chapters reflect the challenges and opportunities that impact how early childhood programs have been organized. Many of the chapters also reflect the use of the GGA in an individual country.

Part I Background

As has been described throughout this chapter, the book reflects the work of many early childhood educators across the globe to establish basic standards for quality early childhood education programs. Over a period of ten years since the GGA was developed, it has been used in nine languages.

Chapter 2, "Cross-Cultural Collaboration Research to Improve Early Childhood Education" written by Bergen and Hardin reports on the results of a continuing effort to examine the psychometric properties of the GGA, including its reliability and validity for assessing program quality within and across different countries. The chapter also provides an overview of other international research that has been done previously, as well as country-initiated efforts to enhance the quality of early childhood programs.

Part II: School Environments

This section addresses the preschool environment to include indoor and outdoor spaces. The need for a physically and psychologically safe environment is stressed. The arrangement of the space, resources needed for the space, and opportunities should be culturally relevant and provide opportunities for exploration, play, and practice of life skills. The three chapters in this section address school environments from the poorest poverty areas to well-designed centers in both Africa and Italy.

Chapter 3, “From Montessori to Culturally Relevant Schools Under the Trees in Kenya” authored by Mbugua describes how Kenya distinguishes itself from other sub-Saharan African countries with a well-established system of early childhood development and education (ECDE). This chapter discusses how different environmental, economic, and socio-cultural circumstances in Kenya affect how programs are designed and preschools are conducted. The author provides a brief historical overview of early childhood educational contexts in Kenya and how preschool teachers meet minimum standards of a quality program using *Guidelines for Early Childhood Development in Kenya* with an African approach. Specific focus is given to the diverse and contrasting programs settings for early childhood care and education from the affluent city suburbs to the rural agrarian farms and the arid and semiarid areas (ASAL) of Kenya.

Chapter 4, “Preschool Environments in Rural West Africa” describes how preschool programs have been initiated in West African countries. A small charity, World Children’s Relief (WCR) encouraged rural school districts to establish preschool programs in government and community schools. Training in early childhood education was provided to prepare teacher and administrators to add preschool programs in their schools. Preschool classrooms have been started in small storerooms, abandoned classrooms, and temporary shacks constructed of millet stalks until more adequate classrooms can be acquired. WCR built model classrooms in two countries to serve as models. Despite environmental challenges that continue, preschool teachers are implementing learning centers, small and large learning groups, and using a constructivist approach to curriculum and instruction within the spaces that they have (Fig. 1.2).

In Chap. 5, “Kindergarten Environments in Reggio Emilia, Bologna, Modena, and Parma, Italy,” the authors, Stegelin and Cecconi, discuss how kindergarten environments for young children 3 to 5 years of age support the early learning experience. Common and contrasting environmental features of private, state-sponsored and Reggio-inspired kindergarten settings are described. Results of a study of classroom environments using the GGA in these three kindergarten types is presented.

Part III: Curriculum Content and Pedagogy

Curriculum refers to the learning experiences and routines that make up the day in the preschool classroom. It is a plan that reflects the philosophy and culture of the area

Fig. 1.2 Two first grade classrooms meet in a single room in a war damaged school in Sierra Leone. (Photo courtesy of Marshal Wortham)

or country. The curriculum is child-centered and stems from the belief that children are competent. The curriculum focuses on the whole child and includes all categories of development. The chapters in this section reflect the settings and cultures of three countries.

Chapter 6: "Kindergarten in Russia's Far East: The Effect of Climate" is authored by Sandell and Victorovna Klypa. It presents the nature of quality in early childhood programs within the unique economic, demographic, and cultural influences that infuse early childhood programs in Russia's Far East. The Global Guidelines Assessment was used as a framework for looking at characteristics of quality in the curriculum and pedagogy among early childhood programs in that region.

Chapter 7, "Preserving Cultural Heritages in Korea" is authored by Lee, Kang, and Hong. They discuss how Koreans have been influenced by western cultures, mostly the American culture. Early childhood educators have become concerned about the prevalence of Disney characters and other elements of American practice in Korea, especially after the emphasis of learning English has become a critical part of Korean education. In response, Korean early childhood education programs have stressed preserving Korean heritage that is being lost in a global environment. Korea's early childhood education in Korea is focusing on holistic development, including appreciating the traditional cultures.

Part IV: Children With Special Needs

During the past 20 years, numerous international initiatives have promoted services for children with special needs. However, many developing countries do not have the resources to serve children, particularly in rural areas. When studies using the ACEI Global Guidelines Assessment were conducted in various regions of the world during the last 6 years, the section on children with special needs reflected the dire need for

additional services in developing countries compared to industrialized countries. In the chapters that follow, information is provided on current special education services for young children in nine countries.

Chapter 8, "International Perspectives on Services for Young Children with Special Needs," sets the stage for this part of the book. The authors, Hardin, Hung, and Mereoiu, provide an overview of recent initiatives impacting special education services. They discuss differences in cultural belief and value systems and how they influence policies and services related to children with special needs. Results of two international studies using the ACEI global Guidelines Assessment will be discussed focusing on services for young children with special needs.

Mexico is the first example of a program for children with special needs. In Chap. 9, "New Visions for Inclusive Preschool Education in Mexico," the authors, Fletcher and Romero-Contreras, trace the history of services for children with special needs to the present inclusion approach. After describing the nature of educational policies in Mexico, the evolution of special education is explained. The identification of children with special needs, the process of referral, and additional health needs are discussed. Steps to an inclusion model included teacher training and ongoing seminars and courses are provided for teachers. Regardless of these efforts, only 50 % of children with special needs are receiving services. Other challenges include variations in teaching quality, and lack of resources to implement inclusion for many children with special needs.

Early childhood education has a prominent place in China's goals for economic and educational success. With regards to serving children with special learning needs and/or disabilities within early childhood centers, inconsistencies exist in access to programs, service provided for children with exceptionalities, educational environments, and levels of educational attainment and training for teachers. In Chap. 10, "Early Childhood Special Education in China: Advocacy and Practice," the authors, Trube, Wenge Li, and Yan Ping Chi, present information about advocacy efforts of early childhood educators and researchers, government leaders, and families of children in the Peoples Republic of China. Interviews and observations compiled by university professors and early childhood special education teacher educators are presented. The role of advocates in creating enduring bonds on behalf of young children with special learning needs is highlighted.

Part V: The Early Childhood Educator

This part of the book addresses the qualities preschool educators need to participate and promote an appropriate preschool program. Beyond the differences between child-care settings and preschool programs, levels of education can vary widely within and among countries. Early childhood educators from three countries located in different continents are discussed in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 11, "Administrators, Teachers, and Niñeras: Professional Partnerships for Quality in Guatemala" written by Belinda Hardin and Maria Albertina deCastenada

provides information on diverse preschool programs in that country. Guatemala has three types of early care and education services, including programs operated by the Ministry of Education, The Secretary of Social Well-Being, the Presidency of the Republic, and private programs. Each type of program is discussed to provide a basic understanding of Guatemalan early childhood services. The preschool programs are staffed by administrators and teachers with university degrees and niñeras who have less, more informal training. The relationships between the three levels of educators are described in this chapter, including challenges and success that impact the quality of early care and education services.

Early childhood teachers in Slovakia face different kinds of challenges. Slovakia is a relatively new country, formerly part of Czechoslovakia and the "Eastern Bloc". After the Iron Curtain was torn down in 1989, Slovakia became an independent country and a member of the European Union in 2004. The new country went through important political changes with consequences in the field of education, mainly school reform. In Chap. 12, "Early Childhood Teachers in Slovakia," the authors, Mbugua, Pupala, and Petrova, who are teacher trainers in Slovakia, discuss the history of the education of early childhood teachers in Slovakia and the process of transforming the system of undergraduate and life-long education of teachers during the last decade. The chapter also describes how pre-primary and primary school teachers are working in their programs today in Slovakia and the new challenges preschools and primary schools have to face as a result of the school reform.

In Chap. 13, "Teachers of Dual Language Children in China," Trube, Yang, and Zhang discuss English immersion programs in China. These programs for young Chinese dual-language learners are currently offered in over 30 experimental kindergartens servicing children between the ages of 3 and 5 in various regions of China. The Global Guidelines for Early Care and Education in the 21st Century, introduced to educators in Chinese kindergartens in 2001, and later the Global Guidelines Assessment (GGA), presented in 2004 contribute a framework for looking at components of Ell programs sponsored by the China, Canada, and United States English Immersion (CCUEI) research collaborative. This chapter presents interviews with anecdotes and observations by Chinese early childhood educators and caregivers working in CCUEI experimental kindergartens. Attention is given to the GGA with emphasis on environments, curriculum content and pedagogy, teacher preparation, and partnerships with families and communities to create significant interpersonal relationships in support of dual language children in China.

Part VI: Family, School, and Community Partnerships

The care and education of preschool children is a shared responsibility between the family, school, and community. This section of the Global Guidelines Assessment (GGA) promotes positive relationships in the shared responsibility. In the chapters that follow, two very different types of preschool systems are described in terms of the nature of the strengths of their relationships.

In Chap. 14, “Family and village Partnerships in Rural Schools in Senegal and Burkina Faso,” Wortham describes children and families in rural West Africa. Children in rural areas of Senegal and Burkina Faso live very much the same way as they have for centuries in family compounds. Subsistence farming is the way of life for families. Electricity and running water are not available to family homes far out into the Savannah. There are very strong partnerships between the schools, families, and villagers. Schools are both government sponsored, and initiated by communities. Villagers build community schools. Mosques and churches located in the villages are a strong community element, as are the village leaders. Schools have committees that are composed of educators, parents, and village chiefs and elders. This chapter describes the nature of the partnerships in Burkina Faso and Senegal.

In Chap. 15, “Weaving Relationships Between Preschools, Families, and Communities: The Nurturing Connections to the Reggio Emilia Region of Italy,” Stegelin and Cecconi discuss partnerships in a European industrialized country. The Reggio Emilia approach is known for important contributions to early childhood education and to the lives of children, families, and communities. The authors describe the importance of nurturing connections in the development of enduring relationships that develop between children, teachers, parents, and community members in the Reggio-inspired schools of northern Italy. Reflective the family-oriented Italian culture, these nurturing connections provide strength, resilience, hope, and adaptability to families and schools that are responding to cultural and economic changes in this region of Italy.

Conclusion

The final chapter reviews the five sections of the book that reflect the five categories of the ACEI Global Guidelines Assessment. Comparisons and contrasts between programs in each category are discussed as well as information across sections that enrich the information presented by the authors. The unique qualities of programs in different cultures are featured as well as how the heritage of countries is reflected in their educational practices.

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Part I
Background

Chapter 2
Cross-Cultural Collaboration Research to Improve Early Childhood Education

Doris Bergen and Belinda Hardin

Introduction

Internationally, there is a growing need for quality early childhood care and education as greater numbers of families migrate to urban areas and more mothers enter the workforce. However, the programs available for young children vary greatly in quality. A number of reports have stressed the undeniable link between quality caregiving and young children's survival and health (Meyers 2006; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2006, 2010; World Health Organization 2004) as well as their social, emotional, cognitive, language, and physical development (Belsky et al. 2007; Burchinal et al. 2010). Thus, it is important to increase efforts to assist early childhood educators throughout the world to engage in evaluative actions and to reflect on those evaluations to improve their program quality.

International initiatives emphasizing the need for quality ECCE services have gained momentum in recent years. For example, in 2000 representatives from 164 countries reaffirmed their commitment to improving the accessibility and quality of education worldwide by adopting the *Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments* (UNESCO 2000). The Dakar Framework contains six goals, the first of which is: "... expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children" (UNESCO 2000). The Dakar Framework continues to focus attention of policy makers and professionals on strategies for increasing and improving ECCE services. One response to international concerns about the quality of ECCE services was the Association for Childhood Education International's (ACEI) development

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of the ACEI Global Guidelines Assessment (GGA), an ECCE program assessment designed to help early childhood professionals examine and improve the quality of their program services throughout the world, particularly in developing countries (Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) 2003, 2006, 2011; Barbour et al. 2004; Sandell et al. 2010). The GGA is based on the *Global Guidelines for Education and Care in the 21st Century* developed by the World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) and the Association for Childhood Education International (OMEP/ACEI, 1999). The Global Guidelines were designed by more than 80 participants from 27 countries with the goal of creating a set of fundamental practices that would be relevant and useful throughout the world. The sociocultural nature of the Global Guidelines is central to the content and purpose of the GGA, which is grounded in the theorical tenets of Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner—that knowledge is personally constructed but socially negotiated through interactions across a variety of environments (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998; Vygotsky 1978). Wertsch et al. (1995) describe these types of sociocultural dynamics as the “relationships between human action, on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional, and historical situations in which this action occurs, on the other” (p. 11). From this viewpoint, learning is a transactional experience mediated by the “funds of knowledge” of young children and families as well as multiple environmental contexts (Moll et al. 1992). Thus, the quality of these dialogic experiences and the settings in which they take place is essential for maximizing children’s development. The GGA’s definition of quality takes into account individual and local variations, as well as a global perspective of what constitutes quality early care and education, stating that, “A quality early childhood curriculum is focused on the whole child and considers physical, cognitive, linguistic, creative, and social/emotional growth. The ultimate goal of an early childhood curriculum is to produce more competent, caring and empathic world citizens” (ACEI 2006, p. 8).

This chapter provides an overview of country-initiated efforts to enhance the quality of early childhood programs and describes the results of an investigation on the psychometric properties of the GGA, an instrument designed to help early childhood staff evaluate their program quality, which is based on the OMEP/ACEI Guidelines. The GGA is translated into nine languages and used by hundreds of early childhood professionals in North America, Central America, South America, Asia, Africa, and the European Union. The reliability and validity of the GGA, recommendations for improving quality, and suggestions for further study on this important issue are discussed below (Fig. 2.1).

Quality Elements, Research, and Challenges

According to ACEI and OMEP (1999), the basic elements of quality ECCE services include: (1) attention to environment features and resources, (2) developmentally and culturally appropriate curriculum, (3) well-educated early childhood staff, (4) meaningful parent and community involvement, and (5) attention to the needs of diverse young children, including those with disabilities. Many countries are challenged by

Fig. 2.1 Guatemalan child care program. (Photo courtesy of program director)

the lack of consistent regulations, resources, and support for early childhood programs. Meyers (2006) points out that although greater coverage (e.g., more children receiving services) has provided an impetus for important changes worldwide, coverage does not necessarily mean children are experiencing high quality services. For example, international reports suggest that more than 20 % of preprimary teachers lack professional training among three-fifth of all countries (UNESCO 2006). Given the diversity that still exists throughout the world, there is great need for assessment measures designed for global use that can be used by ECCE professionals to evaluate how well they are meeting these five areas of program excellence.

Research on the GGA

Purpose Because the ACEI Global Guidelines Task Force was concerned about improving early childhood programs internationally and determining how well their instrument demonstrates quality and needs for improvement, they recommended a

reliability and validity pilot study to be conducted. The following questions guided this research:

1. What is the reliability and validity of the GGA across sites and countries as well as separately for each site?
2. What are patterns of similarities and differences in program services by type of informant, site, country, and total sample?
3. When compared across countries and sites, do results support the use of this measure for early childhood programs in general and also provide a measure that adapts to country and site differences?

Participants The participants in this study were from four countries—Guatemala, Taiwan, United States, and People's Republic of China—and six sites (two in Taiwan and the United States). All four countries provide early care and education services, but they differed by population characteristics (e.g. size, economic status, language). The sites were chosen through contacts established by principal investigators in each country and ACEI Global Guidelines Task Force members. A stratified sampling procedure was used based on country, program type, and geographic area to create a balance between the variations of these program characteristics across the total sample, which consisted of 168 programs.

About two-thirds of the programs were private and another fourth were public, with the remaining programs defined themselves as "other." Over half were located in urban areas, a third in rural areas, and the rest defined themselves as "other." Programs reported the socioeconomic status of their service areas as average (69.4 %), mostly poor (22.8 %), or mostly wealthy (7.8 %). Over 80 % of the programs were open 10–12 months a year and 9–12 h per day. Of the 127 programs that reported total enrollment, 41 % had between 51–100 children, while one-fourth had fewer than 50 children, and the rest had between 100–400 children in the program. Some programs served both toddler and preschool age children (38 %) or preschool age children only (28.3 %), while others included infants (30.8 %) and a few had primary age children as well (3 %) (Fig. 2.2).

Procedures Six research site coordinators were recruited to implement the study at the local level, including three university faculty members, two private program directors, and one doctoral student. Two-hour conference calls were held with each coordinator to train them on confidentiality requirements, criteria for selecting programs, data collection procedures, and the GGA instrument. They then recruited local program participants, oriented and trained them, and gave written guidelines for administering the GGA, copies of the GGA, letters for participants describing the study, and participation consent forms. All verbal and written information was presented in the native language of the participants. The GGA translations were completed for ACEI prior to the study using the consensus method (Geisinger 1994).

There were two people at each site (a director and non-director) who completed the GGA by adhering to the study procedures. Directors also completed a *program information form* that requested demographic information (gender, ethnicity, education level, years teaching, etc.). Each participant received a certificate of participation

Fig. 2.2 Liaoning University Child Care Center, Dalian, People's Republic of China. (Photo courtesy of Professor Wen Liu)

from ACEI. Completed assessments were mailed to the principal investigators for data entry and analysis. Individual ratings [0 (Low)–5 (High)] and examples coded for evidence for each rating [1 (No or weak evidence)–3 (Strong evidence)] were entered into a database. Evidence examples were translated into English for data analyses. For the ratings, two individuals verified the results for each item against the original protocol, and all errors were reconciled and corrected. For the validity code evidence, reliability of coder agreement across a random sample of responses showed a range of agreements between 98.6 % and 99.1 %.

Results Six sets of data analyses were conducted: descriptive analysis by site and for the overall sample; internal consistency of the overall scale and individual subscales; item means to understand patterns of similarities and differences within and across countries; factor analyses and discriminant analyses to address the functionality of the GGA as a global tool for measuring early childhood services; and validity analyses to compare congruity of the evidence with the ratings.

Item means were computed for each of the 88 indicators and the total GGA and compared by country and site. The results indicate that the US1 site ratings were generally higher than the other research sites and China ratings were lower overall. Types of items with high means included those concerned with promoting good health practices, positive child and adult interactions, and providing environments that foster a sense of well-being for children. Items rated lower included those focused on materials in outdoor play environments, children being actively engaged in self-evaluation, and collaborative partnerships with parents and community members. A significant number of participants rated items in the last area (Children with Special Needs) as "not available" or left these questions blank, reflecting a deficit in services for many children with special needs.

Total item mean scores for each of the 335 participants were analyzed by program type (private, $n = 106$; public, $n = 45$) across the six sites (17 programs categorized as "other" were excluded from this analysis). The results showed higher item mean totals for private program participants (3.08 to 4.25) than public program participants

(2.93 to 4.13), which would be expected since private programs generally had more resources for equipment, materials, and training than public programs in this sample.

Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to understand the internal consistency of each subscale by research site and for the total sample. The results indicate a very strong internal consistency for each subscale (0.89 to 0.92) and the total GGA (0.97). The alpha coefficients across the five subscales for each research site (0.82 to 0.95) and also for the total assessment (0.94 to 0.98) are quite high, suggesting that the underlying constructs for this measure worked similarly across different research sites. Also, correlations between raters showed a moderate degree of interrater consistency (0.46 to 0.70) for the five subscales and the total GGA (0.62) when completed by two different raters for the same program.

The international group of early childhood professionals who developed the Global Guidelines on which the GGA is based sought to capture essential elements of ECCE services from a global perspective. Thus, the content of the GGA was intended to represent both the common culture of ECCE services across geographical locations as well as individual differences in services related to contextual differences among countries. Both factor and discriminant analyses were conducted to understand these aspects of the GGA. Items with loadings of ±0.40 or higher were included in the final designation of each factor. Four distinct factors were revealed accounting for 31.5 %, 6.3 %, 3.8 %, and 3.2 % of the variance, respectively. **The first** factor represented general program quality, the **second factor** represented services for children with special needs, and the **third factor** represented parent and community partnerships. The **fourth factor** represented environment and physical space. The classification results for the discriminant analysis show that 91.0 % of the original grouped cases were correctly classified, indicating that the patterns recognized by the factor analysis are in fact real relative to the original data. The reclassifications also show that individuals from each country are classified together meaning there is homogeneity within each country.

Because the researchers were not able to do on-site verifications of respondents' ratings, the method for verifying ratings assessed the degree of accordance between the rating scores and the evidence provided by the raters to determine whether the evidence justified their rating scores. Results showed that overall mean for evidence ranged from 1.9–2.0 on the 3-point scale for all five dimensions of the instrument, indicating a moderate level of validity for the ratings. Scores, compared by research site and by position, showed directors' and nondirectors' ratings were equally valid (1.97; 1.92) and that validity scores across countries ranged from 1.6–2.2. Thus, this measure provided some level of support for the respondents' evaluations of their programs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As concerns about the quality of early childhood care and education have increased globally, so has the need for reliable and valid tools to help ECCE staff design new programs and better understand the quality of existing programs. In this study, the

ACEI Global Guidelines Assessment was piloted in four countries and across six sites to investigate its effectiveness. Overall, the results indicate the GGA is a viable option for understanding and improving program quality in these four countries, and potentially worldwide. Because there was a need for some additional "fine tuning" of the instrument, additional Rasch analyses of the respondents' answers were conducted to determine whether some questions were repetitive. The GGA was revised based on the Rasch analysis that included some wording changes and a reduced number of questions. These revisions were approved by the GGA Task Force and the newly published GGA, third edition, can be downloaded from the ACEI website (www.acei.org). Also, additional studies that include on-site verification of the raters' responses now are being conducted with larger samples in a broader range of countries. These additional studies include examination of the concurrent validity of the GGA by comparing results with those from a comparable instrument (e.g., ECERS-R). This continuing research will provide greater insight for measuring program quality of ECCE programs on a global scale. In addition, and most importantly, the use of the GGA instrument will give respondents insights into their own program quality features and enable them to identify areas they wish to improve to make their programs meet the highest standards of quality, no matter where they are located in the world.

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Part II
School Environments

Chapter 3
From Montessori to Culturally Relevant Schools Under The Trees in Kenya

Tata Mbugua

Introduction and Historical Overview of ECDE

Among African countries, south of the Sahara, Kenya is well known for its organized, effective, and decentralized, community-based early childhood development and education (ECDE) programs. Research has underscored the importance of quality early childhood education programs as a foundation for quality primary school education (Heckman 2000; Mbugua 2009). In the 1940s the British colonial government initially established childcare centers for the European and Asian children. This was followed by the establishment of early childhood care centers for African children whose parents lived and worked in the coffee, sugar, and tea plantations. According to Kanogo (1988), these centers were established as a response to Mau Mau freedom uprising. While the centers provided nonacademic custodial care (Hyde and Kabiru 2003), the entry of United Nations Children's Education Fund into the scene in 1954 with the goal of child survival altered the dynamics of ECDE in Kenya (UNICEF 2002). There was the onset of growth and expansion of early childhood education which was given momentum by the achievement of Kenya's independence in 1963 and subsequent adoption of a national philosophy of "harambee," a principle of pooling resources for the common good.

In the 1970s, several educational commissions gave impetus to the growth of early childhood education through inter-sectorial collaborations between non-governmental organizations, Bernard Van Leer Foundation, UNICEF, and the Ministry of Education. The Gachathi and Kamunge Commissions of 1973 and 1988 sought to create greater recognition of early childhood education within the

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country. By 1984, the Ministry of Education undertook the task of harmonizing the growth, evaluation, training, and monitoring of early childhood education through the establishment of semi-autonomous bodies referred to as the National Center for Early Childhood Education (NACECE—national training centers) and the District Centers for Early Childhood Education (DICECE—local training centers) (Ministry of Education, Science & Technology (MOEST) UNESCO 2005). These bodies are managed by the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), an entity charged with the development of school curricula in Kenya. Given the significant role played by communities in the early childhood education endeavor, the national government plays a fairly minimal role in the management of ECDE programs at the local level while assuming the integral role as the trainer and regulator of early childhood educational settings.

Other pertinent training bodies include the local universities, especially Kenyatta University, which offers bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees in early childhood education. Through the 2005–2006 NACECE and DICECE training, the focus on ECDE training is to cater to the various needs of early childhood education professionals. Notable in the training is the high utility of the *Guidelines for Early Childhood Development in Kenya* whose aim is to ensure holistic, child-centered curriculum that is developmentally and culturally appropriate (NACECE (National Center for Early Childhood Education) 2003). For example, the use of mother tongue in some regions of the country as well as the special education curricular content is evident (Godia 2008). The Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) supports the latter.

The year 2002 marked a historical landmark in Kenya's history of primary school education when the National Rainbow Coalition government enacted a new policy to provide free and compulsory primary education in support of the Children's Act of 2002. The significance of this educational policy is that it was aligned with the following international charters ratified by Kenya—the Rights of the Child, Declaration on Education for All (EFA) at the World Education Conference in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, and the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal which underscored the first EFA goal of "expanding and improving early childhood care and education" (UNESCO 2009). In effect, ECDE program services were positively impacted.

Consequently, early childhood education centers providing services such as nurseries, preschools, and kindergartens can be found even in the most remote parts of Kenya today due heavily in part to the community mobilization strategies and some government support. Over 1.5 million children representing about 35 % of children aged 3–6 were enrolled in these services in 2005 (MOEST, UNESCO 2005). Parents and communities continue to provide land, labor, buy basic materials to build and construct these schools, and provide appropriate teaching and learning materials. Through a local committee, families are mobilized to enroll their children. Subsequently, the committee hires the preschool teachers while the community pays the teacher salaries, which depend on the quality and management provided by the committee. The role of the government in these services is to register, supervise, and inspect the ECDE programs, and to subsidize the training of teachers.

The remarkable expansion of provision of early childhood education in Kenya from 2002 through 2010 is attributed to a number of factors. First, the socio-economic

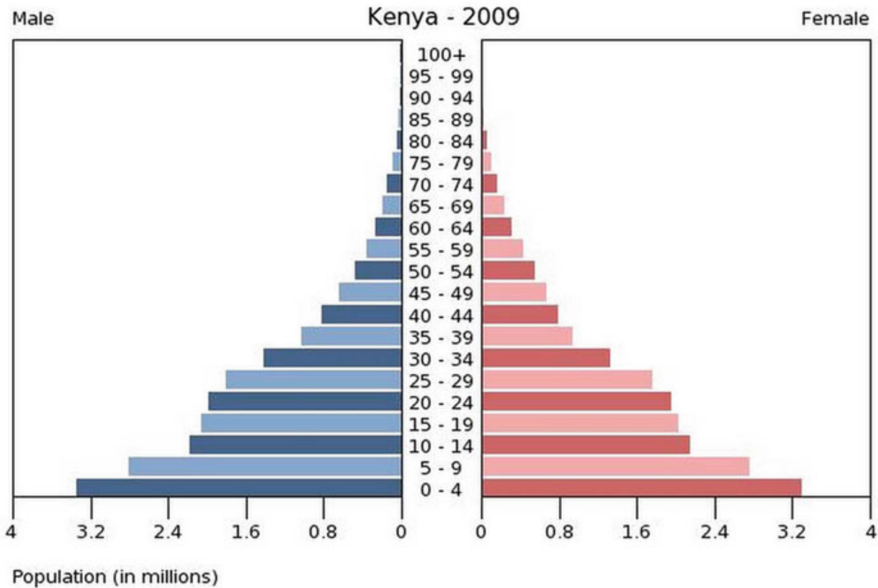

Fig. 3.1 Population of Kenya: male and female. (Source: US Census Bureau, International Data Base 2009)

changes in society have affected the traditional child rearing practice as more women move into the workforce to the tune of 77 % compared to 61 % of the world average of female labor participation (Garcia et al. 2004). Second, parents are recognizing the cognitive, social, and physical benefits of (ECDE). Third, the government commitment to the provision of ECDE has been articulated in the statutory policy document, *Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005* (MOEST 2005). A notable feature of *Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005* is that it committed the Kenya government to ensure that 4 to 5 year olds were integrated into the primary school education cycle by 2010. Fourth, the population dynamics of the country (see Fig. 3.1) suggest that ECDE is an imperative if the country is to develop an educated populace. Investing in the education of young children therefore, fits well with Kenya's demonstrated commitment to education, preschool teacher training and sustained allocation of resources to the education sector (MOEST 2004).

The overarching goal of ECDE is to provide integrated services that include health monitoring, school feeding programs, and basic literacy and numeracy skills. Kenya being a multilingual country, children are introduced to these skills through three languages—their mother tongue; English the official language, and Swahili, the national language. Further efforts to ensure culturally and developmentally appropriate curriculum and pedagogy for ECDE involve the recruitment and training of preschool teachers locally to ensure cultural congruency for the children. These preschool teachers have a thorough understanding of the language, culture, and the environment in which they work. Research corroborates the importance of delivering curriculum using a mother-tongue in the early years and gradually introducing other

school languages as one of the most important factors in improving school success which fosters good learning outcomes (Pinnock 2009).

Early Childhood Development and Education Contexts in Kenya

The term used to refer to the discipline concerned with the care, development and learning of young children ages 0 to 5 in Kenya is Early Childhood Development (ECD) (UNESCO and OECD 2004). Additionally, an all-encompassing term, early childhood services, includes informal, non-formal, and formal early childhood care and education (ECCE) services geared toward children 0+ to 5+ and/or their parents or families. Some of the services provided are integrated to include education, nutrition, and stimulation along with the provision of social, psychological, and health needs of children in a holistic approach (MOEST 2005). Through a process of rapidly evolving grassroots mobilization and capacity building strategies, the number of ECDE programs increased tremendously. The modus operandi for community participation in ECDE takes various forms such as provision of land; construction of physical facilities through fundraising; provision of furniture, materials, and labor; paying teacher salaries; and the responsibility of cultural transmission through language, poems, songs, riddles, and other creative strategies that are integrated in the curriculum (Godia 2008). Through the unique feature of ECDE in Kenya, community-based programs and government guidance, a large cross-section of children from social, economic, and cultural backgrounds are served. This is unlike many African countries where formal preschools are the preserve of the elite and wealthy in urban areas (UNESCO 2006).

Although the provision of ECDE has continued to gain momentum, wide regional and gender disparities in the preschool gross enrollment rates (GER) and national enrollment rates (NER) persist. The areas where this is most apparent are the arid and semi arid lands (ASAL) where GER is as low as 11.2 % for boys and 8.2 % for girls in North Eastern Province compared to 105.7 % of GER for boys and 107.2 % for girls in Nairobi Province (UNESCO and OECD 2004). Enrollment of underage and overage children in ECD centers in Nairobi explains the high GER. Related research shows that what children learn and how they learn are shaped by context and culture. Subsequently, different environmental, regional, and economic disparities around the country influence the nature and scope of ECDE programs as well as the family and community involvement. This next section will highlight the regional disparities and diverse educational programs and environments for early childhood education and development in Kenya.

Private and Montessori Schools in Nairobi

Nairobi rivals many cities around the world as the seat of government and the capital city with a mix of cosmopolitan central business district, affluent suburbs, and city

Fig. 3.2 Loreto Convent School of Nairobi—preschool through high school. (Photo courtesy of Tata Mbugua)

slums. Both private and public programs exist in the city. The high end private as well as Montessori schools can be found in the suburbs of Nairobi and are equipped with the latest educational materials, technology and best practices for early childhood care and education. Participants in these programs are children of foreign diplomats, affluent Kenyans, and children of the expatriate community. Some of these programs are bilingual, international kindergartens for children 2 to 6 years of age. The fees for some of the Montessori programs range from US$350 to US$1,000 a month. The level of technology in the classrooms is commensurate with the fees and includes computers and smart boards. The teachers are highly trained and apply best practices in the field of early childhood education (ECE) that include differentiated instruction, problem-based learning, language learning and a child-centered/play-centered curriculum. Professional development opportunities abound for these teachers and parent involvement is very high.

Montessori Schools, most of which are found in Nairobi, follow a set Montessori curriculum. Examples of Montessori preschools and kindergartens in Nairobi include German, Swedish, and Japanese Schools, Lavington Montessori School, International Montessori Christian Kindergarten, and Umoja Montessori Kindergarten in Mombasa. Parents of the montessori school children and the professional communities have a higher level of education which ensures that the children are well taken care of and parents are actively involved in the education. This ensures that the children are well taken care of and parents are actively involved in the education of their children. However, there may be a tendency to over-emphasize academics (beginning at an early age) due to the pressure for passing primary school entrance exams. Teachers in some of these preschools are under pressure to teach to academics at the expense of a play curriculum. As a consequence, some children are experiencing test anxiety while in preschool (Biersteker et al. 2008). Government preschools in Kenya continue to experience high rates of attendance. These preschools range from average to above average and differ largely according to location and management. They are mainly community based but supported by the government through NACECE and DICECE. It should be noted that there are government preschools that are also run by religious orders such as the Loreto schools (Fig. 3.2), St. Mary's, Kianda School, Edel Quinn, St. Andrews, and Strathmore among others.

Most of the government preschools are also linked to the primary schools. Although there is no formal policy linking both preschools and primary schools parents voluntarily enroll their children in preschools in order to give them a head start in education. An unofficial policy exists requiring preschool education as a prerequisite for school readiness and enrollment in primary schools.

Preschools in the Slum Areas of Nairobi

The understanding of early childhood as a time of sensitive period leads naturally to the notion that early childhood programs can supplement the care and education that young children receive at home, in their families and communities. Subsequently, the synergistic effects of ECD programs as a foundation for later learning and success are well documented as an important investment by governments and policy makers (Heckman 2000, 2011; Hyde 2006). Kibera, Africa's largest slum situated in the city of Nairobi, and Kawangware slum situated about 7 miles from the city, offers a unique glimpse at preschools in some of the most deprived conditions anywhere in the world. Situated about 3 miles southwest of Nairobi, Kibera slum, the size of about 1.3 square miles, is home to 1 million people, most of whom are urban dwellers. There are minimal water and sanitation services and most of the dwellings are make shift cardboard and iron-sheet structures. On average, there is one pit latrine for 50–500 people. Cases of HIV/AIDs are also high. Most of the young and vulnerable children who are either affected (carry the HIV/AIDs virus) or have lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDs are served through Lea Toto programs which offer integrated services of education, stimulation, nutrition, and health care (African Jesuit AIDS Network (AJAN) 2009).

Notwithstanding these living conditions, the community is actively involved in providing preschool education for the children through community-based mobilization. However, unlike many other ECD environments discussed, Kibera has far fewer children enrolled in preschools due to the many challenges facing families. Some characteristics of preschools found in Kibera involve makeshift to semi-permanent and permanent structures. There are also refugee children mainly from Sudan who are served by the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Kibera serves as an example of community based ECD programs and inter-sectorial collaboration of NGOs, government assisted programs, private organizations such as Christian Children's Fund, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, UNESCO, and church affiliated ECD programs. Most of the children in these programs are required to wear uniforms but the cost (US$10) is at times too much for families. As a result, such children do not attend preschools for lack of uniforms and fees. The DICECE provides preschool teacher training while the community provides space, labor, time, and food for the children. Feeding programs and school supplies including play materials are supplied through local NGOs as a way of stimulating the growth and development of young children. Families are involved in the development of play materials made out of locally available materials in recognition of the critical role of play in the ECDE curriculum (Frost et al. 2008).

Children in the slum areas of Nairobi receive ECDE services that do not provide the optimal conditions for learning and stimulation. As a result, these children endure hardships, stressful lives, and crowded classrooms with teacher–student ratios of over 65 along with unsafe and unhealthy conditions. However, the same children and their families have demonstrated the resilience of the human spirit. Recent publications advance this notion by emphasizing the flexibility and adaptability of humans, as well as their resilience to trauma (France and Utting 2005; Masten and Gewirtz 2006). This implies that early childhood programs cannot only benefit all children but can also compensate for young children's negative experiences as a result of family or society conflict (such as was witnessed in Kenya in 2007 after contested presidential elections) as well as nutritional or emotional deprivation. To sum up, participation in comprehensive early childhood programs of good quality can significantly alter the developmental trajectory of a child.

Rural Preschools in Kenya

Two thirds of Kenya's population lives in the rural areas where agriculture is the main source of income and survival (World Factbook 2011). Rural communities are found in the Kenyan Rift Valley, Central, Eastern, and Western Provinces. Although there are regional disparities within these provinces, there is a general tendency for the communities to survive through farming and agriculture. Some common characteristics of rural preschools are that they are found among farming communities such as the coffee and tea plantations. Most of these children live with their extended families in huts constructed of mud, cow dung and sticks or humble wooden or iron sheet homes. Most homes have no electricity so children either use kerosene lamps or fail to read or do homework after dark. Another challenge is that there is no indoor plumbing or fuel for cooking. Consequently, women and girls often walk for miles to a water source and collect firewood for cooking, while men and boys graze the animals.

The ECDE programs often lack some of the resources that one would find in private city preschools. The spirit of "harambee" a Kenyan tradition of community self-help is the predominant mode of establishing these preschools in rural areas. Communities further seek ECDE teachers from the community members, especially young people who may have completed or dropped out of high school, and encourage them to get training through DICECE. Teacher salaries may not be sustained or reliable as these are dependent on family incomes usually generated from selling of farm products. One observable factor is the respect for the traditional approaches to ECDE that are based on the premise that cultural appropriateness and developmental appropriateness are strong foundations for policy and practice, a position that the Kenya government follows. In terms of curriculum, it is indigenized where community values and local materials are used to supplement educational materials. The local language is also used concurrently with the introduction of English words as per the MOEST syllabus (MOEST 2005). The DICECE teachers assist the community

in the development of play toys using the local resources, indigenous songs and stories. The ECDE program extends the focus of preschools to include comprehensive parent education, special education, health and nutrition. This is achieved through community mobilization with the aim of delivering high-quality early childhood education.

Since programs that are responsive to the local culture experience high levels of enrollment, Arnold et al. (2006) contend that they also prove to be sustainable in the long term as parents recognize the value of early education for their children. The community continues to experience increased participation within the culturally responsive practices of early childhood under the care of the extended family. Parents and educators aim for a balance between preserving traditions and embracing modern childhood services.

Preschools Under Trees in Kenya

Disparities in ECD are acutely manifested in Kenya within the ASAL as well as the marginalized communities. These communities are nomadic in nature and include the Maasai, Samburu, Gabra, Kipsigis, Rendille, Borana, Turkana, and Pokot. The disparities in ECD within these communities demonstrate a need for culturally appropriate interventions through programs such as those supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation (Pence and Shafer 2006). This results in the establishment of ECD programs that meet the development and cultural needs of young children and their families in ways that enable them to thrive. Such programs therefore prepare the young generation to fit into their society rather than alienate them.

A unique approach to educating young children in the arid and semi-arid areas (ASAL) of Kenya has been epitomized by the "Loipi" Program settings (van de Linde 2006). The "Loipi" system of traditional childcare is a communal care enclosure usually located under big trees where children play and rest under the shade, away from the scorching sun (Lenaiyasa and Kimathi 2002). The Northern part of Kenya where the Samburu and Turkana people live is characterized by harsh arid and semi-arid climate. The vegetation is scrubland due to limited rainfall. The lifestyle of the people is nomadic pastoralists who frequently move with their cattle, goats, camels in search of water and pasture. The "Loipi" program has sound indigenous child rearing practices that view children as belonging to the entire community. Consequently, children are valued as a source of wealth and community continuity and are treated with tenderness by parents and community members.

The care of young children among the Samburu is traditionally left to the grandparents as parents normally go out for grazing, collecting firewood or fetching water. While children rest under the "Loipi", grandmothers engage children in the traditional curriculum of storytelling, games, riddles, and songs. The growth and monitoring of the young children is done using culturally appropriate materials such as beads that are tied around the waist of the young children. To monitor their physical growth and development, beads are added to their waist when they increase in weight or

removed from their waist when they lose weight. It is within this background that the government, through DICECE and a collaborative triad of focus, engaged in ECD programs among the Samburu and Turkana people. The triad of partnership was formed between the KIE which is charged with ECD curriculum development and training, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, and Christian Children's Fund.

As early as 1987, the NACECE/DICECE preschool training program involved a semi-arid component where preschool teachers were trained for the harsh environment. Through the community based mobilization strategy and inter-sectorial collaboration, ECD programs were set up in the northern part of Kenya. Critically important was the goal of ensuring that the programs were culturally responsive to the needs of the Samburu people. In order to fulfill this goal, a study of Samburu child rearing practices was conducted in 1995 by Bernard van Leer Foundation. Notable in this study was the fact that the Samburu people were actively engaged in the study in an effort to integrate their knowledge on child rearing as well as to foster a spirit of ownership. They were also involved in the provision of milk for the children, play materials, and pieces of cloth for the children to rest on. This meant the alignment and revival of Samburu traditional "Loipi" system of communal child care that ensures the participation of parents and the community. Conversely, the Samburu ECD program of DICECE introduces some modern elements of health care such as immunizations, vitamin supplements and de-worming. They also introduced stimulating educational activities, stories, poems, lullabies, and games using locally available materials. This resulted in what Mitsuko (2000) refers to as *cultural hybridity* which means the need for education that promotes understanding of "others," such as people of different cultures. Thus in early childhood care and development, indigenous childrearing beliefs and practices are critically important because they are intrinsically valuable and pragmatically sound (Evans and Myers 1994) (Fig. 3.3).

Madrassa Secular Schools in Kenya

Kenya's Madrassa schools were established by the Madrassa Resource Center, Kenya (MRCK) through funding and support by the Aga Khan Foundation (Coastweek 2006). Muslim groups concerned about challenges facing their community such as poverty, poor child health, and low school achievement initiated them. The purpose of these preschools was to assist communities in marginalized coastal areas to set up early childhood centers catering to children ages 3–6. The marginalized areas are Kwale, Kilifi, and Mombasa. According to Mwaura (2004), studies conducted in the 1980s concluded that poor school readiness was a contributing factor to the cycle of poverty for these communities. To solve this problem, the communities sought to utilize the underused facilities of the Madrassa buildings in order to provide integrated preschool education.

The first Madrassa School, Khairat Nursery School, was supported by MRCK and opened its doors in 1987. As they develop their own community based ECD centers, the Madrassa centers engage in its version of inter-sectorial collaboration that

Fig. 3.3 Samburu children at recess from the "Loipi" with author. (Photo courtesy of Tata Mbugua)

involves the Madrassa Resource Center (MRC), DICECE, and USAID in supporting the communities through a variety of measures. Some of these measures mirror the national approach to holistic child development and community mobilization—development of training methodologies, teaching programs and manuals, provision of learning materials that are locally made for cultural appropriateness, playground equipment, capacity building through training of teachers, and the creation of local school management committees for sustainability of programs.

In terms of curricular and content pedagogy, these preschools provide school readiness skills such as literacy and numeracy. These are offered together with existing religious classes through a curriculum that offers holistic care while maintaining the children's Muslim identity. The goal of *Integrated Islamic Educational Program* is to "ensure that the Kenya Muslim child is properly molded in his faith as well as prepared to fit into the Kenyan society as a useful citizen, (NACECE 1993, p. 6)."

Consistent with Kenya's community-based approach to ECD, the MRC provides the training of teachers and supplies the materials for preschools. Teacher training includes work with inexpensive or freely available local materials that reflect the children's everyday experience and culture. These include shells, coconuts, seedpods, bottle tops, and soap boxes. The MRC preschool curriculum includes traditional stories, riddles, and songs that are complemented with narratives from the Koran. Other developmentally appropriate activities involve art that incorporates African and Islamic motifs, as well as the *adab*, the rules of etiquette, courtesy and cleanliness rooted in East African culture (Mwaura 2004).

Conclusion and Educational Implications

Although Kenya still faces a number of difficulties in expanding and improving ECCE programs across the variety of socio-economic diversity of settings, a more amenable government policy environment is evident. This can be attributed to a number of factors; the development of the *Guidelines for Early Childhood Development in Kenya,* the establishment of NACECE and DICECE training approaches, the intersectorial collaboration, and parental and community prioritization of early childhood education for the children. The Kenya government has helped shape the ECDE by its holistic approach to ECCE as promoted by the Dakar Framework. The continued quest to ensure that there are adequate resources, public funding and also by designing strong national and district policies indicate a commitment to the nation's young children. The variety and scope of educational programs are designed to address the unique needs of diverse communities to include the linguistic, religious, and socio-economic diversity.

A notable feature is the government's efforts at fostering coordination among sectors and stakeholders within the country. Further, the regulation and monitoring of quality ECDE programs continues to be an important component in the ECDE landscape in Kenya, the overarching goal of which is to make a concerted effort to reach disadvantaged children and others with limited access to ECCE. From the Kenyan example of community-based programs, there is great potential for strengthening ECDE programs by conceptualizing them from the African perspective. Further the notion of funds of knowledge of indigenous cultural practices in raising children are recommended as successful interventions that build on local knowledge (Hyde and Kabiru 2003) with respect to the Maasai, Samburu and Turkana, as well as the Madrassas.

It is equally important to recognize multiple ways of knowing by integrating rather than excluding indigenous knowledge and practices into the ECDE curriculum that would create appropriate cross-cultural curriculum content (Nsamenang 2008; Okolie 2003). This approach to ECDE curriculum holds potential for effective ECD programs and policies in Kenya. The frequent use of simple locally made materials ensures environmental sustainability, fosters creativity in young children, and supports best practices in ECDE.

In all the diverse ECDE programs discussed, there is one constant—storytelling and songs, a curricular aspect that serves as the most valuable source of indigenous knowledge. Storytelling continues to be used as a medium for integrating culturally relevant information into the ECDE programs. In capturing the essence of the integrative nature of storytelling and songs as an indigenous curriculum content strategy, Phiri (2004, p. 4) observes that:

> In addition to the innate appeal that songs hold for children, and the opportunities they create for children to improve their language, pitch, and rhythm skills, songs can be used to communicate certain mathematical concepts, hygienic habits and gross motor activities to preschoolers. As children grow up, these sung concepts are translated into applied understanding.

In essence, the national expansion of ECDE in Kenya through NACECE and DICECE demonstrates continued efforts to ensure equity, access, and quality, while at the same time ensuring the cultural appropriateness of ECDE program content across different social, cultural, and economic contexts.

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Chapter 4
Establishing Preschool Environments in Rural West Africa

Sue C. Wortham

Introduction

This chapter describes the story of establishing preschools in Senegal in West Africa. In 2001 a small charity, World Children's Relief (WCR) headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona had as its main purpose to provide teacher training in rural areas of developing countries where preschools were not part of the elementary school program. The premise was that isolated, rural areas would have the most need for teacher training because they were far away from major cities where governmental agencies could provide training. A WCR coordinator traveled in West Africa to locate communities that were interested in starting preschool classes and receiving teacher training. Three countries were chosen: Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Uganda. This chapter discusses the evolution of the preschool program in Fatick, Senegal.

Fatick, Senegal: A Background

The Republic of Senegal became independent in 1960 after three centuries of French colonial rule. It is primarily a Muslim country with minorities that are Catholic or followers of animist beliefs (Kwintessential 2011). There are 10 ethnic groups, the largest being Woloff that is the dominant ethnic group in Fatick.

Urban areas such as the capital, Dakar, have experienced rapid growth with opportunities for education and employment. In rural areas; however, two out of three people live in poverty (USAID 2011).

Fatick is a small regional city. In the rural areas outside Fatick where the schools discussed in this chapter are located, children primarily live on small family farms worked chiefly by members of the family. A large percentage of the farms are less

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than ten acres in size. Rice, millet, and other grains such as corn are the major crops. In addition, the family might have a garden and animals. Donkey—or horse—drawn carts are the primary form of transportation between villages or into Fatick (Every culture.com 2011). (See also Chap. 14.)

Environmental Conditions for Elementary Education

Education is not readily available in Fatick. Existing elementary schools serve less than 40 % of the children who live in the district. There are two types of schools, government schools, and community schools. Government schools are built by the national government, while village residents build community schools using local resources and labor.

Elementary classrooms are minimally furnished. They are constructed from concrete blocks or bricks with concrete floors. Unscreened windows have metal shutters and the door is also made of metal. Student desks that seat two or three children are usually in poor condition. There is a table for the teacher and sometimes a cabinet for materials. A large chalkboard is the primary teaching resource. The chalkboard is cleaned using a bucket of water and a sponge or cloth. Small brooms made from local plants stems are used to sweep the floors. Once constructed and painted, the classrooms are rarely updated or improved. The gradual building process at a school can be traced by the ages of different buildings. A community school is usually built in phases as money becomes available for expansion. Some schools have latrines. They also have housing for teachers who are not from the local area. Classrooms serve large numbers of children. One first grade classroom visited in 2008 had over 80 children who were squeezed into seating intended for about 40 children. When written work was required half of the students would go outside making room for their classmates to write at the desks (Wortham 2008).

The outdoor environments are large, open, undeveloped space. Some schoolyards have large trees for shade while others are bare with no relief from the sun. The climate remains very hot most of the months of the year.

Steps in Establishing Preschools

Prior to WCR's work in the Fatick district, there were no preschools in government or community elementary schools. There were private preschools that included parochial preschools, private preschools, and community-sponsored preschools. When WCR planned to work in this area to establish a preschool program, a planning process was initiated. The first step in the plan was to hire a country coordinator to work in the Fatick district.

Meeting with Government and Education Officials

The WCR coordinator and Fatick country representative met with government and education officials to explain the teacher training program and other services WCR might be able to provide. During these meetings, possible school sites for the first preschools were selected. Discussions were conducted about local and WCR expectations for the program. After schools were identified to house the first preschool classrooms, plans were made to meet at the selected schools.

Meetings at Schools

The three schools selected to have the first preschool classrooms were Marouth School, Felane School, and Diatmoury School. The schools were located near the village of Diaoule on the savannah about 15 miles from Fatick.

School directors, teaching staff, parents, and the village chief and elders attended the school meetings. The WCR coordinator and country representative discussed the plans for conducting teacher training and establishing preschool classrooms. Arrangements were made to plan for the teacher training sessions and to select teachers for the training who would become future preschool teachers.

Variations in Preschool Classroom Environments

When the first preschool program was being planned, only Marouth School had a preschool classroom. It had been built by WCR to serve as a model. Neither of the other schools had preschool classrooms. Felane School and Diatmoury School started out with improvised areas enclosed by millet stalks. Later a variety of arrangements were made to house preschool classrooms. Storage rooms were cleared to open a small space and unused buildings near the schools served as housing for one or two classrooms. While the model classroom had preschool furniture for the children, large rugs sufficed for seating on the ground or on bare floors in the other two classrooms. At first, the teachers had no teaching materials other than objects from nature such as rocks, millet sticks, or seeds. WCR started providing materials beginning with the first training (Fig. 4.1).

Teacher Backgrounds

Until recently, teachers in government schools were primarily men. It was the practice to send newly trained teachers to assignments in rural areas. The government made these decisions rather than local leaders. The young teachers who generally came from long distances were unable to find housing in the remote villages; as a result,

Fig. 4.1 A new preschool classroom is started in an old dance hall. (Photo courtesy of Marshal Wortham)

accommodations had to be provided by local schools. Since individual schools had to provide the housing, each school had to find the resources. In some instances the teachers would stay in an unused classroom or other space at the school. Thereafter, villagers and school staff would work to raise funds to build suitable housing. This was the case at Diatmoury School and Felane School. The teachers shared one room, and cooking and showering facilities were constructed out of millet stalks outside the building.

Women joined the teaching staff within the last two decades; however, men were still predominant in numbers. This situation changed with the advent of preschools. Teachers in private preschools were mostly women, and when preschools were added to the government and community schools, younger women entered the teaching force.

Men still occupy administrative positions with a few exceptions. When working in groups, men can intimidate female teachers. This occurred in early training sessions until training leaders intentionally focused on female teachers' contributions to discussions. I have yet to meet a female school director.

Teacher Training

The teacher training process used by WCR was originally developed for Haiti beginning with a visit to small, rural community schools outside of the small city of Les Cayes. Homes were also visited to understand family lives. Following the visit, a training system was developed and refined through three years of conducting teacher-training sessions with preschool and primary teachers. The teacher training in Haiti was conducted in Creole (Wortham, undated).

Subsequently, when teacher training was conducted in West Africa, it was translated into French for use in Burkina Faso and Senegal. Training in English was conducted in Uganda and Sierra Leone.

Teacher Training Participants

Preschool teacher training was originally intended for preschool and primary grade teachers; however, school directors wanted all of their teachers to experience the training. School directors also wanted to participate. Other schools in the area were invited to participate when places were available. In Senegal teachers from private centers attended as well as teachers from Catholic and Muslim schools. Usually a maximum of 35 participants are accepted for the training sessions. The training is conducted for four or five days, depending on local circumstances.

Philosophy of the Training

The primary theme of the training is empowerment. Teachers are empowered to use their own ideas and creativity to plan curriculum based on the needs of their students. It is hoped that teachers, in turn, will empower their students to have a role in organizing and conducting learning experiences. The curriculum is child centered rather than teacher centered.

The training is organized with a constructivist theory of learning. A variety of childhood development learning theories and approaches are incorporated to include Piaget, Vygotsky, Erikson, Montessori, and the High/Scope program. The content of the training is congruent with the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) Global Guidelines Assessment, particularly the sections on curriculum and teaching strategies. Mastery learning developed by Benjamin Bloom is included to meet the needs of teachers of older students. The mastery learning model proposes that all students can achieve successfully in school if the teacher sets up the conditions of instruction and assessment to monitor each student's progress. Elementary school teachers found this method to be particularly helpful in their classrooms.

The training is designed to provide participants with the same active learning strategies that they will be using with their students, such as student-initiated activities, active student participation in learning, and student demonstration of understanding new concepts by using them in application activities (Wortham, undated).

Components of the Training

There are five topics in the teacher-training program:

a. Principles of child development.
b. Preschool framework of developmental domains and objectives (a scope and sequence of curriculum objectives).

c. Child-centered curriculum (the process of planning a constructivist curriculum and constructing materials).
d. Classroom management.
e. Teaching strategies and assessment.

Each topic has specific objectives and activities to achieve the objectives.

Implementation of the Training

After the first training is completed, preschool and elementary teachers have the responsibility to use what they have learned within the context of their classroom and the grade level they are teaching. For both preschool and elementary teachers, it means moving from total group learning to work with smaller groups for part of the day and to establish learning centers. Some teachers without child furniture locate learning centers on large rugs. Others who have small tables and chairs can plan for four children to work at the table center at a time. Another possibility is to have several tables form a center. The process was slow at first, especially with the large numbers of children in a classroom.

Teachers of elementary classrooms had to transition from traditional rote learning to constructivist, student centered learning. First and second grade teachers did not find the process too difficult. They also appreciated the experiences many children were having in preschool prior to entering first grade. As trained teachers shared elements of the training with teachers who had not had the training, the transition process became easier.

A continuing problem for the teachers is the availability of materials. During the rainy season, resources from nature are readily available to teacher math and cognitive concepts, especially in the preschool classrooms. Animals and food crops growing nearby provide a rich source of possibilities. To the contrary, during the dry season the environment is bare and resources are scarce. Teachers must be even more creative when planning lessons using concrete materials.

Training the Trainers

An important component of teacher training is to transition the training to local educators in a country. In some countries such as Sierra Leone, strong teachers were included among the trainers. In Burkina Faso and Senegal, education administrators wanted their school directors to become the trainers. In Burkina Faso, the district education inspectors also became trainers. By 2008, the transition of the training was completed in Burkina Faso. The transition was completed in Senegal in 2009.

Case Studies of Preschool Educators and Classrooms

Many of the educators in Senegal have participated in the training program since the first sessions held in 2004. Four of those educators are featured in this section. All of them have participated in the program from the beginning. Among them three are preschool teachers; Barbacour Massely, Fatou Kebe, and Apsa Ndiaye. The fourth is Mamour Seck, the school director of Felane School. All are located in the Fatick District in Senegal.

Barbacour Massely

Mr. Massely is the preschool teacher at Marouth School. WCR built his classroom when the training project was initiated in Senegal. The local village chief and elders hired Barbacour. Because the first preschool teachers were not included in government salaries, the villagers raised the money for his pay for the first year.

At first, Mr. Massely was a very shy, solemn teacher. He conducted his children's activities with almost military precision. Although he was very serious, the children seemed comfortable with him and thrived in the consistency of routines. He conducted many classes outdoors. He taught lessons using a stick in the sandy yard. The children demonstrated their understanding with the same stick. He would have about a third of the class outdoors at a time for a lesson, while the other children worked independently inside the classroom.

After six years as a preschool teacher, Barbacour has grown more confident and relaxed. He now enjoys interacting with the other teachers and takes a leadership role in teacher training sessions. As the result of the training, he has moved from whole class instruction to small group instruction. He has changed from all teacher-directed instruction to giving students responsibility for many activities (Fig. 4.2).

Fatou Kebe

Mrs. Kebe is a local woman who lives in the vicinity of Felane School. Her children are grown. When Felane School was selected to have a preschool classroom, she volunteered to be the teacher. She received some training through a federal project in Fatick and subsequently participated in the first WCR training. Her first classroom was a makeshift room constructed of millet stalks that was attached at the end of the school building. Local villagers later constructed a small, open concrete building with a thatch roof for learning centers. She conducted large group activities in a former storeroom.

Although she has no formal teacher training, over time Mrs. Kebe has become recognized with the educational community for her excellence as a teacher. More families would like to have their children in the Felane preschool. Recently, Felane

Fig. 4.2 Mr. Massely prepares a small group lesson outside the classroom

has transitioned from a community to a government school. New quarters have been constructed for resident teachers, and Fatou has moved classes into the three small rooms that formerly served as housing. The government has hired two additional teachers who work as a team with Fatou. Regardless of her lack of formal education, she is recognized as the head teacher of the three classrooms.

Fatou is a warm and enthusiastic teacher. In contrast to Barbacour Massely's serious approach to teaching, she is like a loving mother. The children call her "Auntie" which is common with younger children who have a female teacher.

Apsa Ndiaye

Mrs. Ndiaye is a young mother of two children. Her son is about 12 years old and her daughter has just turned three. She and her family live in the village of Diaoule near the Diaoule community school. Apsa taught in a community preschool that was established prior to the WCR program. When teacher training was conducted through WCR, she participated. Although her center location is several blocks from Diaoule School, her program is now considered to be part of the elementary school.

Her center is currently in a small building with two rooms. She partners with another teacher and they have organized their classes by age levels.

During the first teacher training, Apsa had a new baby. When the baby was hungry, her son would carry the baby to school and Apsa would nurse her. After the baby had been fed, Apsa sent her back home with her son or carried her on her back for part of the day until there was a break and she could take her home.

In subsequent training sessions over the past several years, Apsa has also developed into a leader both as a teacher, and as a model to demonstrate teaching strategies. During one training she brought some of her students and demonstrated how she teachers a child-centered lesson. At the most recent training session she demonstrated how to conduct Piaget conservation tasks with young children. Apsa is an example of younger women who are training to become preschool teachers in an expanding program.

Mamour Seck

Mamour Seck is the director of Felane School. Felane is located in one of the most remote villages in the vicinity. The school is sometimes difficult to locate, even for people who are somewhat familiar with the area. Felane is one of the smaller elementary schools, but it is an example of what a school can become with the right leadership.

When Mr. Seck found that WCR could no longer fund preschool classrooms, he set out to find a way to have one at Felane. As was described in the information about Fatou Kebe, he started with a millet shack built by villagers and gradually built the program up to three classrooms in a small building.

Mr. Seck has participated in all of the seven teacher-training sessions, first as a participant and later as the major trainer for the program. Although he spoke little in the first series of training, he became a fervent supporter of preschool education. He worked to establish a strong preschool program, even though his school was located in an area without financial resources. He developed very supportive school committees that were willing to help with the preschool project. The villagers were resourceful in acquiring materials to construct the first classrooms. The school committee managed to buy small tables and chairs soon after the preschool opened. When the classroom was expanded into the old teacher housing rooms, the villagers painted the classrooms. His role in the development and expansion of preschool classrooms and lead teacher trainer is significant.

Conclusion

Preschool environments are a relatively new addition to elementary school programs. Establishing classrooms has been very difficult with little in the way of financial resources for building construction. Nevertheless, preschool teacher training combined

with a national movement to include preschools with elementary schools, has resulted in a rapid growth of new preschools. The teacher-training program conducted in West Africa since 2004 has impacted hundreds of teachers and thousands of children. The project initiated by WCR was seriously affected by the recession when funding declined. In 2009, the charity was reduced to providing support for a small home for four orphan girls in Sierra Leone. The ACEI, based in the United States, adopted the teacher-training program in West Africa and provided financial support for a training event in Senegal in November, 2010. From the initial training of 35 participants in 2004, subsequent trainings included more and more of the schools in the Fatick district. By 2007, the WCR process of targeting specific schools for training was abandoned in favor of welcoming all interested schools to become participating schools. In 2010, 10 preschool teachers were given preschool classroom materials provided by ACEI members.

In 2009, preschool programs officially became a part of elementary schools in Senegal through a change in national policy. Preschool programs will be added to all government schools and presumably to community schools as well. The training sessions in 2009 had a large number of new, young female teachers who are now becoming teachers in additional preschool classrooms. There are also administrators in the district education offices with responsibility for the preschool programs.

In Senegal, plans are being made to move the training to new locations in the district to provide access to more preschool programs. With the added support from ACEI's international outreach, the training for preschool and primary teachers in Senegal has entered a new era.

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Chapter 5
Kindergarten Environments in Reggio Emilia, Bologna, Modena, and Parma, Italy

In Search of Quality

Dolores Stegelin and Luciano Cecconi

Introduction

Globally, early childhood educators have been influenced by the municipally operated Reggio Emilia preschools of northern Italy (Edwards et al. 1998; New 1990, 1993). There are, however, three types of preschool settings in Italy—state, municipal, and private. The last year of the preschool experience is equivalent to the kindergarten year in the United States, and the preschool programs are also referred to as kindergartens. Italy is a progressive country that has embraced quality early childhood programs beginning with the post-World War II (WWII) era. Italy offers government-supported preschool education with over 94 % attendance; the program is full-day, five days a week and operates from early September through the end of June (Corsaro et al. 2002, p. 335) (Fig. 5.1).

The authors of this chapter conducted a pilot study of the ACEI Global Guidelines Assessment instrument in the northern Emilia Romagna region of Italy, including teachers from all three types of kindergarten classrooms. In this chapter the authors discuss kindergarten environments for young children 3 to 6 years of age. In addition, the results of a study of classroom environments using the global guidelines in these three kindergarten types are presented. Kindergarten classrooms in the northern sector of Italy—Bologna, Modena, Reggio Emilia, and Parma—are described in this chapter.

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Fig. 5.1 Basilica in Northern Italy. (Photo courtesy of Dolores Stegelin)

Historical Perspective

Italy is a democratic republic organized on the basis of a constitution developed in 1946–1947, coming into force in January 1948 (OECD 2001, p. 8). Two major sources of influence have shaped Italy's economic resources: WWII and the European Union. In order to understand the kindergartens of northern Italy, it is important to also understand their historical, political, and economic contexts. WWII marked an important time for Italy, and the emergence of kindergartens for young children reflected a commitment to both social capital and economic investment. During the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, several progressive social policies were implemented to improve the living conditions of women, families, and children (New 1993). The legislation of this era represented significant efforts to advance women's rights (OECD 2001; New 1993). The progressive early education settings in Italy that developed were the result of fierce political struggles involving political entities representing the left and the right, labor unions, and the Catholic Church (Corsaro et al. 2002, p. 336). Within this national political and social context, regional and grass roots educational experimentation arose in the Emilia Romagna area of northern Italy. The care and education of young children were increasingly seen as a public concern and responsibility. Italy has arguably the most progressive early education system in the world, along with France (OECD 2001; Edwards et al. 1998; Corsaro and Emiliani 1992; New 1990). Two policies that contributed to major changes in Italian family life were those that supported parental leave and the establishment of pre-primary schools for children 3–6 years of age (New 1993). Today, the principle of universal access to services for families with young children enjoys wide political and public support. The commitment to establishing and maintaining high quality early childhood programs is clearly visible, and early childhood education is an educational arena where enthusiasm, initiative, autonomy, and sensitivity to local needs can be pursued (OECD 2001). Among the most noted educational philosophers

who contributed to the establishment of quality early education was Bruno Ciari, who argued for communal oversight and management of all educational life and an active role for parents in most activities of the schools (Corsaro et al. 2002). Thus, the responsibility for the provision of high quality early care and education was placed into the arms of the surrounding community, the parents and families, and the school itself.

The Child Population and Evolution of Kindergarten

In Italy, the kindergarten population includes all children from 3 to 6 years of age. While this is true throughout the country, the northern region of Italy has made the greatest progress in establishing a quality and effective system of kindergarten settings that includes three types of funding support: state, municipal, and private (OECD 2001; New 1993). By the late 1970s, neighborhood councils were established, and their merger with municipal governments created a synergy that has resulted in the development of grassroots, progressive, innovative, and responsive forms of educational reform and school management. Today, nearly all kindergarten children from ages 3 to 6 years are actively engaged in the preschool or pre-primary education system.

Diversity and Early Education

While the size of the Italian population is relatively stable, qualitative changes are occurring that are both dramatic and subtle (OECD 2001). During the 1900s, Italy was a fairly homogenous society with an emphasis on intergenerational relationships and ancestry. Due to global economic unrest, an increasing number of immigrant families are settling in Italy. Over 1 million immigrants have settled in Italy in the past decade, with particularly high representation in the more industrial cities of northern Italy. In addition, internal migration has occurred since WWII as families moved from rural areas to the cities. These forces together have created demands on the kindergarten system of northern Italy. The numbers of children have increased and their needs are more complex due to language, cultural, and economic characteristics of their migrant families. Another trend in Italy is smaller families as women assume more active roles in the workforce. The birth rate has declined from 2.67 in 1965 to 1.19 in 1998 (OECD 2001, p. 12), and these demographic and societal trends are reflected in all three types of kindergartens in northern Italy.

Types of Kindergartens

There are three types of kindergartens; the private—typically operated by the Catholic Church—is the oldest. As early as 1869 policies were developed, advocating for preschools overseen by the king. For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,

the Catholic Church sponsored out-of-home care for disadvantaged children in the form of charitable social services, religious training, and family support (OECD 2001). The Italian family historically has viewed the role of caring for infants and toddlers as a family function. The desire to provide a system of quality care and education for preschool children began at the turn of the twentieth century. Maria Montessori's establishment of her approach to working with young was in place in Rome by 1907 and later in Milan and other parts of the country (OECD 2001; Morrison 2009). But it was at the end of WWII that interest grew in creating systematic out of home experiences for 3 to 6 year old children. In the northern part of Italy the cities of Reggio Emilia, Modena, Bologna, and Parma were especially active in developing a system of kindergartens to serve this child population and especially children of working mothers. In 1968, the government passed Law 444 providing national funds for pre-primary schools and proclaiming the right of Italian children to pre-primary education (Edwards et al 1998; OCED 2001). This law marked a shift in perspective: Pre-primary education should be provided in response to children's needs and rights rather than in response to maternal employment. This law also led to the establishment of a second and third type of kindergarten or *scuola materna* system: state and municipal. Thus, the oldest form of kindergarten is the privately run, followed by the state-run; the most contemporary type of kindergarten is the municipally operated.

Teacher Qualifications in the Kindergarten

The original state-run *scuola materna* for 3 to 6 year old children had rather straightforward requirements for the teaching staff: young (less than 35 years old), and a vocational high school diploma from a specialized *scuola magistrale* (3 year secondary school) (OCED 2001). These teachers competed with others for a position in the state-run kindergartens; the selection process included examinations, evaluation of professional qualifications such as degrees or diplomas, and experience in working with young children or experimental projects. Criteria for the selection of preschool teachers were developed at the local level, and there was considerable variation from region to region in teacher selection criteria. In 1969, the Ministry of Education passed and then implemented a set of *Guidelines for Educational Activity* in the state-run *scuola materna.* An emphasis was placed on working with parents, religious education, and play. Thus a network of kindergarten settings grew and came under a more unified set of guidelines related to teacher qualifications, selection criteria, curriculum, and overall management. The state-run preschools provided meals free of charge and teachers' salaries were paid by the state. State funds were also provided, in some cases, for the provision of free meals for children attending the newly emerging municipal as well as the private (primarily Catholic) preschool settings. Today, there is more homogeneity in teacher training and preparation for all kindergartens: Teachers are now required to have formal training in a pre-primary college preparation course.

Organizational Features Across Kindergarten Types

There are a number of important organizational features of the kindergarten system. One includes the policy of keeping the same group of about 20 children together for 3 years with the same two teachers (Corsaro et al. 2002). This practice is also observed in the 5 years of elementary school, and elementary schools are funded entirely by the national government. Thus, continuity is seen in building the relationships between the children and their teachers. In addition, most preschool settings include at least 3 different classrooms representing 3-, 4-, and 5-year olds. Therefore, the social context of the preschool experience is with same-aged or multi-aged peers but within a range of 3 through 5 years.

Contemporary northern Italy reflects these three types of kindergartens: state, municipal, and private. Funding sources for each of the kindergarten types vary, and new collaborative partnerships are developing, which reflect innovative and shared funding. In this section, the similarities and differences across types of kindergartens are described. The historical roots of early care and education in Italy, both pre- and post-WWII, bring together a shared philosophy and purpose for these educational settings for young children. A study of classroom environments using the global guidelines in the Emilia Romagna region

In this section, the authors describe the research study conducted in four towns in northern Italy in collaboration with other researchers from the USA and ACEI that resulted in the development of the Italian version of the GGA tool. Described here are the translation process of the ACEI Global Guidelines Assessment from English into Italian and then the participation of the kindergarten teachers in the pilot testing of the Italian GGA in kindergarten classrooms in Parma, Modena, Bologna, and Reggio Emilia, Italy.

Translation and Piloting of the GGA-IGA Tool[1]

The translation of the GGA into the GGA-IGA (Italian version) consisted of many phases that are now described. The first translation of the GGA tool into Italian was submitted for appraisal to an expert in kindergarten assessment tools. On the basis of the expert's observations, a second draft was created. The second translation was submitted for appraisal to an expert in translation of educational texts. The consensus group, together with the first translator and the two experts, discussed and agreed on the text of the third translation.

The text of the third translation was presented to a group of 12 kindergarten educators—twice as many as initially planned—known as the review committee. This group of kindergarten teachers was asked to revise the text. The consensus

[1] The following people have joined, in different times and with different roles, the Italian Consensus Group led by Luciano Cecconi: Francesca Corradi, Antonio Gariboldi, Giuseppe Malpeli, Andrea Pintus, Maria Alessandra Scalise.

group assigned the review committee the task of examining the GGA tool, from the viewpoint of educators who work in kindergartens on a daily basis and to formulate observations and suggestions, based on a structured worksheet designed by the consensus group.The consensus group examined and discussed the observations made by the review committee of kindergarten teachers. The fourth translation was prepared on the basis of the observations made by the review committee that the consensus group had accepted.

Pilot Study of the ACEI Global Guidelines Assessment in the Emilia Romagna Region

When the Italian version of the GGA was finalized, the next step was to pilot test the instrument in Italian early childhood classrooms. The pilot study consisted of several stages. First, the consensus group asked the review committee of kindergarten teachers if they would be willing to conduct the field test of the tool at their schools. Seven of the twelve members accepted the proposal, and they were joined by nine additional assessment participants for a total of sixteen assessment participants in the field test. The consensus group met with the group appointed to conduct the field test at the School of Education of the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia in order to present the project goal; structure of the assessment tool; and procedure for applying the tool itself. After that meeting, two members of the consensus group were appointed to follow the participants throughout the period of field testing and to make themselves available to them whenever assistance was requested.

The field test was conducted in October 2008 involving eight kindergartens from the Emilia Romagna region for a total of sixteen classrooms: two from Bologna, one from Modena, three from Parma and two from Reggio Emilia. Of these eight schools, four are state schools, two are municipal schools and two are private schools. Sixteen assessment participants were involved, including nine educators, three school principals, two pedagogists, one form teacher, and one member of the auxiliary staff. Five of the participants have a university degree and the rest have a high school graduation certificate with a specific qualification for kindergarten education. In terms of length of service, the sixteen assessment participants had an average of 15.3 years' work experience in kindergartens and an average of 5.5 years of working at the schools where they were actually conducting the assessment.

The consensus group examined the materials gathered during the field test (thirty-two questionnaires) and designed the codification process for the open questions 'Classroom Examples' and 'Comments'. The consensus group also prepared a worksheet to be used by the codifiers. The consensus group set up a laboratory of university students for encoding the open questions; the students were given appropriate training for the task. At this university laboratory, the students encoded the open questions and entered all the data relating to the other items in the Excel spread sheets prepared by the consensus group.The consensus group gathered all the data and forwarded to ACEI so that the data could be added to the ACEI-GGA database.

Reliability of the GGA-IGA Tool

In order to measure the reliability of the GGA-IGA tool, the group created a new dataset to calculate the average deviation between the assessments made by the rater pairs who assessed the same section within the various schools. The analysis reveals that the highest rater agreement was in two areas: Area 3 (early childhood educators and caregivers) and Area 5 (young children with special needs). The greatest disagreement was recorded in the other three areas: Area 1 (environment and physical space), Area 2 (curriculum content and pedagogy), and Area 4 (partnership with families and communities). This difference in level of agreement is essentially the same, both for the principal items and the parallel ones ('Classroom Examples', 'Comments').

If the same analysis is repeated in sub-categories, the results show that: The two subcategories with the highest rater agreement are 'Common Philosophy and Common Aims' and 'Staff and Service Providers'. It is interesting to note that both of these subcategories belong to Area 5, thereby confirming the high degree of internal correlation in this area. Secondly, the two subcategories with the lowest rater agreement are "Learning Materials" and "Opportunities for Family and Community Participation". In this case as well, it is interesting to note that the two sub-categories belonging to Areas 2 and 4 respectively show a rater agreement which is below the average. The three items that recorded the highest rater agreement (inter-rater reliability) and the three items with the lowest agreement were: item/area: highest agreement: 37/3, 58/4, 81/5 and lowest agreement: 15/1, 51/4, 61/4.

Recommendations to ACEI

On the basis of these observations, and in order to increase the use of the parallel items, the Italian group presented to ACEI two suggestions: (1) more time should be dedicated to training raters before administering the assessment tool in order to increase their motivation and provide them with a practical action guide for identifying and recording of examples; and (2) the procedure for administering the assessment tool should be revisited, for example, by attributing more importance to identifying and recording examples. If parallel items represent the peculiar characteristic of the assessment tool, then they should be allotted an adequate period of time for the procedure.

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Part III
Curriculum Content and Pedagogy

Chapter 6
Kindergarten in Russia's Far East
The Effect of Climate

Elizabeth Jill Sandell and Olga Victorovna Klypa

Introduction

Guidelines for quality childhood care and education may include some general and generic principles that apply to all children and families. However, the specific details vary according to characteristics of life in various parts of the world. Child care and education in the city of Magadan, in Russia's Far East, is no exception. In 2008, the city of Magadan reorganized the programming and renovated the building for Kindergarten 3. This chapter addresses how leaders have adapted childhood care and education in Kindergarten 3 to the region's geography, economy, and culture.

Brief History of Kindergarten in Russia

The first private kindergarten appeared in St. Petersburg, Russia in the early 1860s. In Russia, the term "kindergarten" or "children's garden" is translated from the original German literally into the Russian words ″детский сад″ (pronounced "dyet'—ski sod") for "children's garden." It is a combination of the word for children (dyet'—ski) and the word for garden (sod). Детский сад usually includes all-day programming and services for children. The term refers to programs of education and child care for children from birth to age six or seven years (King 1963, Sandell et al. 2010, Taratukhina et al. 2006).

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The Bolsheviks organized kindergartens immediately after coming to power in 1917. During Soviet times, education was highly centralized and state ideology was a major component of the national curriculum. Education in general and, along with it, the kindergarten, was oriented toward work and was used to indoctrinate children and youth with right thinking about cultural and social roles (King 1963). Those who disagreed with the Soviet government often found themselves sent to forced-labor prison camps, such as those in Russia's Far East and the Magadan region. The city of Magadan was established on the Sea of Okhotsk almost 75 years ago as the administrative center for Stalin's GULAG system of prison camps in the region. Millions of people died before the camps were closed in 1956 (Klypa 2008).

Russia's Far East

Russia's Far East includes most of the eastern side of Russia's 11 time zones. The Far Eastern Federal District (FEFD) includes 10 regions (similar to states or provinces in North America) in an area roughly one-third of the total territory in the Russian Federation. The climate and geography mean long and harsh periods of cold and dark and mountains rich in minerals, including gold, silver, and uranium. Safety concerns include severe winter weather and traveling distances. Most local residents are careful about exposure to the elements between November and April (Bobylev et al. 2007).

The region includes descendents of several indigenous people groups that contribute to a diverse population. The Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East (RAIPON) unites a total population of approximately 250,000 people from 41 indigenous groups, including Aleut, Kamchadal, Koryak, Nivkhy, Saami, Chelkancy, Chuvancy, Chukchi, Evenk, and Even. The traditional occupations of hunting and fishing continue to provide sustenance to isolated groups throughout the region, as well as for native residents of the city of Magadan (RAIPON 2010).

The Far East has always been regarded as a peripheral part of Russia. Residents themselves refer to the western part of Russia as "the continent," emphasizing their feelings of isolation. The transition to a market economy led to a dramatic rise in costs of transportation and weaker economic ties with other regions of Russia. The economic crisis in the Far East was more serious and protracted than elsewhere in the country. More than 25 % of the FEFD population lives below the Russian national poverty level. The decline in numbers of jobs was accompanied by a sharp increase in the cost of living and a decrease in life expectancy, provoking serious population losses. Magadan region lost half its population between 1990 and 2005. Overall, the FEFD lost 18 % of its population between 1990 and 2005. The population is less than one person per square kilometer. The city of Magadan itself is now about 120,000 persons (Bobylev et al. 2007).

Fig. 6.1 Magadan School in Far East Russia. (Photo courtesy of Olga Klypa)

Kindergarten in the Far East

Programs for early education and care have existed since Magadan was founded almost 75 years ago. Those earliest programs cared for children of prisoners or soldiers sent to Stalin's camps while their parents cut timber or mined uranium and gold (Klypa 2008).

Today, there are a number of early education programs that receive government funds in Magadan. Although relatively small in number, there has been an increase in the number of schools offering co-located pre-school and primary education programs. However, tuition fees from families pay for about 20 % of the cost of care and education for very young children. Just over 50 % of very young children attend institutions. This number has been falling since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, due to demographic, state budgetary and household income reasons (Klypa 2008) (Fig. 6.1).

Learning Environments

Borzunova and Vorochay (2010) used the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) Global Guidelines Assessment (2006) to review and report on characteristics of Kindergarten 3 in Magadan, Russian Federation. This school is licensed for 175 children between 1.6 and 7 years old. The children may attend school between 7:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. The children are divided among ten groups: six groups for general development and four for special education (e.g., serious health conditions or physical disabilities). Groups are formed according to age: from 1.6 to 2 years, 2 to 3 years, 3 to 4 years, 4 to 5 years, 5 to 6 years, and 6 to 7 years.

The program components are organized so that children acquire knowledge and correct deviations, as well as to develop personality, acquire learning skills, enhance

self-concept, and orient to the surrounding world. The fundamental direction and content of the Kindergarten includes: revival, preservation and transfer of meanings and values of national culture, and love for nature and the native land in which youngsters live and develop (Borzunova and Vorochay 2010).

Safety, Nutrition, and Health

A regional security company coordinates video surveillance cameras, a two-button emergency alarm system, night and weekend security guards, automatic fire alarm, and a voice warning system. The school practices evacuation drills two times each year. In the case of weather emergencies, children may be housed for long periods until it is safe to return home (Borzunova and Vorochay 2010).

To teach children, the basics of life safety, teachers implement the program "OBZH" approved by the Ministry of Education. In organized classes, everyday conversation, thematic games, entertainment and holidays, children learn the basics of personal safety at home, on the street, in public places in nature, fire safety regulations, traffic rules, and safety rules when communicating with strangers (Borzunova and Vorochay 2010).

Russia's Far East has a very short agricultural season that limits the locally available fruits and vegetables. Kindergarten 3 provides children with balanced nutrition through four meals a day for children in the general education groups and five meals a day in groups of children with special needs. The menus are based on the 10-day menu approved by the government. Meals include fruits, vegetables, seafood, meat, and bakery pastry.

According to Borzunova and Vorochay (2010), even children who are ill are allowed to attend Kindergarten Number 3. So, there are medical and treatment rooms, including an isolation room and nurse's office ("fiziokabinet"). Positive child health is facilitated in Kindergarten 3 in several ways:

1. Providing for the psychological security of the child's personality (e.g., a friendly style of communication among adults and children, the use of relaxation techniques in the schedule of the day, relaxation visualizations called "psihogimnastika," etc.).
2. Improving the educational process (e.g., hygienic procedures, health routines and schedules, consideration of individual child's characteristics and interests, etc.).
3. Forming the healthy culture of the children (e.g., knowledge about health, skills to be healthy, etc.) (Fig. 6.2).

Outdoor Environments

The two-storied building and its playground is located in the courtyard of a residential apartment neighborhood, away from industrial enterprises and highways. The courtyard is surrounded by many large apartment buildings, which soften the

Fig. 6.2 Kindergarten classroom at Magadan School. (Photo courtesy of Olga Klypa)

winter winds. The outdoor environment is a well-equipped green area, with a variety of plant species of the Magadan region. The playground includes slides, swings, arbors, sandbox, small houses, cars, buses, and trains (Borzunova and Vorochay 2010).

Indoor Environments

Borzunova and Vorochay (2010) report that leaders have incorporated unique regional elements in the indoor environment in Kindergarten 3. The remodeled building includes: music room, gymnasium, sensory room, promenade terraces, mini-museums ("Severyachok" and "Russian Dacha"), a speech therapy room, and a nature conservatory.

Each classroom is equipped with "privacy corners," equipment for role-play about home roles and relationships, activities in the outdoors, etc. Classrooms also include comfortable chairs, sofas, and ottomans. Each group has its own sleeping room, with individual cribs or beds.

There is a separate hall for physical education classes, with a gymnasium, swimming pool, saunas, spaces for physiotherapy and herbal medicine, massage, and a walking veranda. Equipment that promotes strength and flexibility includes expanders, exercise bicycles, a variety of treadmills (called "Hummingbird," "Clock," and "Running on Waves"), and modular equipment for children (including those who are disabled) (Borzunova and Vorochay 2010).

Table 6.1 Number and length of lessons each week for each age group

Age group (years)	Number of lessons	Length of lesson
1.6 to 3	10	8–10 min each
3 to 4	11	15 min each
4 to 5	12	20 min each
5 to 6	15	25 min each
6 to 7	17	30 min each

Curriculum

Schedule

In all age groups, organized classes are held according to the ages and psycho-physiological features of children, the normative requirements of state educational standards and sanitary norms and rules. Table.6.1 shows the number and time of lessons for each age group.

Classes that require higher cognitive activity and mental emphasis (language development, familiarization with the environment, nature and social phenomena, the formation of mathematical concepts) are held in the morning and during the days of the highest performance of children (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday). To prevent fatigue, these busy lessons are alternated with times related to culture, music and swimming. There are also special lessons about artistic literature, painting, appliqué work, modeling, construction, and skills of manual labor. Lessons are divided by ten-minute transition breaks for little physical songs and games, known as "fizkultminutka" (Borzunova and Vorochay 2010).

Culture

Teachers incorporate cultural content into programs such as "Russian Folk Culture" and "Severyachok: Children of the North." The "Russian Folk Culture" features a mini-museum and classes about Russian culture. "Severyachok: Children of the North" includes materials and information about the indigenous people of the region.

The school has created a mini-museum "Russian Dacha." This mini-museum displays the old household items of the Russian people. Conducting classes in the museum helps children to experience the world as a Russian family lived decades ago (Borzunova and Vorochay 2010). Teachers introduce children to Russian culture, music, and entertainment, where children sing Russian folk songs, learn the dances, and play instruments. Teachers and children prepare skits and plays about Russian fairy tales, showing them to younger pupils and their parents. Children also learn about sports and games, the rules that children learn in physical education activities, in daily games in groups, and as they walk.

The program, "Severyachok: Children of the North," was developed by Frolova and Davydova (2001) at North-eastern State University's Center of Indigenous People of the North. The program provides children with experiences related to the lives of indigenous people groups. Teachers lead children to conduct studies and interviews about the people's lives and work. Children see everyday objects from the natives of the Far North–East and learn how people used these objects in life. Children also listen to stories and examine the familiar scenes depicted on the walls of the museum (Borzunova and Vorochay 2010).

Physical Education

Kindergarten 3 employs a teacher of "physical culture" (Borzunova and Vorochay 2010). This emphasis uses knowledge gained in class in non-traditional environments. For example, in the swimming pool, children learn physical skills. The teachers also incorporate poetry, music, and topical subjects about the regional animals and plants. In addition, children learn to care for their natural environment through working in the school's garden and through field trips to collect flowers, berries, and mushrooms that grow in the region. Parents join children in carving bird feeders to hang on the school's grounds to nourish the birds during the long winter. During the summer months, children may participate on hikes and excursions to the mountains and the sea. Children also join in games, music, and sports.

In a region where winter weather keeps children indoors for six to seven months of the year, caregivers pay much attention to the physical health and development of the students. In Kindergarten 3, 61 % of the time that children are in the kindergarten involves some type of active motor activity. The head of physical education emphasizes balancing physical activity with rest and relaxation. Teachers plan for the level of preparedness of children, their personalities, and the type of motor activity suitable for the developmental abilities of the children.

The school has implemented a pilot health program, "Healthy Baby," developed to strengthen children with weakened immune systems (Borzunova and Vorochay 2010). The program includes activities such as:

1. "Hardening" (contrasting air baths, the total UV, water, rubbing with flannel mittens) to improve the immune defenses;
2. Immunostimulatory therapy (oxolinic ointment dibasol, fish oil "Tyulenol") to improve immunity in frequently ill children;
3. Vitamin (vitamin A, special vitamin drinks, etc.) to increase the activity of metabolic reactions;
4. Swimming pool, sauna, and wellness bar to increase blood circulation and cardiac output of blood;
5. Physiotherapy (individually prescribed by a doctor); corrective gymnastics classes and phototherapy, inhalation, magneto-infrared laser therapy;

6. Massage (muscle massage, underwater massage) to reduce bronchial hyperactivity, to improve strength and endurance of respiratory muscles;
7. Herbal medicine (aromatherapy, gargling) to increase the reserves of health and resistance for frequently ill children.

The school also implements a series of activities intended to foster good health among all children: daily morning exercise, fresh air, fitness classes twice a week, classes in the pool, breathing exercises, acupressure, jogging, corrective exercises, extensive washing, finger gymnastics, the ionization of air in group rooms, physical therapy twice a year, and oxygen cocktail (Borzunova and Vorochay 2010).

Teachers and Caregivers

Teachers in Russia's Far East are generally prepared by North Eastern State University in Magadan. This university has its roots as a pedagogical institute established in 1961 and includes faculty members related to early childhood education, elementary school, secondary school, and family education. The university has a history of international partnerships with schools in Germany, Japan, and the United States (Klypa 2008). The university hosts the Center of Indigenous People of the North, which features research and resources on regional studies.

Russia is revising its higher education system to meet principles established by Ministers of Education in the European nations in Bologna, Italy. Teacher preparation programs are looking for scientific approaches, objective assessments, and additional conceptual theories. Universities are also adapting active learning strategies and field experience designs to their own unique communities (Sandell et al. 2010).

The administrators of Kindergarten 3 have extensive training and each has between 9 and 21 years of experience. Teachers have years of experience and specialized training (e.g., working with children with physical disabilities).

Partners

Parents and Families

Borzunova and Vorochay (2010) report that teachers seek to ensure the integrity of the pedagogical process by actively involving parents in the kindergarten. In working with parents, teachers use such forms such as: general and group parent meetings, consultations, lectures, conferences, surveys, open house days, joint celebrations, and entertainment.

To celebrate national holidays, parents participate with their children in baking Russian pies and learning songs to demonstrate their abilities and creativity. The school is decorated with dolls, toys, children's drawings, and various panels of natural material made by hand by teachers, children and parents (Klypa 2008).

The entrance features benches, chairs, and tables in the reception room where parents can await the end of the school day. Stairs and hallways are equipped with specific educational work: music education, speech, educational psychologist, road safety, "Rights of the Child" poster, gallery of children's works, and information for parents.

Community

The teachers of Kindergarten 3 work closely with various organizations of the city (Borzunova and Vorochay 2010): the Institute for Advanced Studies, teachers Magadan region, Magadan management education, urban and methodical study, North Eastern State University, educational institutions of the city, various children's art centers, urban environmental center, Pushkin Library, puppet theater, local history museum, health agencies, and other public organizations of the city (on the basis of cooperation contracts).

The aim of cooperation with these agencies is as follows: optimizing educational and teaching process in kindergartens, ensuring medical oversight of health of students, exchange of experience, the injection of new teaching and health-promoting technology, and improving the skill level of teachers (Sandell et al. 2010).

The kindergarten has developed its own system of forms of interaction with these institutions: the holding of joint activities, excursions, puppet shows, plays, music, conducting teaching activities, and organization of sporting activities. The advantage of constructing such work with the agencies is that the educational–teaching process involves not only teachers but also parents, including teachers from institutions for additional education (Sandell et al. 2010).

Special Needs

Kindergarten 3 includes, by design, children with a variety of developmental and physical challenges, including speech delays and cognitive delays.

Speech therapists provide corrective training for children who have impairments in speech in a logopaedic office. The office includes individual, adjustable child desks with built-in mirrors, educational diagnostic and didactic material, various games, massagers, posters, and other equipment. The therapist uses the materials to diagnose and identify children with speech disorders, for the production and automation of sounds, correction and development of phonemic processes, lexical and grammatical structure of speech, and non-verbal processes and functions.

An educational psychologist works with children in a sensory room. Children with intellectual disabilities or with problems in adaptation and behavior receive individualized attention. Classes in the sensory room are integrated on several fronts: prevention (prevention of neuroses), correction (development of cognitive processes, creativity and motivation) and relaxation (calms, increases the level of confidence).

This therapy has many positive effects: reduced restlessness and aggressive behavior, improved emotional state, stress, increased brain activity, or lowered hyperkinetic muscle tone. To achieve these goals, the sensory room is divided into zones, equipped with: a dry pool, lights that form a "Starry sky," a "Waterfall" from microscopic fibers that change color, transparent tubes with bubbles and a mirrored wall, tactile paths, armchairs, rotating mirror ball, the generator odors, mirror panel with colored luminous filaments, didactic materials, tactile cube, sensory board, and a variety of massage and games.

Conclusion

The development of Kindergarten 3 in Magadan, Russia demonstrates the commitment of the community to provide for its youngest citizens in an area that is dark, cold, and isolated for most of the year. Teachers and parents incorporate elements that celebrate the cultural heritage of the region. The fundamental direction and content of the Kindergarten includes revival, preservation and transfer meanings and values of national culture, and love for nature and the native land in which youngsters live and develop. They also closely guard the health and well-being of the children. In this region where winter weather keeps children indoors for most of the year, caregivers pay much attention to the physical health and development of the students.

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Chapter 7
Preserving Cultural Heritage in Kindergartens in Korea

SoYoung Kang, Guang-Lea Lee and Soonohk Hong

Introduction

Modern Koreans have been influenced by western culture since the early 1900s. Prior to the US influence, the primary goal of Korean education was to develop loyalty for parents and ancestors. With western influence, the goal is to help them become independent and responsible people, through family values and respect toward elders that are still emphasized in both home and school. Kindergarten programs serving children ages 3 to 5 emphasize building basic life skills, knowledge of Korean culture, respect for adults, appropriate behavior for positive group life, and pride for one's nation. These basic life skills help children develop identity, self-esteem, and appreciation of traditional culture. Learning about Korean heritage helps children develop a strong identity, pride, appreciation of traditions, and respect for self and other cultures and people that are necessary skills in today's global era. Thus, they will not only strive to preserve their own heritage but also further contribute to diverse cultures of all mankind. Teaching heritage will prevent the disappearance of Korean culture from the powerful wave of western cultural influences and is a key to maintaining Korean heritage.

This chapter discusses the emphasis on learning English in Kindergarten, the influence of Confucianism in Korean traditions, the emphasis of cultural heritage in early childhood curriculum, and using games and literature to preserve Korean heritage.

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Emphasis on Learning English in Kindergarten

In the 1990s, the Korean government began considering English instruction for pre-school children to strengthen the nation's global presence and to be competitive in global markets. From 1997, English became a required subject beginning in third grade. Parents, with typical high academic standards, became eager to introduce English to their pre-school age children, some even to their toddlers.

As more Korean parents demanded that children learn English in kindergarten, many kindergartens responded to parents' demand and began offering English, even though it was not a part of the National Curriculum. Parents often competed to teach English at home earlier than other parents so they blindly purchased educational materials, such as Disney movies, English books, and English songs without considering age appropriateness or quality. They pressured their children to learn English. Educators and child development specialists have become concerned about the consequences of teaching preschool English that places added stress on such young children. Also, the emphasis on English and Western culture has had the negative effect of Korean children being ignorant of their own traditions and culture. Educators have become concerned about the prevalence of American culture in Korea. Korean early childhood education programs have therefore stressed the preservation of Korean heritage.

The Influence of Confucianism in Korean Tradition

The roots of Confucianism, which is based on Confucian ideas and Confucian values, began more than one thousand years ago, from the beginnings of Chinese civilization (Eber 1986). Along with many Asian countries, Korea adopted Confucian ideas and value structure into the social, educational, and governmental fabric (Reid 1999). As Confucianism has become strongly rooted in Korean culture, Koreans have valued collectivism that focuses on groups, especially the family, over individuals.

In social relationships, Koreans who are influenced by Confucianism value hierarchy and status whereas Americans value equality (Kang 2005). In America, emphasis is placed upon equal rights, democracy, and freedom. In Korea much greater emphasis is placed upon recognizing roles, position, status, and hierarchy in social relations. For example, the father holds the highest position in a Korean family, and Korean children are taught to refer to authoritative figures, siblings, or relatives by their titles, like teacher, big sister, big brother and so on.

Most Koreans value respecting elders and positively agree that elders are in the higher rank. This also explains how Korean relationships are built in a hierarchy. Although sometimes gender influences the hierarchical relationship, often the power in Korea is related to *age*. Age plays an important role in human relationships, and it is related to respect as well. This hierarchical ladder cannot be completely removed from Korean culture due to the tradition of Confucianism in the formation of the language (Kang 2006).

Koreans have various styles and levels of speech that are used 'according to the social situation' they are in when speaking; it is principally shown by the verb endings (Vincent and Yeon 2003). Vincent and Yeon mention that although there are formal and informal languages in English, it is not as systematic and widespread as the Korean system of verb endings. Even in selecting and using the language, Koreans consider the status of the people and terms of respect, which is again related to Confucianism. As an example, the emphasis on collectivism in Korean language is also displayed in writing a mailing address. When people write an address in English, the order begins with a person's name, house number, street name, city, and the country. However, in Korea people begin with the country, city, street name, house name, and usually the person's name comes at the end. It indicates that Korean's valuing and caring of collectivism, and thinking the community or the society they belong to come first, before themselves (Kang 2005).

Overall, Koreans believe that one of the ways to bring harmony in the community is by respecting older people, and this is why hierarchical relationships can be viewed as an ethical ladder (Gutek 2005). As Gutek proposes, "the idea of an ethical hierarchy is considered necessary to creating and maintaining social harmony: everyone on the social ladder will know her or his place, duties, and responsibilities and the proper way of performing these duties" (Gutek 2005, p. 19). This is just a different and traditional way of respecting people that Korean parents and teachers strive to instill when raising and educating children.

However, as a result of the influence of western culture and the change in family structure from having many children to having one or no children, social changes in Korean society influence people's behaviors and relationship. Children are becoming more individualistic that is inconsistent with the philosophy of Confucianism, where group thoughts and sacrifice are more valued. As a result, educators and parents began to express their concern over morality and humanism. After the government decided to mandate character education in the kindergarten curriculum starting in 2013, teachers and scholars are now actively engaged in developing more appropriate kindergarten character education. The major focus is to design character education that is child centered rather than authoritative and will be appropriate for modern Korea.

Emphasis of Korean Heritage in Kindergarten

Although Korea is a modernized nation, the underlying beliefs and daily practices of its people are grounded in traditional values and lessons stemming from Confucianism, the dominant force shaping Korean culture (Park and Cho 1995). This traditional value places an emphasis on developing good human character and behavior. Parents teach children to speak politely, use good manners, respect elders, and consider the needs of others. Traditional beliefs are still very much a part of Korean society (Kim 1998). Character development is viewed as an essential part of early childhood education.

Fig. 7.1 Playing drums. (Photo courtesy of Dongsung Jeil Kindergarten)

Fig. 7.2 Observing the tea ceremony. (Photo courtesy of Dongsung Jeil Kindergarten)

The latest revision of the curriculum at the national level was first implemented in 2007. This revision includes *The Seventh National Kindergarten Curriculum* that emphasizes Korea's traditional culture and encourages children to develop respect and love for their heritage. The seventh kindergarten curriculum includes five life areas: physical, social, expressive, language, and inquiry. Specific objectives of the curriculum are: (1) to help young children develop harmonious minds and bodies and acquire basic living habits; (2) to acquire skills for living together and love for traditional culture; (3) to enable young children to express their own thoughts and feelings in creative ways; (4) to develop language skills for communication and proper language use; and (5) to explore the environment with curiosity and to respect nature (Moon et al. 2007). To foster pride and love for Korea, kindergarten children learn about the national flag and flower as well as traditional holidays, games, and artifacts. Heritage education in kindergarten includes teaching children traditional games, literature, dances, music, and arts (Figs. 7.1 and 7.2).

Teaching Heritage Using Korean Traditional Games

Korean early childhood educators focus on teaching heritage using traditional games so the children can learn, value, and preserve their traditions through engaging in a variety of hands-on activities. In exploring the origin of traditional games, it is evident that the focus is not only on entertainment but also on respecting the beliefs and values of the community, and is geared toward the preparation of effective production (Lee et al. 1987). Many folk games have been handed down from one generation to the next, and children and adults enjoy playing those games at home and school today.

Traditional children's games include spinning the top, kicking the jaegi (kicking the shuttlecock repeatedly), neolttwigi (jumping on the seasaw), janggi (Korean checkers/chess) and many more. Yet, the most popular game for both children and adults is a kind of board game with four wooden sticks. The first one to travel all the way around the board wins. It can be played individually or in a team. Neolttwigi and joolnumgi (jump rope) are more popular among girls, whereas spinning the top, and kicking the jaegi are commonly played by the boys.

Generally, the individual games are played more frequently at the initial stages of child development, but as the children get older, the focus moves to the group games that people play in teams (Kim 1994). The traditional games provide many benefits to the children at a young age. Through playing the games, the children acquire social interactions with their peers, learn how to implement strategies, and work cooperatively. This process also helps individuals to increase the use of creative, constructive, and critical thinking skills. Ultimately, people believe that teaching heritage using traditional games can provide opportunities to overcome western influence on individualism that can be viewed as a problem in Korean society today. Sometimes, Koreans interpret respect for individuals as neglecting groups (e.g., family). Even today, Koreans value group thoughts or collectivism over individualism since Confucianism still plays a major role in their society (Kang 2006).

Teaching Heritage Using Literature

Folktales are one of the world's oldest teaching tools and suitable for children because of their teaching of morals (Jung 2002; Spagnoli 1995). Today, folk literature is widely available and aids in children's exposure to Korea's rich culture (Lee 2011). It portrays values and beliefs that have guided ordinary people's lives for many centuries that adults wish to pass down to children (Kim 2004). Folk literature is extremely beneficial when children are allowed to think and reflect on what they have read (Choi and Kim 1988; Jo 2007; Lee 2011; Louie 2005; Yoon 2005). Reading folktales helps children understand the way people have thought, felt, believed, and behaved for generations (Grayson 2006; Lamme et al. 1992; Lee et al. 1974, 1989, 1992; Lee 2001; Moon 2009; Oh and Kim 2007).

Through folk literature, children learn that a person's worth is determined by his actions. Ideal human values are important to possess more than ever as Korea

has become a fast developing, westernized capitalistic country. In fact, as the world becomes more of a global community, the good character and deeds portrayed in Korean folk literature are pertinent not only to Korean children, but to children all over the world. Many Korean parents help their children by reading folktales, and engaging them in discussions. Children listen to folktales that are accessible online and through cellular phones preloaded with familiar folk tales (Lee 2011).

In kindergarten, children read popular folk literature, such as *Faerie and Woodcutter, Kongi Patgi, Hungbu and Nolbu, Sim Chung, Green Frog, The Sun and the Moon, and Golden Ax, and Silver Ax* that contain traditional values. Those folk tales reward virtuous characters who demonstrate respect for elders, honesty, and good deeds (Jung 2009). After reading, the children discuss the consequences of actions and reflect on their own behaviors. In addition, they illustrate, write about, and dramatize good virtues that are rewarded in the story.

Korea publishes a wide range of folk literature suitable for children with contemporary authors adding their own ideas and wit while striving to preserve the original message. For example, several authors (Eu 1988; Kang 1994; Kim 1990; Lee 1987; Lee and Son 1990) of *The Sun and The Moon* tell the same story, but in slightly different versions. Each version reflects Koreans' lives, experiences, religions, rituals, and superstitions. Using folk literature with alternative versions is an effective way to engage children in thinking and reflecting upon the similarities and differences in titles, characters, plots, and styles.

Conclusion

Throughout Korea's long history, people have formed and developed their unique culture. Korean culture consists of all that Koreans have experienced; not only the unique experiences of a particular group, but also the experiences of specific generations. It includes all phases of cultural development that have accumulated over time through experiencing and gaining knowledge (Lee et al. 2004; Lee 2005). It is important to realize that although Koreans have been influenced by western cultures to some extent, the values of Confucianism and the traditional beliefs are still embedded in the society as vital aspects of Korean culture.

Teaching heritage and traditions can help children prepare to make sound judgments even when traditional culture is being influenced by western culture. Early childhood educators have become concerned about the prevalence of western culture and other elements of American practice in Korea, especially after the emphasis on learning English has made them more obvious.

Children should be aware of the ethical, moral, and aesthetic values of their own traditions, and learn how to respect and appreciate what their ancestors have preserved before randomly accepting other cultures. During early childhood, children begin to establish preferences and attitude. Thus, helping children develop a strong identity, pride, appreciation of traditions that are being lost in a global environment, and respect for self and other cultures and people are critical at this stage.

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Part IV
Children with Special Needs

Chapter 8
International Perspectives for Young Children with Special Needs

Belinda Hardin, Hsuan-Fang Hung and Mariana Mereoiu

Introduction

The global landscape of early childhood care and education (ECCE) has undergone significant change during the past decade. Numerous international initiatives such as UNESCO's *Education for All* have stimulated new national policies that support increased availability of ECCE services (UNESCO 2000, 2010). These changes, coupled with global initiatives calling for inclusion of children with disabilities in education, have drawn attention to some of the challenges faced by countries, communities, and local programs as they endeavor to meet the needs of young children with disabilities and their families.

Research has demonstrated that high quality early childhood care and education has long-term, positive effects on young children's development (Belsky et al. 2007; Vandell et al. 2010). Thus, access to quality early childhood care and education is important to children's later academic and social performance, particularly for children with disabilities who require specialized support. Meyers (2006) points out that although greater coverage (e.g., more children receiving services) provides an impetus for important changes worldwide, coverage does not necessarily mean children are experiencing high quality services. This situation is especially true for young children with disabilities, who remain among the least likely population to be served in schools and child care programs (United Nations International Children's Emergency Funds (UNICEF) 2009). Recent reports from UNESCO indicate that

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only approximately 56 % of young children with disabilities worldwide have access to specialized preprimary services (UNESCO 2009). Furthermore, when early childhood education services are provided to children with disabilities, they are often uneven, mostly due to insufficient funding, resulting in staff shortages and less inclusive educational environments (Betts and Lata 2009). These types of program characteristics are important indicators of quality ECCE services. Such findings are particularly concerning for young children with disabilities, as receiving quality of early intervention services is critical to their short and long-term outcomes.

This chapter includes a discussion of successes and challenges associated with services for young children with special needs. The authors first describe the purpose of early childhood special education and provide an overview of recent international programs impacting special education services. Next, differences in cultural beliefs and value systems are described and how these factors influence policies and services related to children with special needs. Results from two international studies using the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) Global Guidelines Assessment (GGA) (ACEI 2003; 2006) will be shared describing current services for young children with special needs. The chapter will conclude with recommendations about how this research can be used to inform policy decisions.

International Initiatives

Reports on the prevalence of people with disabilities worldwide vary according to a number of factors such as data sources, the definition of what constitutes a disability, types of disabilities being reported, the age range of the groups being reported, the tools used, and so forth. However, it is widely accepted that approximately 15.6 % of the world population has one or more disabilities (World Health Organization 2011). Determining the prevalence of children with disabilities globally is even more challenging because of the myriad of factors impacting the number reported. For example, in the recent World Report on Disabilities, variations in the number of children with disabilities reported were reflected as follows:

> ... The Global Burden of Disease estimates the number of children aged 0–14 years experiencing ‘moderate or severe disability’ at 93 million (5.1 %), with 13 million (0.7 %) children experiencing severe difficulties. In 2005 the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) estimated the number of children with disabilities under age 18 at 150 million. A recent review of the literature in low- and middle-income countries reports child disability prevalence from 0.4 % to 12.7 % depending on the study and assessment tool. (World Health Organization 2011, p. 36)

Although people with disabilities constitute the world’s largest minority population, the discriminatory treatment and unequal education opportunities they experience continues to be a major concern for human rights advocates and education professionals. Three different initiatives represent significant milestones toward promoting the human rights of children with disabilities.

In 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (the CRC) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly to ensure children’s basic human rights, including

children with disabilities (Carvalho 2008; United Nations 1989). Article 23 of the CRC states that children with disabilities must have, "... effective access to and receive education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment, and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development," and that these services should be free of charge whenever possible (United Nations 1989). Thus, the CRC was the first international initiative adopted to promote the education rights for children with physical or/and emotional needs.

Although, in late 1980s, the CRC specified education rights for all children as a basic human right, only about 1–5 % of children with disabilities were receiving an education then (Habibi 1999). In 1994, more than 300 people representing 92 governments and 25 international organizations met in Spain to create a document that outlined the principles, policies, and practices needed to effectively provide educational and related services to children with disabilities. As a result, the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* was developed (UNESCO 1994). This document further clarifies the responsibilities of government agencies and schools in providing quality education services to children with disabilities, regardless of their intellectual, emotional, behavioral, social, linguistic, or any other conditions (UNESCO 1994). Also, inclusive education is emphasized as a key principle. It further encourages all countries to be responsive to all children, to provide quality instruction, including high expectations and standards, qualified professionals, and to collaborate with families and the community to create educated citizens in an inclusive society (Peters 2007).

In 2008, another important initiative, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), was enacted to further protect the rights of children and adults with disabilities. This convention not only emphasizes the responsibilities of governments to make sure children with special needs receive equal rights with other children, but also promotes the approach of viewing "the best interest of the child" in the decision-making process as a core value (United Nations 2007). Furthermore, this initiative confirms that quality ECCE programs should take the rights-based approach—that meeting the special needs of all children is a basic human right (Fig. 8.1).

Guatemala and China as Two Country Examples

To protect the education right for all children, the international community has continued to raise aid to support developing countries or low-income countries that typically need more funding for ECCE programs (UNESCO 2006b). Established international monitoring mechanisms such as UNESCO's Education For All (EFA) has led to policy reforms in early childhood education in many countries. China and Guatemala are two examples.

In Guatemala, financial support for ECCE programs has been a significant challenge. To assist the Guatemalan government in meeting this need, aid raised from the international community has shared approximately 10 % of the education budget

Fig. 8.1 Special education teacher and child in Taiwan. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Hsuan-Fang Hung)

(UNESCO 2006b). Also, these efforts have led to policy reform toward increasing pre-primary education coverage for children in rural or poverty-stricken areas (UNESCO 2006b). However, resource distribution of international aid has varied. Thus, the inconsistent availability of international funds significantly continues to impact the access to quality care of young children with and without disabilities (UNESCO 2006b). Research has confirmed that children with special needs in Guatemala may attend early childhood programs in which special education services are not available (Hardin et al. 2008).

China is another country receiving great amount of international aids, receiving $826.2 millions for their education in 2003–2004 (UNESCO 2006a). Because of UNESCO global monitoring mechanism, the Chinese government has gradually supported the concept of providing services for children with disabilities, even though preschool and kindergarten are not within their compulsory education (Hu 2010). Recent research findings confirm this changing trend by indicating that many Chinese ECCE professionals have perceived providing services for children with special needs as critical, even if they tend to be restricted by limited resources, program supports, and trained professionals (Hardin and Hung 2011).

These two examples suggest the importance of having an international monitoring mechanism in place to lead internationally collaborative initiatives and policy progress for governmental commitment to integrated ECCE services that support the health and development for young children with disabilities.

Impact of Cultural Beliefs and Values

The ideologies of nations, their work force, and the available economic supports impact the way nations define early care and education and drive its policies and outcomes for young children with and without disabilities and their families.

More specifically, a nation's ideology on family roles and responsibilities shapes childcare policies, resource distributions, and the design of regular and special education services, which in turn cyclically drive the nation's view on the role of the family and out-of-home care. Lokteff and Piercy (2011) use the familialistic or defamilialization dichotomy to examine variations within ECCE policies across several industrialized countries. The nations which hold an explicit concept that caring for and educating young children falls within the families' roles and responsibilities subscribe to an *explicit familialism* ideology and support families in their efforts to care for their children. For instance, many European countries support the idea that the mother or both parents share care giving responsibilities. Germany tends to favor mothers as the main caregivers and thus provides them with paid childcare leaves or allowances (Morgan and Zippel 2003; Lokteff and Piercy 2011). However, countries which support the families' choice to either care for or seek services of care and education for their young children, such as Denmark or Belgium's *optional familialism* approach, distribute their resources across a set of services for the two options (Lokteff and Piercy 2011; Kremer 2006; Kamerman 2005). Finally, when countries do not provide the families with care and education services or family support to care for their children, they express the *implicit familialism* view that it is solely a family responsibility to care for their children (Lokteff and Piercy 2011). This ideology is reflected in the United States, for example, when employers only provide unpaid leave to new mothers (Kamerman 2006).

The combination of factors such as cultural and historical context, variations in political systems, priorities posed on resources distribution, societal views on ECCE, and the ways in which vulnerabilities of children and families are experienced, shape how disabilities are defined by communities and stakeholders (Kozleski et al. 2008; Artiles et al. 2010; Guralnick 2008). Indeed, the ways the cultural beliefs and values manifest themselves are transactional. For example, in the United States, disability is often thought of as a "thing" individuals have that needs to be fixed, a perspective imported to special education from the medical model (Kalyanpur and Harry 1999). These embedded beliefs shape national policies and local services.

Likewise, policies effect cultural beliefs and values. The revised *International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF)* system published by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2001 provides an example of a shift away from the medical model (WHO 2001). The new ICF system emphasizes health and functioning in society, no matter what the impairments may be. Its standard language and framework for classifying health and disabilities have caused many countries to enact policies that stress functioning rather than deficits, which filter down to the way services are designed and delivered at the local level and thus precipitate changes in beliefs and value about health and disabilities. At the same time, professionals' own cultural frameworks concerning disabilities influence the ways services are delivered (Skiba et al. 2008).

International Findings/Discussion

International studies provide more detailed snapshots of cross-cultural trends in special education services for young children with disabilities. Some international studies concerning young children with disabilities have focused on using a consistent method for screening and identifying functional behaviors. For example, a series of studies by the CHILD (Children-Health-Intervention-Learning-Development) research group (see Björck-Akesson et al. 2010) has examined the effectiveness of using the *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth* (ICY-CY) developed by the World Health Organization as a model with a common language and frame of reference for identifying young children with disabilities. While these studies suggest that the ICY-CY can reliably identify body functioning of young children, there are differences between the perceptions of professionals and parents related to the environmental scales. However, the ICF-CY does appear to have validity in identifying different types of disabilities across cultures/countries while, at the same time, suggesting a need to further examine the cultural sensitivity of the ICF-CY. Findings by the CHILD research group hold promise that the ICF-CY may be a reliable system for identifying young children with disabilities and ultimately helping them access needed services.

Having a dependable international system of identification that focuses on functioning (not deficit) is the first step in the process. Other studies have examined the types of services available to children with disabilities and their families. For example, studies conducted in 2003 and 2007 using the ACEIGGA to examine program quality in ECCE programs found limited access and resources for children with disabilities, insufficient training for professionals, and inconsistent family-school collaboration policies and practices (Hardin and Hung 2011).

Area 5 of the ACEI GGA contains items pertaining to the access and equity of services, common philosophy and aims, special education service delivery, and adaptations to meet individual needs. Teams of two people, a director and teacher or other non-director staff member, each independently completed a GGA for their program in both studies. All programs were typical of the locations and program type for each country. The first study included 138 participants from 69 programs across sites in five Latin American countries (one location in each country)—Peru, Columbia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Venezuela. The second study included 336 participants in 168 programs across 6 sites in 4 countries—the People's Republic of China, Guatemala, Taiwan (two sites), and the United States (two sites). Both samples included private and publically funded programs in both urban and rural areas.

Participants from both studies appeared to believe that children with disabilities should have equal access to education and appropriate support for their learning needs. However, they cited insufficient resources and policies as major barriers that undermined access to services for children with disabilities, especially in rural communities. In terms of educating children with special needs in inclusive environments, although many participants mentioned national trends toward a philosophy of inclusion, the majority suggested that services are still implemented in separate settings

Fig. 8.2 Children playing with manipulatives. (Photo courtesy of Program Director)

such as a special center or special education school like Taiwan and China (Hardin and Hung 2011) (Fig. 8.2).

Results from both studies suggest that parents of children with disabilities have a limited voice in decisions impacting their children, though programs recognize the importance of parental input. However, the way professionals value parent input differs. For example, in the United States, most early childhood professionals perceive having parents involved with classroom and/or program activities as critical for children's learning. However, in Taiwan, they perceive providing information and having good communication with parents are more important (Hardin and Hung 2011).

Another issue that emerged from these studies is the shortage of special education staff and service providers. Many countries require teachers to have at least an associate degree and yet very few of them have special education degrees. As a result, teaching staff at the early childhood education programs may be qualified to teach children with typical development, but may lack the professional skills and knowledge needed to serve children with disabilities. This phenomenon is reflected in findings of several sites including Taiwan, Guatemala, China and Peru. It is especially observed in developing countries where teacher training programs continues to be a high need (UNESCO 2006b). These findings are similar to other reports concerning services for children with disabilities internationally (The World Bank 2006; UNESCO 2010; Rous et al. 2007).

Other international research has examined the effectiveness of current intervention practices for young children with special needs. In their analysis of 56 international studies outside the United States and Canada examining the benefits of 30 interventions in 23 countries for young children with disabilities, Nores and Barnett (2009) found that nutrition and prekindergarten or early stimulation interventions had a direct and positive impact on cognitive outcomes. Additionally, interventions implemented to a specific group at a young age (e.g., infants/toddlers or preschoolers) had a significantly larger impact on behaviors. Thus, providing services to young children with disabilities as quickly as possible after a need has been established is critical to their immediate and long-term well being. Although the availability and quality of early childhood special education services has increased in the past decade in many countries, the global image of special education services is still sketchy at best. Without losing sight of cultural variations and contextual prerequisites, young children with special needs and their families share universal needs and rights regardless of where they live. Therefore, collective efforts toward creating equal access to development and learning opportunities for the children with disabilities should remain an international goal.

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Chapter 9
New Visions for Preschool Inclusive Education in Mexico

Todd Fletcher and Silvia Romero-Contreras

Introduction

Mexico forms a part of the North American continent and has a population over 110 million people. It is an incredibly diverse multicultural and multilingual nation with over 7 % of the population from indigenous backgrounds speaking 68 different languages and more than 360 dialects (National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI) 2007). It is also a very diverse population. Over 75 % of the countries' localities (nearly 200,000 in all) have a population of less than 100 inhabitants (Santibañez et al. 2005). Mexico has one of the largest and most complex educational systems in Latin America (OECD/CERI n.d.). Education in Mexico is governed at the national level by the Secretary of Public Education (SEP), which sets the curriculum, textbooks, teacher salaries and schedules, and the hiring and firing of personnel. Almost 30 % of the country's population is 14 years of age or younger, with over 32 million students enrolled in preschool, compulsory basic education (grades K-9), and high school (grades 10–12) (National Institute of Geography and Statistics (INEGI) 2010a). Preschool education serves over 50 % of children between ages three and five years (National Institute of Geography and Statistics (INEGI) 2010b). In the three levels of school-aged education in Mexico, approximately 71 % of the schools are state administered, 11 % are federally administered, and about 18 % are private (Secretary of Public Education (SEP) 2008).

Education is compulsory through the ninth grade and there is a federally mandated curriculum for all basic education students. States must use the nationally produced textbooks for primary education, which are provided at no cost to the students. At

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the secondary level the Secretary of Public Education provides all schools with an approved list of textbooks for each subject. Basic education including preschool (ages 3 to 5 years), primary (ages 6 to 12), and middle school (ages 13 to 15), accounts for about 80 % of the total school enrollment. Primary education enrolls about 15 million students. According to the RAND study in 2005, there were more than 3.7 million children of ages three to five enrolled in preschool(Santibañez et al. 2005). This amount represented a significant increase over the past decade, particularly in indigenous and isolated areas, but in spite of the increase it represents only about 56 % of the potential demand. In 2003, the educational attainment of the population 15 and older was approximately 7.9 years on average.

In this chapter, we present an overview of the characteristics of special and inclusive education in México with emphasis on early childhood and preschool education regarding: salient historical events, current organization, services provided, potential demand, and teacher preparation. The chapter ends with a discussion about the challenges faced by the educational system to meet the needs of children with special educational needs (SEN), to provide quality services and to advance toward full inclusion.

Recent History and Evolution of Special Education in Mexico

At the end of the 1970s, by presidential decree the General Direction of Special Education was created to organize, direct, develop, administer and monitor the federal system of special education and the preparation of special education teachers. An essential part of the programs providing services to children during the 1980s and early 1990s were referred to as indispensable or complimentary services. Indispensable services were those services provided to children in segregated settings with more severe and frequently visible disabilities. Complimentary services were provided to children with learning difficulties, low academic performance, language, and/or behavior problems, and students identified as gifted and talented enrolled in elementary schools at their home school site or in other educational facilities.

These models of service delivery changed during the 1990s (Fletcher et al. 2003). This change can be attributed to the fact that during the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s a movement was astir in the international community to promote and implement educational integration and the inclusion of children with special educational needs (Karagiannis et al. 1996). This movement was propelled by the international community through declarations, conferences, and pronouncements such as Education for All (UNESCO 1990) and the Statement of Salamanca (UNESCO 1994), designed to provide quality education and to combat the discrimination, segregation, and labeling of students with disabilities and the provision of services in segregated and separate settings from their peers.

In 1993, the Mexican government amended Article 3 of the Mexican Constitution recognizing the obligation of the State to provide all types and modalities of education (such as special education) and at the same time the new General Education Law (GEL) replaced the previous Federal Education Law. These changes provided the

momentum and legal basis for the reorientation of the provision of education to children with special educational needs so as to "satisfy their basic learning needs" independent of their personal characteristics. In 1993, for the first time in its history, Mexico had enacted national legislation that specifically provided for the education of individuals with disabilities. The current version of the three original paragraphs of Article 41 in the new GEL outlines the definition and the breadth of special education:

> Special education is created for individuals with temporary or permanent disabilities, as well as for gifted individuals. It will attempt to provide services that are adequate to the needs of those served, with social equality.
>
> As related to minors with disabilities, this education will promote their integration into general education through the use of specific methods, techniques and materials. For those who do not achieve this integration, this education will attempt to satisfy their basic educational needs so they may achieve an autonomous, productive, social life; to this end programs and didactic support materials will be elaborated.
>
> Special education includes guidance for parents and guardians as well as for teachers and elementary school general personnel where students with special educational needs are integrated. (Official Gazette of the Federation (DOF) 1993/2012: pp. 14–15)[1]

The enactment of GEL as a legal ordinance made explicit the non-exclusion of students with disabilities from attending and participating in general education settings. This mandate came under the umbrella of reordering basic education for diversity and to cease viewing special education as a separate, parallel education system with its own curriculum. The goal was to integrate special education with basic education and teach the same broadened curriculum, albeit flexible and optional in many of its parts, to all children including those with special educational needs. This was done with the lofty goal of insuring that educational equity be a primary consideration for all children regardless of their particular context or characteristics. Moreover, in the 2009 reform, Article 41 of the GEL explicitly includes gifted and talented students (Official Gazette of the Federation (DOF) 1993/2012). More recently, the General Law for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities (Official Gazette of the Federation (DOF) 2011) which provides a comprehensive legal framework to grant fundamental human rights to people with disabilities, broadens the scope of special education to serve students with special educational needs due to learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral difficulties. This law also states that children with disabilities cannot be conditioned to enter early education or preschool programs.

[1] The original version in Spanish reads:

La educación especial está destinada a personas con discapacidad, transitoria o definitiva, así como a aquellas con aptitudes sobresalientes. Atenderá a los educandos de manera adecuada a sus propias condiciones, con equidad social incluyente y con perspectiva de género.

Tratándose de menores de edad con discapacidad, esta educación propiciará su integración a los planteles de educación básica regular, mediante la aplicación de métodos, técnicas y materiales específicos. Para quienes no logren esa integración, esta educación procurará la satisfacción de necesidades básicas de aprendizaje para la autónoma convivencia social y productiva, para lo cual se elaborarán programas y materiales de apoyo didácticos necesarios.

La educación especial incluye la orientación a los padres o tutores, así como también a los maestros y personal de escuelas de educación básica regular que integren a los alumnos con necesidades especiales de educación.

Some of the properties and conditions of Article 41 of the GEL, as they pertain to individuals with disabilities, include the following:

1. No individual with a disability can be excluded from receiving basic education services.
2. The law no longer refers to 'the disabled', but rather to persons with certain disabilities.
3. The law refers to total or partial inclusion in general education classrooms without restrictions, while continuing to provide the option of special schools.
4. The state is obliged not only to provide special education services to all students, but also has the responsibility to provide counsel to families and training for general education teachers.

This emphasizes the importance of collaboration and the development of teamwork to provide the best possible educational services in the context of student's learning environment.

It could be said that with the amendment of Article 3 of the Constitution and the passage of the new GEL, special education was entering a new era. These legal changes recognized the existence of special education and defined its place within the basic educational system, and in theory broadened the basic rights of all Mexican citizens to receive an equitable education. These changes have been reinforced and given greater dimension with the issuing of the General Law for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities in 2011 (Fig. 9.1).

Special Educational Needs and Early Childhood Education

It is important to recognize that as countries such as Mexico embraced and adopted the international mandate of inclusive education it paved the way for educational reforms and changes in policies and practices with the intent to include all students with and without disabilities, as well as those with outstanding aptitudes and skills (special educational needs) in regular education classrooms. Mexico, as a result, adopted the Salamanca definition of a child with special educational needs (SEN) as "that person in comparison with his peers has difficulty learning established curricular content and requires incorporating greater and different resources to attain objective educational outcomes" (Secretary of Public Education (SEP) 2006, p. 14). The reorganization of the special education service delivery models after the 1993 reforms and the passage of the GEL resulted in new structures of service delivery that in most states replaced the previous model of services available to students.

The reorganization led to the establishment of the following service delivery options. (1) Multiple Attention Centers (CAM) that would provide indispensable services to individuals with more severe disabilities and group students by age and by disability in the same classroom. (2) The Unit Support Team for Regular Education (USAER) providing complimentary services with the primary purpose to integrate children with special educational needs (with and without disabilities) into

Fig. 9.1 Public Kindergarten in San Luis Potosi, Mexico. (Photo courtesy of Project ELE 2010–2011)

the general educational context. Most children served by the USAER team (social worker, psychologist, and special educator) have mild disabilities or learning and behavior challenges. (3) Units of Public Orientation were designed to provide information and orientation to families, teachers and the community in general about the integration and inclusion of students with special educational needs (Secretary of Public Education (SEP) 2006).

While in many states, special education services have the previously described organization, in 20 states the Preschool Psychopedagogical Attention Centers (CAPEP) that were part of the previous structure, are still functioning. CAPEP provide evaluation, diagnostic and intervention services mainly to children enrolled in preschools that have adjustment issues due to language or learning difficulties or psychomotor delay (Secretary of Public Education (SEP) 2002).

Preschool Education and Young Children with Special Educational Needs

In 2002, the Mexican government amended Article 3 of the constitution modifying the concept of mandatory basic education to include preschool education which serves children ages three to five years of age. The governmental decree implied

that the goal was to transform and improve the quality of educational practices for young children by reorganizing the functioning of preschool centers. This was accompanied by significant pedagogical reform in preschool education programs (Secretary of Public Education (SEP) 2004b, 2011). Basic education now includes three years of preschool, six years of elementary school, and three years of secondary school. It has been 10 years since the modification of the extension of mandatory education to the preschool level. As a result, it has been implemented incrementally primarily because of the lack of school facilities, teacher shortages, and funding. As preschool became mandatory, class size increased steadily (Yoshikawa et al. 2007). For the moment, the mandatory implementation of the first of the three grades has been postponed, and as a result the percentage of three year old children in school is noticeably smaller than the percentage of four- and five-year-olds attending school in Mexico. The most recent statistics available (school year 2008–2009) indicate that 38.3 % of three year olds, 97.2 % of four year olds, and 96.2 % of five year olds were enrolled in preschool education (Secretary of Public Education (SEP) 2008).

The Mexican government has issued other initiatives to expand Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) services such as the *Estancias Infantiles SEDESOL* (Child care centers, Secretary of Social Development). This program, which started in 2007, allows individuals or groups (private sector) to create day care centers for children aged one to five years or up to six years of age in the case of children with disabilities. The program also aims at helping unemployed adults to have an income by adapting their homes to function as day care centers. The published norms for these centers (Official Gazette of the Federation (DOF) 2010) make no indication regarding the provision of special education services, even though children with disabilities are eligible. The right of children with disabilities to attend such centers is recognized; however, no specific accommodations are required in order for the center to admit them. Nonetheless, the centers receive a higher fee (100 % extra) from the government when a child with disabilities is enrolled. The only requirement to serve children with disabilities is to have one assistant (aside from the head of the center) for every four children, as opposed to one for every eight children in centers without children with disabilities. Heads of these centers (*Responsables*) are required to have a minimum of 9 years of general education (middle school), and have to receive training to become certified in children's care. There is no educational level requirement for the assistants other than undergoing in-service training. There are over 9,000 child care centers registered in this program in the country serving 268,028 children (Secretary of Social Development (SEDESOL) 2011a, b). The program has no statistics regarding the number of children with disabilities enrolled (Fig. 9.2).

Detection of Special Educational Needs in Preschool Children

Currently, either CAPEP or USAER staff conduct preschool students' identification and assessment depending on the specific structure of each state educational system. Students with a previous history of special educational needs can request entrance

Fig. 9.2 Photo of public kindergarten in San Luis Potosi, Mexico. (Photo courtesy of Project ELE 2010–2011)

to regular schools and in most cases would be assigned to a USAER if available. Students can also be identified and referred to by the teacher as having difficulties in the classroom setting. In both cases they are referred to the special education services for assessment. USAER personnel also conduct screenings as part of their routine work in schools to identify students with special educational needs. Once a student qualifies for special education services she/he is assessed from a psycho-pedagogical perspective and an individualized curricular adaptation plan (PCA) is designed if warranted. The teacher with the help of the USAER personnel implements this PCA.

The assessment and detection of young children suspected of having special educational needs is a shared responsibility and starts with an initial referral for observation. The process and procedures for the initial evaluation to determine whether a student has a special educational need contemplates three stages prior to the formal psycho-pedagogical assessment. The first stage is the observation and evaluation of the child in the context of the general educational classroom. Information is gathered about his/her academic knowledge and social skills, and learning style and rhythm in school. The second stage is related to the family and gathering information about the parents' educational background, attitudes and expectations regarding their child, and the level of collaboration that can be expected from the parents. The third stage is related to the social context and the resources in the home in relation to the needs

of the child and any resources in the community available to assist in the social integration of the student. Once this contextual information is obtained and depending upon the nature of the referral, someone from the USAER team will be assigned to follow up in either the school or social familiar context. If the team decides to do a more formal assessment, the next step in the process would be a psycho-pedagogical assessment. Once the test results are obtained, team members interpret the results and make specific recommendations that are incorporated into an adapted curricular plan (PCA). This proposal outlines the students' strengths and weaknesses and details the adaptations/modifications in methodology, evaluation, content, and curricular goals related to instruction.

The assessment report should include: personal information, conditions for referral, physical appearance, behavior during assessment, developmental history, curricular competence, learning style and motivation, family background. The evaluation may include relevant information regarding the student's: intellectual ability, motor skills, communication and language skills, social skills, and emotional development. While the instruments to conduct the assessment are defined by the professionals who conduct it, there is a set of suggested instruments, which include those that have Mexican adaptations or norms, such as: the WISC-RM or WISC-IV, the K-ABC (Kaufman's Battery), the System of Multicultural and Pluralistic Assessment, SOMPA, the Battery for the Assessment of Spanish Language (BELE), and the Adaptive Behavior Inventory for Children (ABIC). These and other specific guidelines for conducting the psycho-pedagogical assessment and report are part of the materials provided by the Secretary of Public Education in a series of documents produced during 1997–2000 (García et al. 2000).

Many students with special education needs require specific medical services and equipment (hearing aids, wheel chairs, etc.) that are provided by institutions outside of the educational system. The provision of these resources is often challenging due to the lack of articulation between the educational and health systems. Parents with limited resources, not eligible for public health care, struggle to provide their children with such non-educational supports. Teachers and special education professionals find this to be a common obstacle for students' full integration and adaptation to school. Low-SES families with no health insurance can now affiliate to the recently created Popular Healthcare Plan (*Seguro Popular*) to cover some health-related expenses such as diagnosis, medication and prosthesis. Families, however, still need orientation and support to make use of these services.

Routine detection programs are still scarce in the country and the existing ones are not yet universally implemented. This is the case of the audiologic screening for newborns which includes detection and early intervention (Secretary of Health 2009) and of the metabolic screening for newborns (Vela-Amieva et al. 2009).

Teacher Preparation for Inclusion in Mexico

Pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion has been implemented in Mexico since 2004. Previous to this year, pre-service special education teachers were prepared under the segregation model and were provided a few courses on special educational

needs and inclusion models. The 2004 curriculum is a four-year program that includes core courses on general education, planning, teaching and assessment for students with special educational needs, and six courses in one of four areas of specialization: intellectual, motor, language and audition, and visual impairment (Secretary of Public Education (SEP) 2004a). The special education curriculum is not differentiated by educational level or age group, which means that teachers are trained regardless of the level (preschool, primary, or secondary) they will ultimately serve.

The curriculum for general teacher preparation for the preschool level is a four year program which trains teachers in five specific areas: intellectual abilities, students' curricular content, didactic competencies, professional identity and ethics, and ability to perceive and respond to students' socio-cultural conditions. In the area of didactic competencies, teachers are trained to be sensitive and responsive to students' individual differences and special needs. In the area of ability to perceive and respond to students' socio-cultural conditions, teachers are trained to be sensitive and respectful of ethnic, social, cultural and regional variation. All preschool student teachers take one course titled "Special Educational Needs" and one other course on children at risk (Secretary of Public Education (SEP) 1999).

All teacher preparation programs in Mexico have a strong practical component. During the first three years, student teachers combine their theoretical courses with visits and short practicum experiences in schools. During the fourth year, student teachers conduct a full-time practicum in public schools with the supervision and support of Normal school teachers.

In-service regular and special education teachers have various opportunities to learn about inclusion models through seminars and courses offered by the federal, state, or municipal governments. The number of in-service basic education teachers that have taken at least one course offered by the federal government on inclusive education between 1998 and 2010 was about 75,000 which represents 5 % of basic education teachers in the country (García 2011). The states and municipalities also provide courses for in-service teachers, and teachers may also take professional development courses in private institutions. Regarding preschool teachers, a recent study revealed that 38 % of the teachers have taken at least one course on special education needs in the last two years (Pérez Martínez et al. 2010).

A study conducted by the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE) during 2006–2007 and published in 2010 revealed that over 50 % of the preschools in Mexico do not serve children with special needs. Preschools serving students with special educational needs have on average of 1.3 such students. Sample-based estimations from this study suggest that 250,000 students, which represent 5.4 % of students from the total preschool population, have special education needs. The report indicates that 39.8 % of the schools serving students with special education needs receive support from USAER or CAPEP. This support varies across school conditions; it is far more frequent in well-located urban schools (61 %) than in indigenous one-teacher schools (5.9 %). Most teachers consider that serving students with special needs and integrating them into general classroom activities is either difficult or very difficult; this proportion is similar across school conditions regardless of the support they receive from special education personnel (Pérez Martínez et al. 2010).

The statistics provided by the National Institution for Evaluation of Education (INEE) report look rather optimistic when compared with data provided by the National Program for the Strengthening of Special Education and Inclusive Education (*Programa Nacional de Fortalecimiento para la Educación Especial y la Integración Educativa* (PNFEEIE)), which reports that in 2009–2010 the number of schools with some support from special education services was 27,717 from an estimated total of 222,350 schools. This represents 12.46 of all basic education schools (as opposed to almost 40 % reported for preschools by INEE). The comparison of these two sources show important discrepancies that cannot be disentangled due to the different population reported on each source and the different methodologies used. The INEE study takes into consideration only preschool level, and the data is sample-based using questionnaires from teachers and parents (Pérez Martínez et al. 2010); whereas the PNFEEIE provides statistics for all educational levels from initial to secondary education based on questionnaires responded to by all schools within the school system (Secretary of Public Education (SEP) 2002).

Challenges to Advance Toward Full Inclusion

In this section we discuss the characteristics of Mexico's early childhood special education programs using some of the Association for Childhood Education International Global Guidelines Assessment (ACEI-GGA) criteria and review the conclusions reached by a comprehensive study on preschool education in Mexico, in order to identify major challenges for the attainment of quality services and full inclusion.

As discussed by Wortham (this volume, Chap. 1) and Bergen and Hardin (this volume, Chap. 2), the GGA are minimum quality standards which can be useful for educators and policy makers to identify areas of opportunity to improve the provision of services for early childhood.

Area 5 of the GGA refers to *Young children with special needs* and includes four subcategories: (1) access and equity of services, (2) common philosophy and common aims, (3) staff and service providers, and (4) service delivery (Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) 2003). The information presented in this chapter is particularly relevant to assess the issues related to sub-categories 1 and 3: access and equity of services and staff and service providers; therefore, we concentrate our analysis in the afore-mentioned sub-categories.

Access and equity of services are assessed with five criteria: gender equity, income group equity, religion, ethnic, language and cultural affiliation equity, special needs and disabilities equity, and universal access to information on services (Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) 2003). In Mexico, gender equity has improved as school enrollment figures by gender show only minor differences, which appear to reflect the demographic composition of the country's population by gender (Yoshikawa et al. 2007). Income distribution in Mexico is closely related to cultural and ethnic affiliation; mainstream populations tend to live in urban areas, indigenous populations tend to live in marginally urban and rural areas. Income

group, ethnic and cultural equity remain unresolved as access and quality of services are markedly different depending on the location of schools: Well-located urban schools are better equipped and have more access to special education professionals (USAER) than marginally urban, rural and indigenous schools (Pérez Martínez et al. 2010). The reforms conducted during the 1990's to provide access to students with special needs to general schools and classrooms, and those conducted in the early 2000s to extend mandatory basic education to preschool-age children have had a positive impact on special needs and disabilities equity and on universal access to information of services. However, only a small proportion, less than 15 % of schools, have special education support (USAER or CAPEP), which provide both special education services and information (Secretary of Public Education (SEP) 2002). Moreover, early detection services and the articulation of health and educational services need to be improved, so that children can be timely identified and treated.

Staff and service providers are assessed with four criteria: Availability of special education professionals to conduct the identification of special education needs students; the adaptation, modification and implementation of the curriculum to meet students' needs; to establish relationships with parents or guardians so that they participate in meeting the children's needs; and to make recommendations to decision makers to improve child care and education services. The first three of these criteria are met in the Mexican system as long as the school has special education services. USAER structure includes special education professionals who are trained to identify children's educational needs, to make curricular adaptations and modifications, and to support regular teachers and parents in their implementation. However, only a few schools (15 %) have such services and in many cases, the USAER workload includes several schools, which reduces the capability of its staff to provide adequate service to all students who need them. Regarding the fourth criteria, neither USAER personnel nor regular teachers have access to decision-making officials to make direct recommendations for policy reforms.

Overall, our conclusions using the GGA are in line with the results reported by Hardin and Hung (2011) who administered the GGA to early childhood professionals in Mexico and other countries during 2003–2004. Mexican professionals were recruited in 14 privately administered urban sites in the state of Campeche; however, it is inferred from their responses that they answered the GGA taking into consideration the Mexican educational system, and not only the program they specifically work in, as the following comment illustrates: 'Participants from Mexico commented on differences in accessibility by geographic location (e.g., urban, rural) as well as income, indicating that rural, low income families did not have equal access to services' (Hardin and Hung 2011, p. 109).

The analysis of the Mexican Educational System using the ACEI-GGA criteria reveal that the major challenges to advance toward quality of services and full inclusion are mostly quantitative, as very few schools have special education services and these are inadequately distributed. Other challenges include giving agency to teachers so that they can play an active role in policy making, the implementation of early detection services, and the articulation of educational and health services.

Probably the most important and recent source of information on preschool education in Mexico is the study conducted by INEE researchers entitled "Preschool

Education in Mexico: Conditions for Teaching and Learning" (Pérez Martínez et al. 2010). They framed their findings around five general themes of paramount importance to early childhood education in Mexico. The first theme deals with structural inequities in the educational system that impedes the right of preschool children to access a quality public education. The authors note, the more poorly trained and less experienced teachers work with students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The second theme is the lack of articulation among educational objectives, infrastructure and resources as reflected in the National Program for the Strengthening of Special Education and Inclusive Education (PNFEEIE) denoting the lack of clarity regarding the identification and provision of services to young children with special educational needs in inclusive settings. The third theme is the importance of investment in preschool education in Mexico. The per-pupil investment per year in preschool education in 2008 was approximately $10,000 Mexican pesos or $800 U.S. dollars (INEE 2008). To support this argument, the authors cite the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40 to emphasize the long-term benefits of investments in education: high probability of reduced crime, improved academic performance and overall economic well-being (Schweinhart et al. 2005). The fourth theme concerns the compulsory nature of preschool education. The authors suggest it is an admirable and important goal to provide universal coverage to all students as suggested in the Declaration of Education For All (UNESCO 1990). Even though preschool education is compulsory, the authors' concern is regarding the quality of preschool education being provided and the fact that increasing services without accounting for the varying socio-cultural variables of diverse populations may actually accentuate the inequalities and decrease the quality of services being provided. The fifth theme focuses on future evaluation and research needs examining the provision of preschool education in Mexico. According to the authors, this study provides a starting point from which further in-depth research should examine multiple topics from the articulation between preschool and basic education, teacher training and evaluation to the importance of parental involvement. Lastly, they suggest that the quality and appropriateness of the educational services provided to the children must be monitored, evaluated and prioritized and ultimately incorporated into policies and practices in the classrooms, schools and the educational system of the nation. This last point highlights a major concern in the zeitgeist of educational reform and echoes Fletcher and Artiles (2005) who questioned the ongoing transformation and educational reform of special education in Mexico and Latin America without supporting data or evidence to evaluate the efficacy, impact, and outcomes of these reforms on childrens' development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In Mexico, educational reform has led to organizational changes and pedagogical reform designed to address preschool early childhood education. Since 2002, there has been significant emphasis placed on the reform of preschool education. These

changes have included new programs of study for preschool educators (Secretary of Public Education (SEP) 2004b, 2011). changes in the organization and functioning of schools, and the transformation of educational practices to improve young children's formative experiences in Mexican schools.

Quantitative results regarding the number of preschool students with special educational needs (SEN) served in Mexico are inconclusive, nonetheless in the best scenario less than 40 % of preschool level schools receive support from special education and 5.4 % of the children enrolled have been identified as having SEN (Pérez Martínez et al. 2010). There is a real dearth of information and lack of specific data regarding the diagnosis and other conditions of children with disabilities in preschool services settings (Yoshikawa et al. 2007). Statistics available only refer to the number of students served, with no other identifying information or characteristics.

In summary, we have provided an overview of educational policy and legislation that has resulted in the current programs and services available to young children with and without disabilities in Mexico. There have been multiple initiatives focused on preschool early childhood education that is now mandatory in Mexico. Our review of educational policies and practices of early childhood programs for children with and without disabilities coincides with findings from a small study using the ACEI-GGA (Hardin and Hung 2011), as well as with a recent comprehensive study of preschool education in Mexico conducted by the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE) entitled "Preschool Education in Mexico: Conditions for Teaching and Learning" (Pérez Martínez et al. 2010).

The main challenges for early childhood special education in Mexico identified throughout this review and previous studies can be summarized as follows: (1) Attain full and equitable coverage of special education services while monitoring for quality; (2) Improve communication between service providers and authorities to inform policy making and give sense of agency to teachers and staff; (3) Extend coverage of preschool services monitoring for quality and equity; (4) Extend coverage of early detection programs and create others to minimize the effect of disability by providing early intervention; (5) Improve the coordination of health, social and educational services; (6) Review and improve the organization of special education and inclusion services in order to overcome obstacles and contradictions and to facilitate the decision making process regarding eligibility and the provision of services: (7) Monitor and evaluate the quality of services at all levels in order to produce reliable indicators to measure and improve quality of services.

The education that young children of preschool age receive is critical to their cognitive, social, emotional, and motor development. Multiple studies have demonstrated the importance of early childhood education and the impact it has in the lives of children, their families and the greater society over their lifetime (Zigler et al. 2006). This is significantly magnified for children with special educational needs who require greater individual attention and specially designed educational services. Mexico has made significant progress in the past 10 years but still needs to more effectively address multiple dimensions to attain full inclusion with quality services.

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Chapter 10
Early Childhood Special Education in China

Advocacy and Practice

Mary Barbara Trube, Wenge Li and Yan Ping Chi

Introduction

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs hold a prominent place in China's goals for economic and educational success. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines ECCE as a holistic approach that "supports children's survival, growth, development and learning–including health, nutrition and hygiene, and cognitive, social, physical and emotional development–from birth to entry into primary school in formal, informal and non-formal settings" (UNESCO 2006, p. 17). ECCE programs include children from birth to entry into primary school, usually by age six in China.

Approximately one third of China's young children participate in ECCE programs in nursery (birth to age three), kindergarten (aged three to six), or preprimary (aged five to six) classes, as well as in other avenues of child and parent education programs. These opportunities typically are more available in urban areas than in rural China. The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes ECCE as a right for all children, assuring the well being of young children during a time of critical importance in their development. Further, many advocates for ECCE and early intervention promote the finding that services for children with disabilities and developmental delays can compensate for childhood disadvantages, especially offsetting inequities for poor

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children. China's Education Ministry, the All-China Women's Federation, and the Public Health Ministry strongly support policies that promote ECCE for each child.

To identify current perspectives on special education progress and challenges, Chinese university professors conducted a series of interviews with educators, special education researchers, and government leaders in 2009 and 2010. This chapter includes pertinent statements from these interviews that convey the context and evolution of special education in modern China.

Historical Context of Special Education in China

The Confucian theory that places education in high esteem has greatly influenced educational policies and practices in China. Although China has a distinguished tradition of valuing education, the practice of providing special education services in schools did not exist until more recent years (Pang and Richey 2006).

Government-sponsored schools for children with hearing and visual impairments began with the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 (Worrell and Taber 2009). Due to political instability in Mainland China, however, educational progress was seriously hampered from the 1950s to 1970 (Lau and Yuen 2010).

As China's doors were opened to Western countries during the social and economic reforms of the late 1970s and 1980s, systematic services for students with disabilities came into being (Chen 1996). Special schools for children with a variety of exceptionalities were expanded in some urban areas in the 1970s and 1980s with a focus on care and rehabilitation (Forlin and Lian 2008). In 1986, the Compulsory Education Law established guidelines that supported all students. Specifically, the legislation required special schools for young children who were deaf, blind, or mentally retarded (Deng et al. 2001).

Another breakthrough occurred in 1988, when special education was moved under the Ministry of Education, which assumed responsibility for 50 % of the funding. In 1990, the Law on the Protection of Disabled Persons emphasized shared responsibility for the care of disabled persons among families, work units, and community organizations; it also underscored the importance of developing early intervention programs. The report *Some Opinions on the Development of Special Education* established basic special education guidelines, including a pre-school component (Chen 1996). At the same time, the State Council General began including special education in regular schools. In 1994, new regulations promoted compulsory education for all children with disabilities (Chen 1996). Prior to this important initiative, 80 % of children with special learning needs reportedly lived in rural areas, whereas most special education centers for young children were in cities.

Throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, China has continued to make progress in special education. Worrell and Taber (2009) suggest that "in spite of eligibility and placement issues, and a tremendous population of school aged children, the Chinese have made inroads in terms of including students with disabilities in regular classrooms" (p. 132).

The History of ECCE Programs for Children in China

The first public kindergartens in China date to 1903, when American missionaries brought teachers from Japan (Spodek 1988). In the 1920s, programs for the young children of farmers and factory workers were founded in Nanjing and Shanghai. Based on John Dewey's philosophies, these early childhood centers encouraged children to "employ both hands and minds; to learn by doing" (Zhou 2007, p. 972). The first experimental child education center and teacher training school for early childhood education were established in the 1940s with standards that emphasized good Chinese citizenship, the use of nature and social life, and the principle of learning by doing (Gargiulo and Piao 1995; New and Corcoran 2007; Zhou 2007).

Following World War II, Chinese educators were influential in promoting kindergarten as the basis for country building by instilling good habits and attitudes in young children. In 1952, the Ministry of Education specified that early childhood programs must "ensure that children have a healthy physical and mental development upon entering the elementary school ... [and] relieve the burden of child care from mothers, so mothers are able to have the time to participate in political, productive and educational activities" (Zhou 2007, p. 971). The National Conference on Education encouraged organizations, businesses, and industries to sponsor their own kindergarten programs for young children. Education and services for very young children became part of the services of government organizations, institutes, and provincial government. In 1989, China developed a policy to build the public and political profile of ECCE and boost levels of children participation in kindergartens. It promoted child development, active learning, attention to individual differences and group functioning, respectful relationships between staff and children, and holistic evaluation of children.

Traditional ECCE teaching practices made the guidelines difficult to implement. Further, in 1996, the Chinese Ministry of Education required more stringent qualifications for early childhood teachers, principals, and other staff working in kindergartens. In 2001, the government issued guidelines for gradually putting progressive ideas into practice while emphasizing the holistic evaluation of children through authentic assessment methods (Deng et al. 2001). For the first time, the new reform proposals embraced the notion that "early childhood education is the foundation of lifelong learning ... to help children cultivate a positive attitude towards learning and good living habits in an inspiring and enjoyable environment" (Education Commission 2000, p. 30).

Since the mid-1990s, young children with disabilities have been included in China's "education for all" goals. The severity of disability as well as the school's ability to accommodate the student with a disability determines children's placement in a regular education classroom, a special education classroom within a regular school, or a special institution. According to the Ministry of Education, by 2000, only 4.5 % of disabled children were receiving specially designed education services. China is slowly implementing its ambitious goal of extending special education to

Fig. 10.1 Guangzhou Children's Welfare House, Guangzhou, PRC. (Photo courtesy of Wenge Li)

95 % of children with disabilities who reside in cities and 85 % who reside in rural areas that have compulsory school programs, as well 60 % of schools in impoverished areas (Law 2002). Depending on the sponsorship (public enterprises, municipal authorities, local groups, or families) of kindergartens, both the quality of programs and the fees for children vary; however, many of these programs are available for all children, including those with special learning needs whose parents have chosen to enroll them (July 2009) (Fig. 10.1).

Today, the Chinese generally believe that children have a right to special care and protection. The State Council's National Program of Action for Child Development (2001–2010) and the provinces', municipalities', and autonomous regions' programs established 18 basic development goals, 55 supportive targets, and 66 strategic targets for children's "health, education, legal protection, and environmental consciousness" (www.chinatoday.com/cn).

Chinese Children Development Guidelines for 2001–2010 made children's health, education, legal protection, and the environment national priorities. National policies supported by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and the National Women's Federation serve the following purposes:

1. Protect young children and mothers by improving their living conditions and the quality of service;
2. Set up the national program and curriculum standards to improve the quality of early childhood education;
3. Coordinate the administration and management for early childhood education programs between different social sectors at the national, provincial, and local government levels;
4. Improve teacher training and professional development;
5. Provide better support and child care service to families and parents; and
6. Provide support for the development of the early childhood education program in underdeveloped areas (New and Corcoran 2007, p. 974).

Results of Surveys with Teachers

In 2005, 24 teachers from 8 English immersion kindergartens were introduced to the Association of Childhood Education International's (ACEI) *Global Guidelines Assessment*(GGA) during a breakout session at the First Annual Symposium of English Immersion Program on Teaching and Research at Shaanxi Normal University in Xi'an. They received handouts and information for conducting self-studies in their kindergartens. From December 2005 through February 2006, 11 teachers from 4 kindergartens in Xi'an and 1 from a kindergarten in Beijing responded to the Mandarin version of the GGA. Data reveal the following information related to Area 5: Young Children with Special Needs.

Under Access and Equity of Services, 100 % of the participating teachers rated their kindergartens as "excellent" in four of five indicators. They reported that children of both genders and from all income groups, family backgrounds, and ethnic groups have equal access and opportunities in types and levels of support and services. Two teachers who work in a factory-supported Montessori kindergarten said that children with mothers and fathers who work all types of jobs–from management to factory work–receive the same care and education. Four teachers commented that communication is the job of school administrators.

Under Common Philosophy and Common Aims, 25 % of the participating teachers rated their kindergartens as "good" in working with a team (parents, program staff, other specialists) to meet children's needs. Four teachers from the same kindergarten commented that a parent and the principal provide an aide for a child with autism—a common practice when parents who are part of the kindergarten want their child enrolled. 75 % of teachers at three kindergartens rated their schools as "inadequate" with regard to identifying a person in charge of planning, coordinating, and monitoring services; 25 % of teachers at one kindergarten rated the same criteria as "not available." In terms of reporting plans for children with special needs to government agencies, 100 % of teachers responded "not available."

Under Staff and Service Providers and Service Delivery, 100 % of the participating teachers responded "not available" when asked to rate their fellow staff members and/or specialists and their roles with families and officials in policy-making positions about child care/education services. Responses indicated that every kindergarten has a nurse on staff to give all children regular checkups. Further, teachers noted that working with parents, specialists, and government officials is the responsibility of administrators. Additionally, some teachers indicated that special schools in Xi'an assist children with deafness, blindness, and cognitive delays. One-third of the participating teachers at one kindergarten indicated that children with physical disabilities have opportunities to learn with their classmates and are encouraged to participate as much as they possibly can.

Fig. 10.2 Guangzhou Children's Palace, Guangzhou, PRC. (Photo courtesy of Wenge Li)

Challenges with Special Education in China

University faculty and deans shared the following information about early childhood special education in interviews conducted in Xi'an and Guangzhou in July 2010. In accordance with the current international definition of special education for young children, the phrase "special needs children" is used frequently. Broadly stated, the UNESCO definition of "special learning needs" includes the education of young children who have been identified as having barriers to their abilities to access information and obstacles to learning such as learning disabilities, emotional affective disorder, speech disorders, behavioral problems, conduct problems, communication disorders, dyslexia, mental health problems, and poor physical health. In China, special education generally refers more narrowly to physical and mental disabilities and delays related to child development. Implementation of education for children with disabilities includes the following classifications: deaf, blind, and mentally retarded. An estimated two-million school-age children in China have special education needs. According to 2007 statistics, China had 82.96 million people with disabilities, accounting for 6.34 % of the total population. Among children from birth to five years of age, 1.41 million pre-school children had disabilities. The school-age population of young children with disabilities who receive special education services was 4.53 % (Fig. 10.2).

Pang and Richey (2006) argue that several challenges face the development of special education in China: (1) the lack of effective identification and diagnostic procedures, (2) the lack of an appropriate vocational education system, (3) the scarcity of educational opportunities, and (4) the difficulty in establishing family and professional collaboration. A university professor in Guangzhou reports, "A school for

children with disabilities is needed to solve the problems by varying physical and mental characteristics and needs for their education. The current field of special education in China is not only concerned about the quality of teaching special education and regular classrooms. There are more problems related to the quality of special education schools; ... [both] content and teaching methods need to improve." (October, 2010)

In discussing why special education for very young children is needed, the professor shared her view that educators need more knowledge of ECCE theories, "Children's development from zero to six involves the structure of the nervous system. This time period is the important period of development in cognitive, physical, and perceptual development. This time period is important in the development of action; during this period, the plasticity of the nervous system has an impact on the individual's ability to adapt to the external environment." She continued, "Within this period of a child's life, it is often possible to facilitate the realignment of the individual physiological and physical functions. The child's physical functions can often be corrected and rehabilitated. Early education for children with disabilities and defects is beneficial in order to maximize children's potential, providing the maximum benefit to their physical and mental development" (July, 2009).

Dr. Zhou Jing, an early childhood professor at East China Normal University, Shanghai, reports, "Currently, ECCE for all children has a prominent place in advocacy groups throughout Chinese society" (October, 2009). Dr. Jing comments on the critical role of university faculty and early childhood teachers in advocating for education and services for all children. The number of special education schools appears to be too small to meet the current needs, especially in rural areas. Dr. Zhou Wei of Shanxii Normal University, Xi'an, reports that while special education schools are concentrated in cities, more are needed (July, 2009).

Few normal schools and teacher training colleges prepare educators for special education. The major source of special education teachers includes graduates of secondary special education, general secondary school or two-year college programs, and a few four-year colleges. Currently, only six Mainland China normal universities offer undergraduate degrees in special education. Fewer than 50 individuals graduated per institution in 2010. There are two college-level special education programs (annually training about 30 people) and 34 secondary special education teacher-training institutions (producing fewer than 400 graduates per year). Due to the employment system in China, many teachers do not stay in the profession. To accommodate the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular schools, state laws explicitly require courses in special education in teacher preparation programs. Throughout China, there are only a handful of special education professors. Compared with less-developed regions, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and other cities have relatively abundant resources and large numbers of special education teachers. In the central region and some small cities, however, there is a serious lack of teachers for children with disabilities.

In general, throughout China, university professors report that conditions in special education schools, when compared with ordinary schools, are challenging due to

higher labor intensity and lower wages. These factors may reduce the number of university/college students who want to teach young children who are deaf, blind, and mentally retarded. One professor of special education says, “China’s biggest problem facing special education is the lack of high-level educators. The problem has seriously hindered the development of special education in China” (July, 2010). University professors, many of whom advocate for special education for young children, call for improvements in the processesfor identifying and diagnosing children’s special needs; increased support for main streamed/included children with severe and/or multiple disabilities; improvements in education for parents of children with special needs; increased cooperation between schools and families; and teacher training to stop “class float” from occurring.

Normal school faculties suggest that in the recruitment of special education teachers, job training is essential. Further, because on-the-job training can promote exchanges between the special and the regular education teachers, it can enhance their knowledge and help them learn the latest information about special education laws and regulations. Normal school faculties also recommend that general secondary schools and two-year regular college students create a special education curriculum for students that can be shared among special education educators. To reverse the loss of special education teachers, workers need to advocate for improved income levels and social status for the profession. One normal school dean indicates that high-quality teachers are essential to such efforts: “To give disabled children a better education, there is the need to improve their learning environment and to improve the quality of textbooks, assistive technology, and classroom equipment. It takes great teachers to make that possible” (June, 2009).

The Future of ECCE in China

In May 2010, Professor Dong Yin of the Institute of Psychology at Renming University of China interviewed Professor Xiao Fei of Beijing Normal University. When asked about the future of early childhood education, Dr. Fei responded, “With the improvement in the level of civilization, more and more organizations realize the importance of early intervention or early education to carry out [personal and national goals]. Parents realize that intervention, as early as possible, takes careful guidance. Related institutions (kindergartens) are more and more willing to accept children with special needs, and [these institutions are] becoming more professional. As for . . . special education abroad ... we have also [made progress]. At least now in academic research, an international gap basically does not exist. Currently [in] special education, one is constrained by the level of economic development . . . [and by] the general public’s understanding of the level of children with special needs; [attention to these areas is] needed to solve future problems. In addition, many times, China’s laws or principles lack the power of enforcement, and details need to be thought through” (May, 2010).

Chinese families speak about the “4 + 2” for each child, interpreted to mean four grandparents and two parents who are devoting resources to a single child. In some urban areas, very young children attend boarding schools for a portion of the week while their parents commute to work. A teacher at the Jukai Kindergarten in Guangzhou said, “Our school is a second home to about a third of the children. Their parents work long days, and children are here from Monday until Thursday. Then they go home with the parents. They are happy to go home and they’re happy to come back to school” (July, 2009).

Education reforms in China reflect international trends, including the increased inclusion of children with special needs. Forlin (2010) suggests that fully supporting reform through an inclusive approach to working with children with disabilities in the regular classroom “requires a transformation in curriculum; the development of appropriate policy at both a national and school level; the provision of relevant support; and opportunities for both academic and social inclusion. Becoming an inclusive practitioner requires teachers to be able to modify the curriculum, their pedagogy and assessment procedures, and inclusion requires a functional multi-agency collaboration to ensure appropriate support for all students” (p. 177). Additionally, it is generally accepted that ECCE “inclusive programs [should] build on traditional child care practices, respect children’s linguistic and cultural diversity, and mainstream children with special educational needs and disabilities” (UNESCO 2006, p. 19).

Special education is a key area. Ministry of Education data show that at the end of 2000, China had 1,539 special education schools with 37.7 million students; 4.3 million special education teachers staff, including up to 3.1 million full-time staff; and a large number of special education teachers in regular classes in ordinary schools. Universal compulsory education for children with disabilities is still a focus of development. The effectiveness of any education system is determined by reviewing a variety of services, including the capacity of staff. China’s special education “teacher first” policy is intended to build a sufficient quantity and quality of qualified special education teachers.

Although challenges exist, teacher education programs in China strive to prepare teachers with the appropriate knowledge and dispositions to work with children with exceptionalities and to develop the requisite skills to adapt and modify curricula. Pedagogies in current teacher education and training programs include constructivist methodologies. Teacher training features field sites to establish the necessary dialogue to develop knowledge, skills, and understanding about the ideology of inclusive practices that can be implemented with large numbers of children in Chinese classrooms (Forlin 2010).

Research to determine evidence-based practice is important. Dr. Fei of Beijing Normal University says, “Of course there are many related research projects. An example of relevant research . . . is the study of special education students learning in regular classes . . . [There are] pros and cons of such a resettlement. There is an affirmative educational effect of this arrangement of mainstreaming children” (May 2010). Further, as China’s efforts in ECCE look to international advocacy and long-range plans, China’s educators remain constant in improving programs and aligning

practices with the Education for All (EFA) goal of UNESCO, focusing on equity and inclusion. EFA goals are being monitored with a 2015 timeline to achieve objectives related to equity and inclusion.

Conclusion

Education for all and education according to one's needs and potentials is congruent with Chinese philosophy. Lau and Yuen (2010, p. 125) assert that in Chinese society, the "way people with special needs are met in modern society is also an important indicator of the quality of life. The effective execution of special education requires strong cooperation among students, parents, schools, and the general public". Policies "that reach out to the excluded and improve the quality, flexibility and relevance of education" are strongly suggested by UNESCO (2006, p. 2). Meeting the needs of each child in China will require efforts in teacher recruitment, training, professional development, and pre-service education, including on-the-job practice in working with children with disabilities. Advocating for more incentives for teachers working in difficult contexts is a priority of university faculty in teacher preparation programs.

Although China does not have a high number of public special education schools that serve children with disabilities, the country has made significant progress in some areas of special education. A number of policies have been introduced on behalf of children with disabilities. Mainstreaming is currently the primary mode of providing educational opportunities to children with disabilities who live in remote areas. Guidance and oversight to ensure the healthy development of each child has been implemented.

However, a significant number of special education problems cannot be ignored. For example, about 80 % of China's population lives in remote and rural areas with high poverty. Only a few special education schools and teachers are present in these areas, the quality of special education is generally low, and most rural families cannot afford the cost of education for their learning-disabled children. To change this situation, China will need to improve the social status, working conditions, and treatment of those who work in special education while improving the quality of special education teachers through on-the-job training and proper evaluation. Further, it is important to establish clear and authoritative identification of standards and assessment tools—and to be creative and strategic in providing training for professionals.

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Part V
The Early Childhood Educator

Chapter 11
Administrators, Teachers, and Niñeras

Professional Partnerships for Quality in Guatemala

María Albertina Guerra de Castañeda and Belinda J. Hardin

Introduction

Nestled in the northern part of Central America between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, Guatemala's diverse heritage is seen throughout the country in its colorful tapestries, iron works, and vibrant ceramic tiles. In recent years public and private agencies in Guatemala have supported the expansion of early care and education services for young (Elvir and Asensio 2006; UNESCO 2006). This chapter begins with a description of Guatemala's population and information about political, geographic, and financial factors impacting early childhood education services in Guatemala. Next, a discussion of the three types of early childhood services in Guatemala is described as well as the different professionals who provide these services. Finally, implications of current successes and challenges are shared as well as recommendations for future professional development to enhance the quality of early childhood services in Guatemala.

Country Characteristics

More than 56 % of Guatemala's approximately 13.6 million people live in poverty, making it one of the poorest countries in Latin America (The World Bank Group 2010). Malnutrition and mortality rates for children under five years of age continue to be among the highest in Central America (Elvir and Asensio 2006). Guatemala's more than 20 official languages (indigenous languages and Spanish) reflect the country's mountainous landscape where people of villages live in comparative isolation

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from each other (Beckett and Pebley 2003; US Department of State 2010). These significant variations in language present educational challenges for many children in Guatemala. For example, children are expected to participate in Spanish-speaking school environments and written materials are typically in Spanish with a few bilingual exceptions (Beckett and Pebley 2003). The result is that often children who are Spanish speakers participate in more years of education (6.7 years) than children speaking indigenous languages (approximately 1.8 years depending on the language) as reported by UNESCO (2000).

Migration to urban areas without the benefit of extended family members to provide child care for working parents, and international initiatives such as UNESCO's *Education for All* have stimulated greater interest in developing and expanding early childhood care and education services in Guatemala (Inter-American Development Bank 1999; UNESCO 2008; UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2007). For example, in 1991, the National Education Law was enacted placing greater emphasis on the total development of children. Another important change occurred in 1995 when the Bilingual Education Department (Dirección General de Educación Bilingüe) was created to launch a new system of intercultural bilingual unitary education (Nueva Escuela Unitaria Bilingüe Intercultural) through the Ministry of Education (Elvir and Asensio 2006).

Types of Early Care and Education Services

Though pre-primary education remains optional, since the early 1990s enrollment rates for children aged 5–6 years old have doubled and early childhood education is now viewed as an important part of the full range of educational services in Guatemala (Elvir and Asensio 2006). These changes resulted from the new policies and principles described earlier designed to improve the quality of Guatemala's national education.

Early care and education services are offered by three groups: (a) the Ministry of Education, (b) the Secretary of Social Well-Being-Presidency of the Republic, and (c) private programs. Each of these groups has their own policies and regulations; however, often they develop collaborative processes that allow for greater numbers of children to receive services. For example, a private program may receive funding through the Ministry of Education and/or the Secretary's office as well as fees paid by parents (UNESCO International Bureau of Education 2006).

Ministry of Education Programs

The Ministry of Education provides education services to children aged four through six years old through several types of programs, including bilingual services and párvulos or initial services (UNESCO 2008). Bilingual services (Spanish and an in-

digenous Mayan languages) are limited and typically offered in rural areas. Although nearly half of Guatemala's population is indigenous, less than 20 % of young children from indigenous communities receive bilingual education services. Another program operated by the Ministry of Education is the Proyecto de Atencion Integral al Nino (PAIN). The PAIN program includes four types of services: (a) monthly orientation programs for pregnant and lactating mothers on health care, nutrition, and parenting techniques for newborns; (b) parent education meetings on child development and caregiving; (c) training to support the physical and mental development of infants and toddlers; and (d) education services for children 3–6 years old that promotes development across all developmental domains (Anderson 2001).

The Programa de Centros de Aprestamiento Comunitario Preescolar (CENACEP) is a part-day program (3 hours per day) that provides education to children who are six years of age and about to enter primary school (Anderson 2001; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2006). The children participate in an accelerated program designed to promote basic psychomotor, social, language and math skills. Approximately 47,000 children receive services through the CENACEP program (UNESCO International Bureau of Education 2006).

The federal pre-primary curriculum must be followed by anyone approved to provide pre-primary education. The curriculum is based on 10 criteria that promote quality pre-primary education including: child-centered processes; family and community involvement and advocacy; the learning environment; cultural relevance; respect and provision for individual differences; consistencies of activity and communication; integrated learning; play as the right and privilege of children; strengthening child development; and the central role of children's participation (UNESCO International Bureau of Education 2006). Also, the curriculum is organized into six developmental areas that reflect the stages of child development: learning skills, communication and language, social and natural environment, artistic expression, and physical education.

Private Child Care Programs

There are more than 135 private childcare and education programs in Guatemala City and a limited number of private programs in other locations (Hardin et al. 2008). Private programs accounted for about 20 % of the pre-primary services in Guatemala during 2003 (Elvir and Asensio 2006). Typically, private programs are supported through fees paid by participating families or contracts with government agencies (e.g., Ministry of Education). Children from middle to upper socio-economic groups attend private programs in Guatemala through private pay, which has caused some concerns about social stratification in pre-primary services. The curriculum, facilities, and staff training for private programs are varied; however, in Guatemala City, there is a Kindergarten Association for early childhood programs primarily operated by private programs. Many private programs often have state-of-the art facilities and materials.

Secretary of Social Well-Being Programs

A third type of early childhood care and education is offered to families and children through the Secretary of Social Well-Being-Presidency of the Republic (the Secretary). The Secretary's office is responsible for regulating and supervising all child care centers throughout Guatemala. Also, they implement six different types of programs related to children and families. Many programs provide services to children and families in need, such as children with disabilities and children living in poverty. One program implemented by the Secretary's office is the Centros de Atención Integral (CAI), called Centers of Integral Attention in English. The CAIs are subsidized by the government to provide nutrition, education, full-day child care, health care, and parent involvement activities to poor working families without other sources of child care (Hardin et al. 2008). Studies show that a whole child approach to services for young children (e.g., educational services coupled with nutritional packages) produces positive long-term outcomes, such as improved cognitive development (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2006). This program is particularly important in Guatemala where half of the children under five years of age have nutrition needs (Elvir and Asensio 2006).

The CAIs provide child care services from early morning to late afternoon according to the parents' work schedules and the program hours of operation for children aged two months to four years old. Many unidentified children with disabilities participate in these services and simply attend the program and receive the same services as children with typical development. In combination, these programs provide early care and education services to many young children and families in Guatemala. However, significant numbers of young children, particularly in rural areas, continue to have limited or no access to early childhood services (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2007). One important aspect of early childhood services that officials in Guatemala have worked to address during the past decade is a more highly qualified early childhood professional.

Benefits and Limitations of Professional Development

Administrators, teachers, and niñeras, who share the responsibilities for the children in their care, staff preschool programs. Administrators and teachers typically have college degrees. Administrators are trained in disciplines such as psychology, education, or a related field. They oversee the daily operations of the programs, supervise staff, plan special events, and, in private programs, conduct fundraising activities. In urban areas such as Guatemala City, program administrators coordinate with community agencies and organizations, such as health providers, to enhance their services.

Teachers must be qualified to teach pre-primary education for children from birth to six years. They are typically trained in one of 17 teaching-training colleges established for this purpose in 2002 (Elvir and Asensio 2006; UNESCO International

Bureau of Education 2006). Training for bilingual pre-primary teachers is available also to ensure that services are culturally appropriate. Teachers plan and implement the daily curriculum, interact with family members, supervise staff, and are sometimes responsible for the upkeep of the facility.

Niñeras, which means sitters or nursemaids, receive more informal training. However, they may also attend a two-year training program at one of the teaching colleges. The niñeras provide assistance to lead teachers, sometimes prepare meals, and support daily activities of children including overseeing hygiene activities.

Partnerships with families and other community providers are encouraged and viewed as an important part of early care and education services. Some early childhood programs provide parent education classes to families with children aged six and younger (UNESCO International Bureau of Education 2006).

A training event in 2005 and the subsequent follow-up survey in 2006 provides insight into a process for identifying training needs, developing partnerships to implement professional development, and the impact such events can have at the local level. In 2005, approximately 110 administrators, teachers, and niñeras from 11 of the 35 CAIs programs (described earlier) participated in a two-week professional development program sponsored by the Secretary's office and provided by six faculty members from the United States. These 11 programs were chosen by the Secretary's office primarily because they were located in Guatemala City. Travel from the rural areas is costly and time consuming, most likely a general problem for providing training to ECCE providers in Guatemala. The project contained several phases of planning, implementation, and evaluation including:

a. A *planning phase* to establish a working partnership with leadership staff and to develop a work plan (already completed);
b. An *information gathering phase* in which program participants used the ACEI Global Guidelines Assessment to identify and prioritize needs;
c. A *two-week training* with early childhood care and education directors, teachers, and niñeras on three topics identified in the previous phase;
d. *Follow-up conversations* to answer questions or provide additional information to the on-site project coordinator through email and conference calls; and
e. *An evaluation* of the following year to measure changes in the participants' beliefs and knowledge and to examine the effectiveness of the project as a potential replicable model for other countries.

The training content was focused on three areas: environment and physical space, curriculum content, and pedagogy; and building family and community partnerships. These areas were identified through the results of an earlier study using the ACEI Global Guidelines Assessment (GGA) (2003) as well as topics requested by the Secretary's office (Fig. 11.1).

For the first area of the training, environment, and physical space, participants learned how to effectively use classroom space, specific strategies for organizing indoor and outdoor environments to support learning and development, and examples of how to make and use learning materials.

Training in the second area, curriculum content, and pedagogy included information on what constitutes a developmentally appropriate curriculum, strategies for

Fig. 11.1 Faculty and participants in Guatemala. (Photo courtesy Belinda J. Hardin)

observing children and organizing meaningful curriculum content, and pedagogical strategies such as individualization and responsive teaching techniques. Other information covered in this area including positive behavior support techniques, theoretical information on Piaget and Vygotsky, and foundational information on multiple intelligences. Research on brain development and the impact of quality early care and education services were also covered. Training content on the third topic, building family, and community partnerships included sharing strategies on building relationships and how to facilitate greater collaboration among parents, professionals, and community members.

Follow-up Evaluation

To understand changes in participants' beliefs, knowledge, and classroom practices resulting from the training as well as recommendations for future professional development, a subset of trainees completed a questionnaire the following year. Of the 49 respondents, 7 were administrators, 23 were teachers, and 19 were niñeras. All were female and most reported being in their current position for 6–10 years

Fig. 11.2 Making learning activities. (Photo courtesy of Belinda J. Hardin)

or even longer for niñeras (11–17 years). The questionnaire was designed to gather information related to the following questions:

1. How did the participants' knowledge and beliefs about early childhood education change as a result of the training in 2005?
2. Did changes in pedagogical practices, classroom environment practices, and parent/community partnerships occur as a result of the training?
3. What recommendations do the participants' and officials at the Secretary's office have for future training programs?

More than two thirds of the respondents reported acquiring new knowledge about teaching practices, and one third of them described specific actions they used to apply this new knowledge. For example, one person stated, "I learned to have the children work in groups. [I learned to] work with recycled materials [and to] work with appropriate materials for the age of the child. Learning in a community is more productive." Additionally, behavior management techniques were reported as important teaching practices learned by approximately a fourth of the respondents (Fig. 11.2).

Most respondents reported they learned new knowledge about how children develop and learn, including (a) understanding the variance in child development; (b) learning how interactions among teachers, parents, and the children themselves enhance development; and (c) the role of the physical environment in supporting children's development.

Respondents also reported gaining new knowledge related to indoor and outdoor classroom environments. More than a third described specific strategies they were using as a result of the training such as making sure there were open spaces for the children to jump and run and using found materials such as cardboard boxes for outdoor play. New information for setting up the learning environment, especially techniques for using recycled materials to make learning activities and creating learning centers, were also reported as new knowledge that the respondents applied in their

local programs since the training. Challenges for implementing these new practices included a lack of resources to create learning centers.

Nearly three fourths of the respondents reported new knowledge about how to form effective family and community partnerships. Improving methods of communication and offering parent training activities were two types of changes reported in this area. A number of respondents described difficulties in establishing collaborative relationships with families. One problem they reported was insufficient time for families to participate in program activities due to work schedules.

Regarding future training needs, respondents indicated they would like more hands-on training for developing learning materials, additional information on behavior management, and training on specific types of disabilities. Ways to support young children's social/emotional well-being, including children who have suffered from abuse and neglect, was also reported as a significant need for future training.

It should be noted that this collaborative experience was equally beneficial for the trainers from the United States. For example, learning how early childhood care and education and special education services for children with disabilities were implemented in Guatemala provided the faculty with new, experience-based understandings that they could share with their students in future coursework. Also, the integration of cultural information into their coursework gathered through personal interactions, photographs, and artifacts help provide more authentic information about Guatemala for American students. Lastly, subsequent conference presentations and published articles helped increase public awareness about Guatemala's early childhood education services. The partnerships established during this training continue to have a positive impact for young children both in Guatemala and the United States.

Conclusion

During the past two decades, early childhood care and education in Guatemala has grown in both in quantity and quality. Yet, much work remains to be done to ensure the education and care of young children and families in a country where poverty, geographic terrain, and other factors present unforeseen challenges. Possible areas for increasing the quality of early care and education in Guatemala include: professional development in rural areas; addressing salary, staff–child ratios, and other issues related to high staff turnover; providing on-site coaching; and more frequent in-service training for all staff.

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Chapter 12
Early Childhood Teachers in Slovakia

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Introduction: Two Branches of Early Childhood Education in Slovakia

A contemporary approach to early childhood education in Slovakia has evolved from two developmentally autonomous branches of educational institutions, formerly based on differentiating between age groups of children. The first branch covers preschool institutions as centers providing care for children before the beginning of compulsory school attendance (3 to 6 year old children). The second branch is connected to the tradition of primary school education (6 to 10 year old children) that serves as the beginning of compulsory school attendance[1] for children. This branch formerly belonged to the national schooling system. Despite the fact that autonomous roots of both branches of early childhood teachers were established historically, current school policy promotes trends of integration. A clear manifestation of this tendency is apparent in the enactment of school law in 2008 that re-classified preschools from institutions providing care, to educational institutions that integrate preschools into the national schooling system. Further, the school law established new, integrated study programs for training early childhood teachers at universities, both for preschools and primary schools. This study program has been referred

[1] In Slovakia, compulsory education refers to 10 years, usually from age 6 to 16.

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to as the *Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy* (from 2005). These educational trends of integration are comparable with worldwide trends (OECD 2008), but in post-communist countries like Slovakia, it has a unique perspective.

Based on traditions, preschool and primary school teachers fall within the official structure of a teaching profession that has different sub-categories. These sub-categories are based on a number of factors such as the target age group of children, different historical approaches to educating these age groups of pupils, and different teacher qualification requirements. For example, preschool teachers are trained at the higher secondary level and are not required to have a college degree, while study programs for primary school teachers require a master's degree. It is important to note that there is some differentiation in the teachers' professional identity and status which is reflected not only in a community of teachers and society in general, but also in the social representations of children who describe preschool teachers as "friendly caregivers" and primary school teachers as "serious carriers of knowledge" (Pupala and Branická 2002). Although the interdependence between these institutions and their key role in educating children was repeatedly emphasized in the history as an achievement to uplift the status of the teaching profession in society, the status of preschool teachers and primary teachers in society still remains different. This emphasis exists as an empty political cliché that is not followed with the necessary actions and policies. Therefore, in order to understand the concept of early childhood education in Slovakia today, it is necessary to understand the history of pre-school and primary school institutions during the twentieth century.

A Brief Historical Overview of the Twentieth Century and the Illusion of a "Golden Era" of Preschools

During the short period of existence of the first Republic of Czechoslovakia (1918–1938) when the issue of developing a nation state for the Czech and Slovak people was highlighted, the question of integrating the national schooling systems was raised repeatedly. Specifically, the community of teachers emphasized the idea of teacher training (including teachers for preschools) at universities. The engagement of discussion regarding this integration was a significant step toward the process of raising the status of the teaching profession. This process, which was closely related to the political program of the national democratic government, was interrupted during the World War II. This period thus represents the first wave in a tendency to foster congruency in order to align both branches of early childhood education, preschool teachers and primary school teachers.

After the World War II, and specifically from 1948 when Czechoslovakia became part of the Eastern Block, this trend, influenced by new communist ideology, continued for the next 40 years. This period affected school policy in general, but also had in a unique way, a paradoxical effect on preschool education.

The period of communism has been perceived as the "golden era" of preschool education and care. Many who are looking back with sentiment at this communistic approach emphasize that it was an era of financially supported preschools, mostly during Slovakia's national history. In fact, during this period, the number of preschools increased so that preschool education and care became available to the whole population of preschool age children resulting in 90 % attendance in preschools.

Subsequently, curriculum development and concern for qualification of early childhood teachers were supported. Initially, the prioritization of early childhood education as a cornerstone for lifelong learning was comparable to trends that are in existence today. However, this was only at face value or superficial. The real motive behind the development of early childhood education was to ensure 100 % employment of mothers, although this idea was unnatural, economically ineffective, and even destructive to society. Separation of children from families (and working mothers) thus enabled the establishment of preschools as mediums of indoctrination of children with the ulterior motive of taking ideological control over the children and to facilitate the subordination of children under the ideology of communism. Continued development of centrally controlled curriculum enabled the process of indoctrination via the centrally set content of education. In effect, the training of teachers enabled a smooth implementation of communist ideology into educational practice. The extensive development of early childhood education became the medium for manipulative social policy and regulation that, when interconnected with communist ideology, leads to cultural destruction with consequences that are typical for all post-communist countries.

Conversely, during the communist era, the teaching profession enjoyed a relatively higher level of prestige and recognition compared to the current situation. Teacher training institutions such as higher secondary schools and teacher training colleges, registered a high number of applicants. Most of these graduates entered the teaching profession resulting in insignificant numbers of teachers without proper teacher qualifications. However, this interest in the teaching profession rapidly decreased after the fall of communism. The most significant reason for this change can be attributed to the fact that the labor market opened access to new, financially better appraised professions compared to the teaching profession. Consequently, Slovakia is currently facing a situation where interest in the teaching profession has decreased and a significant number of graduates with teacher qualifications choose different professional career paths outside the schooling system.

University Teacher Training as a Political Gesture

In the beginning of this era in the 1950s and 1960s, both categories of early childhood teachers were synchronized. Preschool and primary school teachers were educated together in the same institution referred to as "pedagogical schools." These schools

were at the level of higher secondary education. From an outside perspective, it appeared quite appropriate that the status of preschool and primary school teachers was balanced. However, from within the teaching profession, this caused frustration for primary school teachers due to the fact that primary teachers were participating in compulsory school attendance together with secondary school teachers who had higher qualifications from a teacher training college. This situation meant that the status of primary school teachers seemed to be decreased when compared to that of secondary school teachers. In addition, the primary school teachers' professional identity in the community of teachers and society was decreased.

During the 1970s, there was a significant reform of the basic school system that influenced teacher training, especially primary teacher training, which was definitely elevated to the master's level. However, training of preschool teachers remained at the higher secondary school level. At the same time, universities opened non-obligatory master study programs for interested and ambitious preschool teachers, with the main focus on school management and administration, and an effort to develop preschool pedagogy as an academic subject. Compulsory primary education had been fully staffed with teachers who formally had the same university qualification as secondary school teachers.

Even though the training of early childhood teachers at the master's level was compulsory (for primary school teachers) or voluntary (for preschool teachers), it demonstrates the serious interest of government and society in education in general and in the teaching profession in particular. Today, this focused interest in education is supposed to be the positive legacy of society from the previous communist era. But this generous implementation experienced unintended consequences. There was the unclear status of educational studies at universities, decreasing prestige of the teacher profession in society, and also decreased interest in students applying for study programs in the teaching profession. It can be argued that the decision to establish teacher training at universities was mostly a political decision rather than the consequence of developing academic theoretical knowledge about education, schooling, teaching and learning (Fig. 12.1).

The theoretical content base of university teacher training study programs was weak in comparison with traditional university study programs. This is one of the reasons leading to contempt of pedagogy at an international level (Ricken 2007). In post-communist countries, this dismissive attitude raised the awareness that the study content of teacher training study programs during this era was explicitly filled with communist ideologies. Establishment of legitimacy of teacher training programs at the university level occurred in two dimensions. First, immediately after 1989, teacher-training programs were discredited because of the communist content, which raised the questions about the legitimacy of teacher training at universities until now. Second, the teacher training programs were questioned on the issue of what should be the core of teacher study programs; to weaken the tension between the pragmatic requirements of everyday teaching practice and the high academic standards of university studies (Kosová 2009).

Fig. 12.1 The status of primary school teachers in Slovakia (and early childhood teachers in general) continually decreases in society despite the attempts to uplift the level of their qualification and their professionalism due to the fact that these attempts have no academic relevance and are mainly power plays within and from the academic field. (Photo courtesy of Tayne Godfrey)

Early Childhood Teacher Training as a Power Play

It is a paradoxical situation that now, in the era of school reform, and more than 20 years after the fall of communistic government in society, political powers responsible for the hurried creation of compulsory university training of teachers, are not fully recognized. The inheritance of the past is still present and is understood as a challenge to establish compulsory university study for all categories of teachers. However, one category of teachers, preschool teachers, is still educated at the higher secondary level. Thus, this decade is the last period of aligning the qualification of preschools and primary school teachers with very specific progress in Slovakia.

It is the first time in Slovakia's history that a new branch of study programs has been created and defined as a new area of social sciences or humanities called *Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy.* All students graduating in this program of study at the bachelor level receive a preschool teacher qualification. Further studies at the master level leads to a qualification for primary school teachers. With this master level degree in this program, graduates are qualified to teach within the whole scale of

preprimary and primary level of education that covers the education of children from 3 to 10 years. Concurrently, the higher secondary level study for preschool teachers is still in operation, but these institutions are supposed to be temporary, pending appropriate steps leading to the enactment of a new law on compulsory education for preschool teachers at the bachelor's level. Additionally, it is even possible to receive Ph.D. training in this field. It is necessary to mention that the decision to establish the new area of social sciences or humanities and new ways of teacher training was purely a political power play within the academic environment that was given impetus by the Bologna Process[2], which in fact has no theoretical or academic significance.

Now the process of increasing the status of the teaching profession seems to be formally fulfilled in Slovakia. From this point of view, it appears that Slovakia's integrated programs of *preschool and primary school pedagogy* should be the positive example within the field of teacher professional preparation because early childhood education is established as a part of university study, thereby fulfilling faculty research endeavors.

However, universities offering these study programs are still facing some challenges related to the content of the study. As a result, this issue has generated discussion in a variety of forums such as conferences and publications, all aimed at defending the content base in the study program. All these discussions reveal that the creation of the programs at the university level was a result of a power play from the academic environment rather than the recognition by the authority of early childhood pedagogy within the university community. The creation of this university study program may be perceived as a clear effort by academic lobbying to pursue professional and institutional interests instead of serious intentions "to improve the quality of the teacher profession" in which early childhood teachers are just pawns.

In fact, since the interests of academicians involve training early childhood teachers as well as conducting research as a source of their subsistence and professional identity, there is less interest in advocating for the interest of early childhood teachers. However, if these power plays are resulting in increased professionalism of early childhood teacher training, then these strategies are fruitful for all the stakeholders and are a medium for taking and securing a position within the academic world. In addition, these power plays fit well within the educational policy of the European Union that places more emphasis on the professionalization of preschool and primary education than ever before (Commission of the European Communities 2000).

Today, the issue of increasing the qualifications of early childhood teachers has become the major focus of all innovations in teacher training, especially with regard to pre-service and in-service teacher training. The aims of early childhood teacher

[2] The Bologna Process is named after the Bologna Declaration, which was signed in the Italian city of Bologna on 19 June 1999 by ministers in charge of higher education from 29 European countries. Today, the process unites 47 countries. The overarching goal was to create a three-cycle structure (e.g., bachelor–master–doctorate), and to facilitate mobility of students, graduates and higher education staff.

Fig. 12.2 After establishing the university study program *Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy* preschool teachers, traditionally prepared at higher secondary schools, can receive bachelor, master and even Ph.D. training in this field. However, the legitimacy of teacher training at universities is directly or indirectly questioned from within the academic field and preschools are generally perceived in society as social institution primarily providing care, not the integral part of national schooling system. (Photo courtesy of Karin Hambálková)

training are articulated as the development of teachers as autonomous professionals with extended periods in teacher training. This perspective is succinctly advocated through the concept of reflective teaching (Schön 1983; Kasáčová 2005) and the concept of teachers as reflective practitioners (International Step by Step Association (ISSA) 2009). Further, the alignment of the status of training preschool and primary school teachers is politically motivated via the concept of lifelong learning and lifelong education or professional development (European Union 2004). Subsequently, a strong emphasis is placed on preschool education as a significant part of this process of lifelong learning and education (Fig. 12.2).

The increased interest in prioritizing preschool education at the university level underscores the Slovakia Ministry of Education's attempts to increase the number of young people with university qualifications in Slovakia. Susol (2009) contends that this approach to teacher training is analogous to "Europeanization" of the Slovak system of higher education. An overarching theme, however, points to the renewed focus on prioritizing early childhood education in general, and early childhood teacher training in particular (Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI), 2006; Mbugua 2009).

An important aspect of fostering the integrity of early childhood education deals with the introduction of new strategies of regulating the processes of preschool education. This is to be achieved through a number of tools and factors that are specific to the national schooling system, but now modeled for preschool education. First, there

is the development of educational standards; second, the orientation of preschool goals to reflect long-term aims of education according to the global economic interests; and third is to harmonize their approach to curriculum development with that of primary education. The question remains, however, whether preschool education should be compulsory.

This goal of achieving integrity for early childhood education is expected to lead to the development of higher autonomy of teachers in the field. It is imperative that this process be regulated by setting professional standards for in-service teachers, and opportunities for career advancement based on the development of core teaching competencies (Collective of Contributors 2006).

Influences from European School Policy

Recently, the early childhood education policy along with the policy for the professional development of teachers (especially after Slovakia joined the European Union in 2004) has significantly been influenced by the centralized school policy of the European Union. This approach to improved teacher professionalism has its roots and support in the general framework of the policy of lifelong learning (Commission of the European Communities 2000), and in other related emphasis on requirements to improve the quality of the teaching profession (Commission of the European Communities 2007). These teacher-training reforms are prioritizing the idea of standards and competencies as a new approach to the teaching profession. Subsequently, a new law has been implemented specifying the necessary requirements for qualification and professional development. This law has had a direct impact on the employment of teachers in schools since 2009. The law established the systematic hierarchy of the professional career for teachers, a system of credits in their lifelong learning, and standards of the teaching profession for individual sub-categories of teachers (different for preschool and primary school teachers). Standards for the teaching profession are meant to be tools for regulation in the process of lifelong learning as teachers acquire a high level of professionalism and produce high quality professional achievements. Concurrently, these standards have been established as indirect regulation mechanisms for coordinating curriculum development in study programs training teachers, through courses of lifelong learning in the liberal environment of a free market with education. The standards are also supposed to be tools for self-regulation in teachers' lifelong professional development, helping them to make decisions in choosing educational and self-educational activities. Taking control over the professional development of teachers based on standards is allowed by means of indicators helping them to identify and evaluate their professional achievements. These indicators are referred to as teacher competencies.

The course to improving the professionalism of preschool and primary school teachers (and the course of the latest changes in their pre-graduate and post-graduate study and in their lifelong learning) has been synchronized recently with the broader framework of how professionalism is perceived within the school policy of the

European Union and the policy of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The specific emphasis is on the autonomy of teachers and on their responsibility for self-regulation of their teaching and of their individual professional development. Autonomy of early childhood teachers is in fact strengthened, and not only in relation to their professional self-development. From the time when school reform was started in Slovakia in 2008, teachers have been expected to participate in developing the basic curricular documents of schools—the school curriculum. Since schools operated under the guidance of centralized curriculum until 2008 (curriculum developed at the central, national level), development of school curriculum provides the autonomous space for schools which now require teachers to apply this autonomy appropriately and wisely. Teachers integrate the new competencies in their curriculum and lesson plans to the benefit of their respective schools and students. The question remains as to whether teachers have adequate external sources and support to assist them in the utilization of this autonomy according to the original intentions of proponents and framers of school reform. Increase of indirect regulation of education via detailed standards of preschool and primary school education could turn this autonomy of teachers and school paradoxically into a tendency for teachers to prepare pupils to pass school leaving standards. Professionalization of teachers within this autonomy framework could thus lead to less professionalism (Wong 2006).

The subject of critical analysis, especially in the field of early childhood education and training teachers for preschool and primary school level of education, should also be the school policy of the European Union, as articulated in the special thematic issue of the journal (The Learning Society from the Perspective of Governmentality. Special Issue 2006). Strictly controlled economic motives underlie this approach to quality teacher training. The nexus is an acute attention to increasing the competitiveness of Europe and its global economic interests, with education being perceived as the producer of highly productive and flexible labor force and the qualified subject (teacher) perceived as "human capital". Autonomy of the learning individuals (pupils at school and teachers within their professional career) is postulated through the concept of "new public management", which continually transforms the public sphere of education congruent with mechanisms within the private entrepreneurial sector. The aims of lifelong learning as defined by the European Union, to which all levels of education have been subordinated in recent times (including the preschool and primary school level of education), as well as the concept of professional development of teachers, should be perceived as the cornerstone for establishing the reductionist economical approach to the world motivated by neoliberal ideology (Kaščák and Pupala 2010).

Conclusion (Skeptical) and Closing Remarks

At first glance, the school policy related to early childhood education in Slovakia seems to be in accordance with current global trends of prioritizing early childhood education as a foundation for educational success with the aim of "best practices"

in the teaching profession. The latest school reform and changes in the strategy of training teachers are confirming the positive tendencies in developing the social environment of preschools and primary schools, the emphasis being the professional development of teachers. However, the keen interest on increasing the qualification of early childhood teachers raises important questions about the re-distribution of power among certain social or even certain political groups in society. The medium used by these groups is therefore early childhood education as a way of exerting influence and status in society. If we are looking at school reform from the point of view articulated above, it becomes apparent that there are weaknesses in school reform not only in Slovakia but also in the idea of a knowledge-based society that is recognized as the central point of socio-economic development within the European Union (The Learning Society from the Perspective of Governmentality. Special Issue 2006). It can reasonably be argued that a critical analysis of trends in educational reforms leads to skeptical attitudes particularly when they purport to increase the quality of education in general.

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Chapter 13
Young Dual Language Learners in China

Best Practices in English Immersion

Mary Barbara Trube, Rong Yan and Lei Zhang

Introduction

Many international early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs are creating opportunities for children to become bilingual and multilingual or to maintain their bilingualism and multilingualism (Lorenzo et al. 2009; Lenker and Rhodes 2007; Richards and Rogers 2001). Three major categories of ECCE settings that serve young dual-language learners (DLL) are the first-language classroom, the bilingual classroom, and the English language classroom (Tabors 2008). This chapter focuses on the English language, or English immersion (EI), classroom for DLL. In the ECCE EI classroom, a portion of classroom interaction is in English, and the outcomes include the development of English language proficiency and preservation of the children's home languages and cultures. A distinguishing factor in most ECCE EI classrooms in China is that teachers are typically not native English speakers. However, in China, Canada, United States English Immersion (CCUEI) kindergartens, more native English speakers are also university-prepared ECCE teachers. Further, in CCUEI kindergartens, learning outcomes include English language learning, content learning, and development of social competence. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss EI for young DLL in the context of the CCUEI research collaborative schools in China. Specifically, the chapter defines DLL in general; identifies DLL in the context of CCUEI kindergartens; reviews current research in the field of EI education;

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discusses findings from the Global Guidelines Assessment (GGA) program evaluation tool, interviews and observations; and concludes with recommendations.

Dual-Language Learners

A child with typical developmental skills learns a first language in the context of social interaction within a family or care-giving environment. Children's language development begins with producing sounds; recognizable sounds of a child's home language occur around the first birthday. During the next four years, children acquire basic oral language skills, which include phonology, vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and pragmatics. Throughout the early childhood years, children continue to learn culturally appropriate ways to use language (Tabors and Snow 2001). In EI programs, young children who come to ECCE EI programs from homes where English is not the dominant language also develop English language skills through simultaneous acquisition. Research suggests that young DLL have the capacity to understand which language should be used in what context without confusion (Cloud et al. 2000; Gonzalez-Mena 2007).

Context

China's history of offering formal English language education has spanned over 100 years. In more recent years, the English language has gained unprecedented recognition as the international language for academic, diplomatic, scientific, technological, tourist, and trade communications (Kelly 2004; Qiang et al. 2011).

In the 1990s, the national Ministry of Education in China began encouraging an outcome-based reform approach to English language teaching (Qiang and Zhao 2001). The ministry views the introduction of English during early education as an appropriate initiative because 50.9 % of children from rural and urban areas attend kindergarten, and this number is expected to reach 75 % by 2020. In response, CCUEI began implementing EI with experimental kindergartens on a volunteer basis in 1997. The highly successful Canadian French Immersion educational model of language teaching was introduced in Xi'an, People's Republic of China, by a Canadian team in 1996 and was embraced under the title of "An Experiment of English Immersion Teaching" (Qiang and Zhao 2001; Siegel 2011).

For the first year, based on parental permission, children from eight kindergartens participated in EI for 50 % of each school day. Chinese teachers with bilingual English and Chinese competency were enlisted and provided with professional development on EI practices in ECCE environments. A cohort model developed as children entered first grade, and CCUEI measured the progress of participating children through their elementary school experiences.

Currently, CCUEI is considered a key collaborative research project and is listed as a Priority Project by China's National Center for Foreign Language Teaching and

Fig. 13.1 Yingcal Kindergarten, Beijing, People's Republic of China. (Photo courtesy of Ron Yang)

Research (Qiang et al. 2011). Today, CCUEI works with over 60 kindergartens, elementary and secondary experimental schools in various regions of China (Liang 2009) (Fig. 13.1).

English Immersion Teaching Principles

Richards and Rogers (2001) identify immersion education as foreign language instruction through the medium of the target language, resulting in a series of goals for children. These include the following:

1. Developing a high level of proficiency in the foreign language;
2. Developing positive attitudes toward those who speak the foreign language and toward their culture(s);
3. Developing English language skills commensurate with expectations for a students' age and abilities; and
4. Gaining designated skills and knowledge in the content areas of the curriculum (p. 206).

The CCUEI project applies Johnson and Swain's (1997) research with immersion education. In the context of Chinese kindergartens, EI is an additive bilingual approach where exposure to and use of English is most often confined to the children's classrooms. Additionally, the kindergarten classroom culture reflects the local Chinese community, offering EI in developmentally appropriate and content-integrative ways.

The theoretical foundations of CCUEI are based on cognitive learning theories of Piaget and Bruner and the social-linguistic theories of Vygotsky. Siegel (2000) provides assumptions for practice:

1. Young children learn languages easily and enjoy the experience. They do not experience the inhibitions and embarrassment of older children or adults.

2. Language should be learned in an interactive way. Communication is important.
3. The teaching of subject areas should be integrative.
4. Language learning should be about everyday life.
5. Children should enjoy the experience (p. 1).

Because EI was a new paradigm change for English language teachers (ELTs) in China, the CCEI (and later CCUEI) research collaborative members designed new ways to provide professional development for educators at all levels of involvement: CCUEI conferences/symposia, workshops, and communities of practice (CoP).

To implement EI in kindergartens, teachers participated in a CoP. CCUEI early childhood educators meet the three characteristics of domain, community, and practice identified by Wenger (1998), who also suggested the following criteria for a CoP:

1. CCUEI ECCE teachers' domain provides them with a collective identity that they value and learn from.
2. CCUEI ECCE teachers' community provides support as they meet regularly to see model lessons, engage in reflective practice through self-assessment, peer-assessment, modeling, and discussions, while learning from each other.
3. CCUEI ECCE teachers' practice is grounded in theory, which is applied to practice. Practitioners share English immersion pedagogy through stories, experiences, and methods that inform their roles as EI educators.

EI teaching practices were modeled by experienced EI teachers and followed by structured group critiques based on immersion theories (Qiang et al. 2011).

Global Guidelines Assessment

The growth of the program brought recognition of the need for systems of program, curriculum, and teacher evaluation (Trube and Huang 2009; Qiang et al. 2011). The GGA, based on the *Global Guidelines for Early Childhood Education and Care for the 21st Century*, was translated into Chinese by members of the Association for Childhood Education International (Wortham 2001, 2003; Barbour et al. 2004). The GGA was introduced to CCEUI in 2005 as a means for self-assessment by ECCE EI kindergarten teachers and administrators. Teachers and administrators in CCUEI kindergarten programs completed the self-assessment in 2005. Based on their perceptions at that time, they perceived that the kindergartens provided optimal environments and physical spaces, had quality curriculum planning and pedagogical methods, employed teachers and caregivers who were committed to optimal early care and education, and promoted positive partnerships with families and communities.

Through the GGA, teachers identified the need for capacity building through teacher training workshops in curriculum design, content, pedagogy, planning for instruction, working with cooperative groups, classroom management, and EI

Fig. 13.2 Kindergarten Class, Yingcal Kindergarten, Beijing, People's Republic of China. (Photo courtesy of Ron Yang)

strategies and competencies. It also generated findings that were supported by interview statements, written comments, and classroom observations (Fig. 13.2).

The GGA (Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI 2007) revealed that CCUEI teachers have "adapt[ed] the use of space, materials, and time to meet the needs of the children and the particular program" (p. 13). These teachers have demonstrated knowledge of developmental learning and immersion practices related to the interests of children. CCUEI EI teachers have employed best practices by engaging young DLL in authentic learning environments. The strategies have involved literacy-intense, play-based interactions that pair speaking and/or singing with nonverbal communication and use of realia. Children have been engaged in imitation, nonverbal behavior, sound experimentation and repetition, and rehearsal of words and phrases.

Introducing children to English through play-based activities and English-supported environments has fostered a cumulative developmental sequence aligned with stages of language development (Cummins 1991; Krashen and Terrell 1998; McLaughlin 1984). As reported during interviews and confirmed through observations over the span of several months, when CCUEI teachers introduce EI play-based sessions, children often attempt to communicate in Chinese, followed by a nonverbal period when they communicate primarily through gestures and inner speech; then they enter a stage of telegraphic and formulaic English use; and, gradually, with support from their teachers and peers, children enter a stage of productive English use during play.

Observations and interviews with CCUEI educators suggest three additional factors—as identified by Tabors (2008)—that should be considered when promoting children's sequential acquisition of Chinese and English in CCUEI kindergartens: (1) aptitude, (2) social, (3) and psychological. Each child's social goals receive attention since a child's needs for affiliation and participation impact interactions, which, in turn, affect development in content-language integrated learning (Philp and Duchesne 2008; Coyle et al. 2010).

Children who are acquiring a second language have already learned a significant amount in their first language and, therefore, are comfortable in authentic learning

environments (Cote 2001). To accomplish the three-pronged goals of language, content, and social competence, CCUEI educators use strategies of listening, speaking and gesturing in authentic, play-based environments and the here-and-now of children's experiences by repeating, expanding, and extending with words and phrases in English.

Teachers in CCUEI kindergartens create and provide a curriculum plan that outlines language teaching goals and pedagogy, which gives children opportunities to master information through practice and multiple means of expression (Knell et al. 2007). This curriculum plan is posted daily for visitors to the kindergarten and maintained by kindergarten administrators. As observed, children chant, sing, dance and role-play to demonstrate and communicate their concepts of time. One teacher noted, "The children like to sing 'Tick tock, tick tock, what time is it?' and dance to the music. They shout the time out loud and jump and clap. I can see children know the numbers 1 through 12. They know what time they go home for lunch. They are happy!"

The teachers understand the importance of creating an emotionally safe and motivating environment as children engage in the EI portion of the day. Teachers have a supportive teaching and caring relationship with the children and use positive language when speaking with children. A Shenzhen kindergarten teacher remarked, "It's important to play with the children." Children joined their teacher as he placed items on a stage to create a faux living room. Through these types of skill-building cooperative learning pedagogies based on play, children acquire the socio-cultural dispositions to embrace English language acquisition (Qiang et al. 2011).

Teachers are attentive to providing curriculum materials that support creative learning experiences and that maintain cultural identity. A kindergarten teacher in Guangzhou said, "Children like to paint the opera masks, and they can easily tell me the colors and shapes on the masks. They like all the sizes of brushes, and we talk about big, bigger, biggest, and long, longer, longest."

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, interviews and observations conducted between 2005 until 2011 document the work of CCUEI kindergarten educators. Five teaching principles collaboratively developed by CCUEI research members have been observed in practice:

1. Integration of teaching objectives in language acquisition and subject content.
2. Monolingual immersion teaching practices.
3. Literacy blocks with listening skill development first.
4. Activity-oriented teaching and learning; and
5. Whole-child approach to teaching and learning (Qiang et al. 2011, p. 9).

These principles have enabled teachers to apply research/theory to practice in order to guide instruction, curricular design, lesson planning and evaluation to EI for young DLL in China.

This chapter addressed ECCE EI programs that follow a whole-child approach to teaching and learning for DLL enrolled in CCUEI kindergartens in China. It explored findings from GGA surveys and interviews with educators and suggested the importance and underlying principles of the cognitive, linguistic, physical, and social domains of learning for DLL. It also presented research supporting the three goals of language, content, and social competence in EI programs for young DLL. As the descriptions are limited to a few items on the GGA, more research is needed to better understand the work of CCUEI kindergartens in addressing outcomes for DLL in China.

As EI is currently implemented in CCUEI kindergartens, young DLL in China are making gains in English language acquisition, content knowledge, and social competence. As CCUEI kindergarten programs continue to grow, it is recommended that the GGA tool and other means of program evaluation and assessment should be used. These types of tools focus attention on designing, maintaining and assessing environments, curriculum content and pedagogy, teacher preparation and professional development, and partnerships with families and communities to benefit all children.

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Part VI
Family, School, and Community Partnerships

Chapter 14
Family and Village Partnerships in Rural Schools in Senegal

Sue C. Wortham

Introduction: Influences on Rural Schools

It is early afternoon in late November. A group of educators are sitting in the shade of a large Baobab tree waiting for the afternoon training session to begin. Nearby, in a classroom of older students, the recitation of a lesson in Arabic is underway. Behind the school is the grave of the former village chief who attended some of the training events while he was alive. Today, his son, a teacher who has participated in the training is the new village chief.

Some of the children are gone for the day. School lets out by 1:30, 3 days a week. Some goats wander in the schoolyard nearby. Children can be seen playing at homes. Some curious ones peek at us through the school gate.

This is Diaoule School in the Diaoule community many miles from the nearest small city of Fatick, Senegal. Much of the content in this chapter was learned from seven years of experience in this rural school and other schools in villages nearby.

The families and villagers of the area have met with us frequently over the years to share school accomplishments, discuss issues concerning the schools or to celebrate the completion of the training with us.

The understanding of rural education described in this chapter was enriched by published information concerning rural education in Senegal, but the basics of the interaction between school staff, families, community members, and religious faith was learned through first-hand experiences with the adults and children of the community. As a left-handed person, it was my third visit before my new friends shared the cultural and religious information that forbids eating

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or writing with the left hand. They had found me strange at first as a left-handed person. Later, they were amused to let me in on their secret that I had not been observing this practice.

I also learned about Muslim calls to prayer throughout the day. Each afternoon, we paused for prayers. Someone came to school each morning carrying a prayer rug. When it was time for prayers, the training session had a break while the men washed their feet and took turns saying their prayers on the prayer rug. No amount of research would have been as meaningful as this personal experience with the trainees. The influences on rural schools in Senegal are complex and varied. Some of these influences are described in the sections of the chapter that follow.

Family and Village Organizations

There is an obvious contrast between family life in urban and rural areas in Senegal. In an urban community, there are banking services, large markets, internet cafes, restaurants, and various types of small businesses. Businesses include cell phone and internet services and copy shops. Families usually live in individual homes. For example, the small city of Fatick has some paved streets, a defined commercial district, churches and mosques, and civil and educational offices. Electricity and municipal water are available.

A few miles outside Fatick, the environment becomes completely pastoral. Small rural farms are spread out across the savannah. Small villages have been organized near a cluster of farms. Community schools are located in or near a village. There is usually no electricity or water service. There are community water wells where families can collect water and wash clothes. Families most frequently live in family compounds that include small living units for extended family members. Usually a farmer and his wife establish a compound. As the children are born and become adults, they might add their families to the compound or start their own compound. A widowed older parent, divorced daughter or other relatives might live in the compound.

A fence surrounds the homes in the compound. Individual dwellings are round structures with thatched roofs. Recently, the use of bricks for construction has become more common resulting in rectangular homes with tin roofs in some compounds.

Family Roles

The status of family members emerged from Islamic practices. Husbands, fathers, brothers, and uncles have all the rights over women. There are constitutional

protections for women, but rural women face societal discrimination where Islamic and traditional indigenous customs are very strong (Everyculture.com n.d.). About half of all women live in polygamous relationships. Several wives and their children might live in the same family compound.

Women do most of the household chores of cooking, cleaning, and caring for children and small compound animals such as chickens. In the compound setting, several women might share these responsibilities. The men clear the fields and tend to large animals such as goats, sheep, cattle, horses, and donkeys. Children in the family also help with family work. The girls help with fetching water, washing clothes, and caring for younger siblings. Boys are responsible for taking animals to pasture when they are not in school.

Village Governance

Senegal has formal law and customary law. Formal law is based on national legislation and policy while customary law has emerged from traditional cultural practice. For example, there are formal laws with policies for land ownership. In rural areas, customary laws for land ownership are at odds with formal law. Customary law prevails over formal law in many situations (USAID 2010).

Residents of rural villages are descended from ancient tribes or ethnic groups. There are approximately 22 ethnic groups, each with their own cultural practices and dialects. The largest ethnic group in Senegal is the Wolof. This is also true in the rural areas outside of Fatick. Although French is the official school language, most of the population speaks Wolof.

Ethnic and religious groups have lived together peacefully for many years. The traditional social structure reflects kinship relationships that are tolerant and sharing of mutual jokes. Although kinship practices have been modified with the spread of education, the traditional values of respect for others, good manners, and hospitality are followed in social relationships (Everyculture.com. n.d.).

The tradition of leadership through village elders and village chiefs continues. When important visitors visit village schools, village chief and elders meet with the visitors in one location, while women and children are gathered in a separate area. The chief and elders are greeted first before visitors move to greet the women's group. The chief and elders in turn present a gift to the visitors. Two examples of these gifts are a large bag of eggs or live chickens (Wortham 2007).

The village chief and elders make many decisions related to village life. This influence extends to decisions made about the village schools (to be discussed later in the chapter).

Fig. 14.1 Faly Mane, his wife, Elizabeth, and their children Na Mariana and Mustapha

Faly Mane and His Family Faly Mane is an inspector of secondary education for regional education offices serving the Fatick district and other districts in the region. He and his wife, Elizabeth have two preschool children. Elizabeth is a supervisor in the local school district. Mane's parents live in a village some distance away from Fatick. The family is Muslim. Elizabeth's family lives in the city of Dakar, the capital of Senegal. They are Christian. Elizabeth is also an artist. There are several pictures with Christian topics that she has painted on the wall of their home.

The children are being raised as Muslims. When they are of age they can choose which religion to follow. Recently, Mustapha, age 2, was circumcised in the Muslim tradition.

There is no conflict between the two religions in the family. They observe both religious holidays. This is also true for the larger Senegalese community. Christians visit Muslims on their holy days and Muslims do likewise on Christian holy days (Faly 2008) (Fig. 14.1).

Rural Economy

Agriculture is almost the only economy in rural Senegal. In the region discussed in this chapter, subsistence farming occupies the rural farm family. The family might grow millet, corn, rice, and market produce. The small farms do not grow commercial crops; however, each village has a market day where families can barter for needed items or sell or buy produce, animals, grain, and other household items. Market day is also an opportunity for village members to gather to exchange greetings and news.

Land Tenure

The subject of land ownership was introduced earlier in the chapter in the context that males usually own the land. Most of the land in Senegal is allocated by customary law. Land is held communally by families and inheritance. Loans, leases, and gifts of land are also conducted under customary law. Under the National Domain Law, rural councils can allocate land so long as the land is used productively. Farmers who occupy land for three or more years can apply for use-rights even if there are competing claims for the property under customary law (USAID 2010).

Religious and Cultural Practice

As noted previously, the majority of people in Senegal are Muslim. Muslim religious norms prevail in social practices. Muslim traditions affect the roles of men and women in society (King 1970). Since ownership of property is generally controlled by men, women access land through their husbands. However, women often can determine what crops they want to plant (USAID 2010). Laws regarding marriage are influenced by religious practices. All citizens must register their marriage. Polygamy up to four wives is permitted. Husbands are recognized heads of the household. Wives are required to live with their husbands. Husbands are allowed a quick form of divorce. Wives, however, must apply for a court decree to allow the divorce. As a result of the submissive practices regarding women, the majority of women over age 15 are illiterate. They have little knowledge of formal law and women's rights. If women try to assert their rights they will experience strong disapproval and ostracism from the local village community (USAID 2010). The situation for women is changing, even in rural Fatick. Some women are educated and teach in school or have other professional occupations. Younger women and men wear western clothes rather than the traditional Muslim clothing. Women hold high positions as educational administrators at the national level. Girls now attend school in large numbers. There is little evidence of discrimination favoring males in school attendance. Nevertheless, a large percentage of children of both genders do not yet attend school.

Oral Traditions

Villagers transmit their culture through stories and songs. Some of the stories reflect their beliefs in superstition and magic. Tales are a means of teaching, expression, and entertainment. There are also tall tales that can be lewd and humorous. Tall tales are categorized as *mayi,* while folktales are *leebs* (Sougou 2008).

The Baobab tree is a popular source for folktales and expressions of superstition. Baobabs are very large trees that can live up to 3000 years. People revere them and

old Baobabs are given names (Govindan n.d.). They have large, thick limbs that resemble roots.

There are many folktales about the origins of the trees. One legend tells of the god Thora who disliked the Baobab growing in his garden and tossed it out of Paradise to the earth below. The tree landed upside down and continued to grow. Another tale says the Baobab was among the first trees on Earth. When other trees appeared with colorful foliage and fruit the Baobab demanded to have the same. The gods grew angry with the continuous complaining, so they pulled up the tree by the roots and replanted it upside down to keep it quiet (Govindan n.d.).

My personal experience with a Baobab tree came during a training session in 2004. The school where the training was held had a huge Baobab tree in the courtyard. An educational inspector assisting with the training told me that the trees were occupied by spirits when they were 100 years old. People were not allowed to sit under the tree at night because that is when the spirits come out and sat under the tree (Fade 2004).

Professor Sougou at the Unversite Gaston Berger in Senegal has studied folk tales told by young women. Some of the tales he collected were from young women from the rural area outside of Fatick who worked part of the year in Dakar as housemaids. The stories empower women to transform themselves from the secondary status and control by men. One story, "Maimouna" is about an orphan in a polygamous household. It reflects tensions in polygamous homes. The story presents a stepmother who is hostile to the orphan child and wants her removed from the household. Fortunately, a half-sister loves the orphan and protects her from the stepmother. The half-sister reports the stepmother's attempts to get rid of the orphan to her father. The father punishes the wicked stepmother and banishes her from the village. The father affirms that a stepchild is the same as one's own child (Sougou 2008).

Music and Dance

Music and dance are also important in rural Fatick as they are in much of Africa. Musicians take instruments to local gatherings and music is interspersed with other activities. Songs are sung during training sessions when participants need a change of pace. Individuals are very adept at inventing a song and teaching it to others before they sing as a group. Songs are an important form of expression. At the end of the training sessions there will be a song thanking the trainers for their work and presence. Sometimes a beat is played on a table to accompany a song. When preschool children sing, the teacher might play a beat or have the children clap their hands as they sing. Some preschool songs have gestures that the children make as they sing.

Dance has always been a part of the culture. Dancing is part of community celebrations. At the end of five days of training, villagers and community and government officials are invited to a meal of celebration. Cooks start early in the day to prepare the meal over open fires using large cooking pots. Villagers start gathering as time for

the meal approaches. After some opening remarks before the meal, everyone settles down to eat. The Senegalese style of eating is to sit cross-legged on the ground or floor around a large serving pan. Five or six people will share the pan and grasp the food with their fingers. Water is provided before and after the meal for hand washing. Two tips for dining etiquette are to (1) eat only from the part of the serving bowl that is in front of you and not reach across to the other side; and (2) eat only with the right hand (Kwintessential.co. n.d.).

When the meal is completed, the dancing begins. The group includes several generations of villagers who gather in a large circle and take turns demonstrating their individual dances. At the celebration that I attended, only the women, girls, and some small boys participated in the dancing. Only one person danced at a time, and was cheered by the crowd. Sometimes a dancer would indicate who the next dancer would be. At other times, an individual decided to take a turn.

The Role of the Family and Community with the Schools

The Nature of Community Schools

The educational system in Senegal is divided into two types of schools. Formal education occurs in government-sponsored schools. Non-formal education takes place in community schools. Community schools were originally organized for children from 9 to 14 who were not enrolled in government school or had left school (Cherry 2006). Although the first schools had little official supervision, there are now Ministry of Education inspectors who provide pedagogical supervision. The community school curriculum now parallels the government schools curriculum.

Senegal promotes a strong relationship between the state and civil society. Partnerships have been established with non-governmental organizations, community members and other interested organizations to participate in community schools. School committees are organized to make decisions about the school and to conduct projects for the school (Cherry 2006). This is the process being used in the rural schools outside Fatick. While all the schools were first organized as community schools, some have transitioned into government schools. Others are getting more financial support that includes construction of additional classrooms and more educational resources. With national legislation permitting preschools in basic or elementary schools, new preschool classrooms are being added to many rural schools in the Fatick district (Fig. 14.2).

Family, Village, and School Partnerships

Rural schools outside Fatick reflect the national emphasis on community participation with the schools. The villagers are very active in the conduct of the school in their village. Each school has a school committee composed of school staff, village

Fig. 14.2 Families traveling in rural areas. (Photo courtesy of Marshal Wortham)

governance representatives that can include the chief and elders, and parental representatives. The committee meets regularly to address school issues, plan school projects, and make other important decisions. Some of the school projects that have been accomplished in these village schools have included construction of buildings for teacher housing, constructing facilities for preschool education, conducting feeding programs, and maintaining school landscapes.

Felane School is one example. There are two committees at the school. One committee is concerned with the basic (elementary) classrooms and the other committee works with the preschool. When the preschool was begun, the preschool committee constructed a temporary shed made of millet stalks to serve as a classroom. Small tables and chairs were purchased along with a few manipulative materials. Next the committee constructed a small outdoor pavilion with a thatch roof to serve as an area for small centers. Finally, when more space became available for preschool classrooms, two classrooms were added. Villagers painted the walls to make them more pleasant for the children (Seck 2010).

School, Community, and State Partnerships

Families, village officials, and school personnel have voice in decisions made by government officials about the schools. There is an inspector in Fatick whose job is to coordinate community school planning. Inspector Bardy Niang is the planning official for the district of Fatick. Part of his job is to incorporate preschools into the community schools. Inspector Niang explained that the process begins at the community school. When a sufficient number of preschool children are being served, the planning office provides assistance to school committies in establishing more preschool classrooms. Felane School increased the number of classrooms and preschool teachers from one to three using this process. The initiative taken by the

principal at Felane, the preschool teacher, and the villagers to develop a quality program led to the needed support from the school district (Niang 2010).

A similar process is used when a community school wishes to become a government school. The initiative begins at the village level when school committees plan to request the change. After various steps have been completed successfully, the school is accepted as a government school. Felane School has completed this process. New classroom buildings being constructed at Felane were a positive result of this effort.

Conclusion

When visitors approach the small community schools in rural villages across the savanna outside Fatick, the first impression is of the extreme poverty of the people. Resources for eating and living are found in the local area. Little is seen from commercial sources other than clothing. The people grow their own food and construct their homes from what is available from nature. Vehicles with engines are a rare sight since transportation is usually a cart pulled by a horse or donkeys.

Although there is an outward appearance of poverty, the rural families have something that contemporary towns and cities lack; a strong sense of community and belonging. The community stems from the ethnic culture, a common way of life, and an established religion.

Rural schools reflect the national and local culture and the cohesion of the villagers. As villages construct and support community schools, they have a sense of ownership and responsibility for children's education. Residents of rural villages all know one another, leading to a sense of mutual support and caring. Community gatherings extend the sense of belonging and support.

The rural schools also benefit from national policies that encourage local communities to participate in the decisions and plans for the school. School committees comprised of families with children in the school as well as village leaders work with school staff to improve children's education.

After an immersion through repeated visits to the rural schools, the visitor gains a very different impression of the people and the nature of rural education. The children have a sense of security that many western children have lost. School boys in Muslim clothing who practice drums after school represent the continuity of religion and ethnic culture. Gatherings of villagers for celebrations held at the school bring together the local ethnic leadership with the school institution. On each succeeding trip the visitor from the United States sees many friendly, familiar faces and feels welcome as an addition to the community school.

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Chapter 15
Weaving Relationships Between Preschools, Families and Communities

The Nurturing Connections to the Reggio Emilia Region of Italy

Luciano Cecconi and Dolores Stegelin

Introduction

A Brunello di Montalcino possesses all the qualities of the land of Siena, the intensity of the sun that shines on that corner of Tuscany and the freshness of the winds that caress the hills that are home to the vineyards. The bouquet, color and flavor of this superb wine owe their uniqueness to *that* land and to the tireless work of *those* men and *those* women. Every land has its *own* wine, even if the grape variety is the same. For example, Sangiovese, the grape Brunello is made from, is common to other Italian regions, including Emilia Romagna, Umbria and Marche, as well as beyond Italy, in California (Napa Valley and Sonoma County) and Argentina (Mendoza). Many different wines are made from Sangiovese grapes (in Italy Bardolino, Chianti, Montepulciano, Morellino di Scansano, Montefalco Rosso and so on) and yet they are all very different, as the territories the vines are grown in, and the microclimates the grapes mature in, are different. Brunello and Chianti, both Tuscan wines, are two of the most famous, but their differences are very clear. The conquering features which meet the eye, palate and nose of wine tasters around the world is not the bouquet, color or flavor of *standard* Sangiovese but rather all the intense, persistent hints of undergrowth, aromatic wood, soft fruits and light vanilla, that bright, shining ruby color, the long, dry aromatic persistence that only the area of Montalcino produces, and which make Brunello a unique wine (Fig. 15.1).

In the global society, in which, when and where the soil and climate conditions permit, the Sangiovese grape is grown, what makes the difference is the diversity and uniqueness of the place it is grown in, the element which is commonly known as *typicality*.

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Fig. 15.1 Piazza San Prospero, Reggio Emilia, Italy. (Photo courtesy of Dolores Stegelin)

And as *natural products* are considered and assessed in close relation to the territory they come from, so too *cultural products* can only be fully appreciated when placed in relation to the cultural context in which they were designed and developed. This relationship with the context guarantees the typicality of the cultural product and, ultimately, its quality, and at times its excellence. The difference being that in the global society it is possible to buy and enjoy a bottle of Brunello di Montalcino anywhere, although it is far more difficult to reproduce a service (such as a preschool) created by and for a local community and local culture, in another territory, for another community and another culture.

This premise helps to introduce some concepts (context, cultural product, uniqueness, typicality, local/global) that are essential for understanding and appreciating the preschool experience in Reggio Emilia.

A Short History of Preschools and Infant–Toddler Centers in Reggio Emilia

The historical roots of preschools in Reggio Emilia lie deep in the history of the Reggio Emilia working classes, the history of the women of Reggio Emilia, and in the history of the local government, which steadfastly believed in investing in the future. But it is also the 40-year-long history of a group of people, some highly creative in the pedagogical field and others in the political field, all highly motivated, who have skilfully managed a precious heritage of experience over the years. Finally, as far as the history of a single man can count in such a complex collective movement, it is also the history of a man with many interests, a courageous and wilful man and above all, a free thinker: Loris Malaguzzi (1920–1994). The pedagogical footprint of the schools of Reggio Emilia is his, as is their organisational structure (although he would say that the two are inseparable). Although he wrote little, Loris Malaguzzi

did much, and knew how to 'do school." Today, 17 years after his death, his charisma is still strong and his disciples still stand firmly at the helm of the preschools and infant–toddler centers of Reggio Emilia.

Workers and Farmers

The history of the preschools and infant–toddler centers of Reggio Emilia is also the history of its working classes, because in the early twentieth century the socialist municipal administrations, were among the first in Italy (1899) to promote policies to support the working classes, fight illiteracy and guarantee appropriate services for the workers' children. From 1899, the administration's commitment to school buildings, teachers' salaries, school canteens and subsidies for families was constant. Coherently with the strong cooperative traditions of the area, during the same period the administration promoted the "Gabinetto Pedagogico," a structure that facilitated collaboration, and therefore self-learning, among teachers.

In reconstructing the attention to education of the time, we should also remember the establishment in 1909 of the 'Mutualità Scolastica Reggiana," the 'Reggio Emilia educational mutual aid fund' was established by the municipality and a group of teachers to support children's education. The purpose of the fund was to offer not only support and assistance to children in need, but also to assure their human development, inspired by values of solidarity and cooperation.

The relationship between the establishment of the first municipal preschool in Villa Gaida (1913) and the working class, particularly working women, is clear from the school statute, which justifies the choice of setting up the school in one of the city's most outlying neighbourhoods due to the fact that that neighbourhood was '. . . dangerous for children, mostly inhabited by families in which the women spend their days at the factory, and there is a more pressing need to safeguard the children'.

The sensitivity of the Reggio Emilia administrations towards education translated into the special attention paid in making preschools not only a place of safekeeping but also of moral, social and cultural development. The Regulation of the Villa Gaida preschool is also clear on this point: "A modern-thinking administration such as ours could not, at the start of this great new reform, confuse a preschool with a place for the mere custody of children. For this reason, it has designed a most modern type of school, following the Froebelian method, with a specifically trained teacher and a free, healthy meal provided for the children".

Although the Reggio Emilia administration had to wait until 1913 to directly tackle the problem of schooling for the under-sixes, it was once again due to the attention of the socialist administration towards the working classes and the farming communities, in particular, to combat the problem of illiteracy which was rife among these sectors of the population (in 1911, 47 % of the Italian population was illiterate). During the fascist period, the experience of the non-clerical school at Villa Gaida was hindered using every means possible until it passed under the control of the Catholic Church. It was only following the resistance and the liberation from Nazi-Fascism (1945) that the foundations of the educational experience we know today

were laid. The school built in Villa Cella (1947) represents a perfect metaphor for this rebirth. In just two years, the local people built the 'Asilo del Popolo', the People's Nursery, ' brick by brick' with the money raised by the CLN (Committee of National Liberation) from the sale for scrap of a tank, three trucks and six horses left behind by the Nazi army in its hasty retreat. The project was also funded by the local Davoli family, who donated the land, and the Builders' Cooperative that loaned equipment and a building foreman. Finally, the local people donated their hard labour and their enthusiasm. The school fell under municipal management in 1967, when it took the name "XXV Aprile" (the date of the Italian liberation from Nazi-Fascism, and a public holiday in Italy) (Borghi et al. 2001).

Women

It was in the post-war period after 1945 that the decisive contribution of the women of Reggio Emilia to the creation and development of the preschool experience became clear. During that time two female movements were highly active: the Union of Italian Women (UDI), founded in 1944, a secular, antifascist association, and the Catholic Italian Women's Centre (CIF), founded in 1945. As early as 1945 the UDI autonomously managed seven preschools in Reggio Emilia, with an eighth opening in 1947 (Villa Cella). Again in this period, from 1945 to the end of the 1950s, the history of the women's movement and that of the workers' movement went hand in hand. The preschools became necessary because, escaping unemployment, many women from the Reggio countryside looked for seasonal works like winnowing, threshing and grape harvesting, and had to find somewhere to leave their children during these periods. In the 1950s in the province of Reggio Emilia there were around 60 preschools run by women's associations and trade unions to cope with the needs of female seasonal workers. Another important testimonial of the role played by women's associations in the history of the Reggio Emilia preschools is the UDI initiative of 1961 to force the municipality to include the costs of setting up preschools in its budget. Various meetings were organised as part of the initiative, and thousands of signatures collected. We should remember that at that time most of the preschools were Catholic (22 out of 33), 4 were run by the UDI, and none at all by the Municipality.

The pressure from women to promote childhood policies in Reggio Emilia has been constant, indeed so incisive that it has positively affected decisions and actions taken by the local government which in some cases anticipated, if only slightly, some important decisions taken on a national scale. Despite their different political inspirations, the women's movements have always fought the battle for children on the same side. Thanks to their commitment, problems that were once considered 'women's problems' became political and cultural problems that concerned the whole local community. The central role of education in the policies of the Reggio Emilia administration is owed precisely to the—somewhat difficult—passage from the female universe to that of the whole community, the *polis*. Hard on the heels of the first movement which, between the late Fifties and early Sixties contributed

to the opening of the first municipal preschools, a similar women's movement took hold in the second half of the Sixties to promote the establishment of infant–toddler centers (for children from 0 to 3 years old). Working and farming women, and their organisations, once more faced the dramatic problem of doing two jobs (one in the factory or in the fields, and the other in the family).

The Start of Recent History

The turning point in the history of the schools of Reggio Emilia came right at the start of the 1960s when, following the completion of the post-war reconstruction and having overcome the serious economic crisis which affected the main industries of Reggio Emilia, leaving more than 40,000 unemployed in just a short time, the city administration felt the need to accompany the profound changes in the production fabric with a general improvement in quality of life. To open its first preschools, the Municipality of Reggio Emilia was forced to push the limits of the national law (the law governing school for the under-sixes came only in 1968). In 1962 the Municipality approved the construction of five preschools in newly build neighborhoods. Loris Malaguzzi's collaboration with the Municipality of Reggio Emilia to open new preschools began in 1963. Loris Malaguzzi instantly became a reference figure for the city's educational culture and its place in national and international pedagogical debate.

The lack of specific national laws was also an obstacle for the opening of the first municipal 'nidi', infant–toddler centers for children from 0 to 3. At that time all public and private children's institutions were supervised by a body left over from the Fascist period (ONMI, Opera Nazionale Maternità e Infanzia, the National Organisation for Maternity and Infancy), which took great care to avoid any initiative concerning infant–toddler centers in order not to offend the Catholic church, which saw them as a threat to the exclusivity of the family in the care and education of the under-threes. Indeed at that time the Catholic Church was against any law which facilitated women's work outside the home, as this was believed to separate women from their family duties.

In 1969 the movement in Reggio Emilia to promote the establishment of infant–toddler centers saw its first victory in the ceramics industry area of Scandiano where, with the agreement of the local employers and the municipality, the first infant–toddler center managed directly by the province was opened. Also in this case the Reggio Emilia experience led the way for the national experience (the national law on infant–toddler centers was passed in 1971). In 1971, exploiting an old law on maternity that provided for company childcare facilities, the Municipality of Reggio Emilia considered itself as a company and opened the first municipal infant–toddler center. The women's movements of the city worked together for its achievement. The municipal council's decision was unanimous. The center was named after Genoveffa Cervi, the mother of the seven Cervi brothers, shot by the Nazi-Fascists in 1943. In less than 10 years, 11 other municipal infant–toddler centers were opened. The staff

Fig. 15.2 Drawings along a walkway, Reggio Emilia, Italy. (Photo courtesy of Dolores Stegelin)

management and the coordination of the centers were appointed to Loris Malaguzzi and the 'Équipe Pedagogico Didattica' (the pedagogical and teaching team established under the Preschool Regulation of 1972) guaranteeing their inclusion in the '0–6' educational project, and the full continuity of the preschools. The 1970s saw the consolidation of the municipal network of schools known today: 20 preschools and 13 infant–toddler centers (Borghi et al. 2001).

Today in Reggio Emilia there are 29 infant–toddler centers (13 municipal and 16 cooperative) and 60 preschools (20 municipal, 5 cooperative, 21 FISM[1], 14 state-run).

With a view to both consolidation and expansion of the Reggio Emilia educational project beyond the city boundaries, several events marking recent history should be mentioned: the establishment of Reggio Children, the foundation of the 'Friends of Reggio Children' Association and above all the Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centers Institution of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia.

Reggio Children is a company with limited responsibility and mixed private and public capital established in 1994 by the Municipality of Reggio Emilia and other shareholders to manage the pedagogical and cultural exchanges between the childhood services institutions of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia and many teachers, researchers and intellectuals from all over the world. In the past decade, this body has contributed greatly to building an international dimension of the strategy of participation.

In the same year, the International Association 'Friends of Reggio Children' was established, a non-profit organisation with more than 1,000 Italian and foreign members which is sustained by the volunteer work of its members and donations from supporters (Fig 15.2).

In 2003 the Municipality of Reggio Emilia decided to establish a body given the autonomous responsibility of managing the human and economic resources required

[1] FISM, Italian Federation of Preschools, a Catholic organisation which has been operating in Reggio Emilia since the early 1970s.

to run the schools which participate in the '0–6' educational project. The Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centers Institution has a Chairman, Director and a Board of Directors. Its purposes include the planning, management and development of all activities involved in the running and qualification of the preschools and infant–toddler centers of the municipality of Reggio Emilia (Identity 2002).

Participation and Social Management of the Municipal Schools of Reggio Emilia

Participation

Participation is considered a veritable strategy by the stakeholders of the Reggio Emilia experience, both in terms of educational relations and social interaction. From this point of view, participation not only concerns the child's attitude within his own group ("I am not alone, I grow and learn as part of a group") but also the family's attitude to the school ("I know the children, the teachers and the institution my child lives in"/ "we know the needs, ideas and skills of the parents of our children"). Participation also concerns the pedagogical vision of the teachers concerning both the activities proposed to and carried out with the children and their own professional community (being part of a group of professionals that is recognised and qualified as such). Participation understood as the manifestation of co-responsibility by all those involved in the educational activity. Education is public, meaning it belongs to everyone, and as such falls under the responsibility of everyone. Participation therefore also concerns social interaction between citizens and institutions, on all different levels. The school built in Villa Cella (1947) is a clear metaphor of participation (see above), everyone felt responsible and everyone played a part, firstly to build the school 'brick by brick' and then to autonomously run it. Among the key players in this social construction were a political organisation (the CLN), a family, a cooperative and the local people. To better understand the concrete meaning of *participation* and *co-responsibility* it is interesting to mention another episode that concerned the school in Villa Cella. During the workers' struggles at the 'Officine Meccaniche Reggiane' factory to fight job cuts (1950–1951), the workers' families began to see their resources dwindle and could no longer help the school as much as they wished, so the factory canteen output was increased in order to provide lunch also for the children at the school[2]. This is an example of social solidarity that springs from an action of co-responsibility.

Participation, as co-responsibility, is a value founded on and consolidated within local history and culture, day after day (Various Author 1994) . This is true in the case of the preschools (Various Authors 1994), in the daily practice of relations

[2] 'Una città, tanti bambini. Memorie di una storia presente' ('One city, many children. Memories of a present history'), Reggio Children, Reggio Emilia 2010, p. 71.

and communication with the families and with the local administration[3]. Or again, participation is a way of finding and then affirming one's own identity. The concept of participation is therefore closely linked to that of citizenship, it was born with the French Revolution and consolidated with the development of modern states, the passage from the condition of subject to that of citizen. Citizenship designates the condition of the individual (the citizen) to whom the State recognises full civil and political rights. Article 118 of the Italian Constitution recognises *"autonomous initiatives promoted by citizens, individually or in associations, in order to carry out activities of general interest"*. Recognising full rights for citizens, including that of promoting autonomous activities of general interest, means recognising them as subjects with their own vision, interest, competency, baggage of knowledge, subjects who, in a fully aware manner, become an active part of a wider set (group, class, school, factory, city, state). Under this condition, the citizen constantly plays an active role both in the community he belongs to and the institutions, as well as the state. A citizen who is an active part cannot be a subject. In the same way, a child is an active part of his community, with his own interests, curiosities, knowledge, affections and values. Recognising these talents in every child/citizen (the competent child) means recognising their right to competent participation and shows teachers the ways of pedagogy of participation[4]. More generally, participation is considered an attitude, a way of being (children, teachers, parents).

Participation is an educational strategy which marks our way of being and doing school. The participation of children, families, teachers, not merely by "taking part" in something but rather as being a part of it, its essence, the substance of a common identity, an "us" we create through participation. In this way our experience, education and participation blend together and become the form and the substance of a single building process (Preschools 2010) .

Social Management

Social management, as fundamental as the concept of participation, was defined by Loris Malaguzzi as: 'the organisational and cultural form of the set of processes of participation, democracy, joint responsibility, the study of problems and choices inherent in every institution ... it is itself a project around the educational project, offering cohesion and enriching orientation both during collaboration and interaction

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[3] Paola Cagliari, 'La storia, le ragioni ed i significati della partecipazione' ('The history, reasons and meanings of participation', in various authors, *La partecipazione: valori, significati, problemi e strumenti*, ('*Participation: values, meanings, problems and tools'*) Documentation and Educational Research Center of the Municipal Infant-toddler Centers and Preschools, Reggio Emilia 1994, p. 8.

[4] Loris Malaguzzi, La gestione sociale. Significati e finalità, ('Social management. Meanings and purposes') in Partecipazione e gestione sociale, ('Participation and social management') published in the 'Quaderni reggiani' of the Department for Preschools and infant-toddler centres of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, Reggio Emilia 1984, pp. 5–6.

with district councils and during the wider debate and definition of policies within the Municipal Coordination of the Management Boards . . . ."[5] While in participation, which essentially concerns an individual's particular attitude to the community he belongs to, the institution is the only one of the dimensions involved, in social management the institutional dimension is the main one, everything leads back to the institution, from the levels closest to the child (the class, the school) to those closest to the city administration (municipal board). Social management is therefore the organisational form of participation, the place in which participation dialogues with management and becomes a project (Department for Preschools 1984).

To allow parents to participate actively in the educational project, a strategy of *dialogue* and *exchange* must be open to them, communicative functions which are inborn in human beings based on the capacity for mutual understanding. In this way, school staff is able to understand not only the thoughts, ideas, wishes and expectations of the parents, but also their competencies. On the other hand, by listening to the school staff, the parents acquire information about their children not only as individuals and as part of the community, their needs and their competencies, but also about the educational project. In this way they are able to become co-stakeholders of the educational experience, and can participate in decision-making and the construction of meanings. The formalisation of these communicative functions, these relations, constitutes the nervous system of social management, a communication system that carries information from the peripheral areas to the centre and vice-versa. Over the years, this nervous system has changed several times, but always with the purpose of increasing the ability of the educational project to meet and respond to the needs of families and society, to make the aforementioned functions of understanding, dialogue and exchange more sensitive and effective. To understand the sense and the function of this nervous system, we may use the example of the changes that have taken place in the typical family structure. In the past 50 years, at least three different seasons can be identified: (a) the season of the family, man and woman, projected towards the external world of work (60s and 70s); (b) the season of the plural family (regenerated families, de facto couples, etc.) in which gender roles are questioned, for example, men participate more in the management of the family and therefore the education of the children, but at the same time the traditional authority figure of the father is weakened (80s and 90s); (c) the season of the immigrant family, the impact of migration on an increasingly multi-ethnic society (from 2000 onwards).

These great changes have been perceived by the schools of Reggio Emilia by osmosis, a slow and progressive transfer of information through the constant, continuous contact with families (meetings, working groups, assemblies, seminars, etc.). The perception and assimilation of change in real time has allowed the schools of Reggio Emilia to develop increasingly effective forms of adaptation to the changing social, economic and cultural conditions. This adaptation has taken place thanks

[5] Loris Malaguzzi, in *Partecipazione e gestione sociale*, ('*Participation and social management*") published in the Quadernireggiani, Municipality of Reggio Emilia, Reggio Emilia 1984, p. 2.

above all to the work of the social management bodies. At this point it may be useful to offer a short description of the various bodies involved in social management[6].

The principal body in every preschool and infant–toddler center today is represented by the *Consiglio Infanzia Città,* Community-Early Childhood Council, comprising parents of the children attending the schools, teachers, the pedagogists and other members of the local community. The Board is elected every 3 years during a public assembly, and autonomously decides on its organisational forms.

The coordinating body of all the Community-Early Childhood Councilis the *Interconsiglio cittadino,* the City Inter-council, composed of representatives of every Community-Early Childhood Council, Reggio Children, the International Association Friends of Reggio Children, the Preschools and Infant-Toddler Center Institution and the municipal councillor for education. This body, meeting at least three times a year, is the interlocutor for the city administration for school policies, and has consultation functions concerning the main educational, management and administrative decisions, promoting the development of a quality service and working towards the construction of a culture of childhood.

In terms of participation, the body closest to the children's lives and educational relations is the *class meetings*. Class meetings, between children, teachers and parents, are organised using different strategies, times and methods (individual meetings, group meetings or assemblies, etc.) and aim to promote socialisation, educational projects and teaching initiatives, to build dialogue and offer debate on the various issues concerning children, school and learning. The meetings are organised by the teachers throughout the year according to need, also at the request of parents and the Community-Early Childhood Council.

The *Working Group* comprises all the staff of each preschool or infant–toddler center (teachers, educators, atelierist[7], cook, pedagogist, etc.) and is based on values of relationships, debate and co-responsibility.

The *pedagogical coordination team* comprises all the pedagogists (each pedagogist coordinates a given number of preschools and infant–toddler centers) who work together as a working group. The pedagogical coordination team assures the unity of the educational project in the 0–6 segments, and is responsible for research activities and innovation in developing everyday educational orientations and choices. This coordination team also offers a cultural and pedagogical link with local, national and international stakeholders. It also manages staff training.

Finally, the *Equipe allargata, "Enlarged team"* are periodical meetings between the bodies of the Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centers Institution, the pedagogical coordination team, staff representatives from the educational services and adminis-

[6] The description of the various bodies refers to the Preschool and Infant-toddler Center Regulation of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, published in 2009.

[7] The atelierist, a figure officially introduced with the Regulation of 1972, is one of the most significant innovations of the Reggio Emilia experience. He/she is an expert in different (principally graphic) languages, who, in a dedicated area (atelier), helps the children to form their own their expressive language.

tration departments. This body has the basic task of contributing to the development of the educational project (Preschools Regulation 2009).

Over the past 40 years, this tight network of relations involving all the stakeholders in the educational process in different forms and occasions has strengthened the central position of educational issues in the local culture as well as the openness towards participation, understanding, dialogue and exchange, by both local citizens and the institutions.

To conclude, it is interesting to report a recent episode concerning not only the preschools and infant–toddler centers but also the whole education sector of the city of Reggio Emilia.

Since 2008, in response to the national government's education policies that are progressively reducing the resources for education and research, a group of citizens, teachers, students, parents, researchers and pedagogists has spontaneously emerged in Reggio Emilia, joined by the will on one hand to defend public schools, opposing the government's education policies, and on the other hand to develop its own vision of a secular, pluralist and quality school. The group, which not by chance has taken the name "“La scuola che vogliamo”, “The school we want”, meets periodically to discuss and compare different ideas of education and schools. These meetings, held at the Loris Malaguzzi International Centre, often lead to interminable discussions going on late into the evening. In the past year, a number of meetings open to the local community have also been organised on current issues facing Italian schools. Many local people have taken part in the meetings, held in the evening and always going on until after midnight. What gives a special meaning to this experience of spontaneous mobilisation of the local citizens is that the group has considered it quite natural to hold these meetings directly with the local government bodies (Mayor, President of the province, etc.) to support its own vision of schools and to make proposals. The group has also organised cultural meetings with intellectual figures to discuss educational problems of international importance. Representatives of the local institutions, on the other hand, have on several occasions taken part in both the smaller and larger scale group meetings. The active participants of the group include members of the Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centers Institution and the local university. This kind of participation, recording unique and surprising interconnections between the local movements and the institutions, is possibly the latest manifestation of the endemic tendency of the population of Reggio Emilia towards social participation, but it may also be the latest result, referring back to the comparison with the world of wines and the products of nature, of that *pedagogical typicality* of Reggio Emilia, or the *pedagogy of participation* Loris Malaguzzi spoke of, which in one form or another has found the most fertile terrain for growth and development in the preschools and which has left an indelible mark on the generations of active citizens today.

Conclusion

As can be seen, the vitality of the Municipal Preschool and Infant/Toddler Centers in Reggio Emilia, Italy, are the result of many interwoven relationships. Over a period of 6 decades, the political and socio-economic forces of post-WWII combined with the

growing voices of the working class, the rising influence of women and the existential commitment to children as the fabric of the Italian culture brought together essential forces that have resulted in the highly successful and respected Municipal Preschools and Infant/Toddlers Centers of Reggio Emilia, Italy. The continuous commitment to the family unit and to the rights of the young child is at the heart of these schools. The relationships that have been woven throughout these many different layers of culture, economy, politics, and family have produced a system of early care and education that is admired globally and treasured by the citizens of Italy.

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Chapter 16
Conclusion

Sue C. Wortham

Many countries and their preschool programs have been visited in this volume. Much has been learned about how different circumstances have formed the programs in each country. The characteristics of preschool settings have been discussed under the categories of school environment, curriculum content and pedagogy, children with special needs, and the early childhood educator. These topics were addressed within the framework of the ACEI Global Guidelines Assessment (GGA) that has evolved during the years between 1998 and 2011. As described in Chapter 2, "Cross-Cultural Collaboration Research to Improve Early Childhood Education," the GGA is dynamic and its development continues through revisions and studies to establish validity and reliability. The GGA was administered in several countries that include Kenya, Italy, Russia, Korea, China, and Guatemala. Chapters on Slovakia, Mexico, and Senegal reflect unique conditions related to organizing or reorganizing preschool programs. The following sections describe the commonalities and unique characteristics in the countries represented in this volume.

School Environments

Preschool environments in the countries represented in this volume range from the very simple to very advanced, model environments. Kenya was reported to have the most varied range of school environments within one country. Urban preschools in cities are similar in quality to those found in developed countries. However, in poverty-stricken neighborhoods in Nairobi, early childhood services provide inadequate conditions for learning and stimulation. In rural areas in Kenya, community-based programs serve children from different social and cultural backgrounds. There are Montessori programs in both city and rural areas. In more remote, semi-arid and arid areas, life is nomadic and preschool programs are held under the

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trees. These "Loipi" programs are indigenous where grandmothers conduct storytelling, games, riddles, and songs. There are also Muslim Madrassa schools where the Integrated Islamic Education Programs combine curriculum pedagogy with the maintenance of the Muslim identity.

In rural Senegal and Burkina Faso in West Africa, preschool classrooms within elementary schools are just beginning to emerge. Preschools that have been established in the last ten years have very few amenities. Classrooms were started in former storage areas, in temporary quarters constructed of millet stalks, a borrowed vacant home, and even in an abandoned dance hall. Teachers in the new classrooms participated in training based on the Global Guidelines. They are implementing elements of a child-centered curriculum with simple learning centers and both large-group and small-group instruction.

Kindergartens in Reggio Emilia, Bologna, Modena, and Parma, Italy are a strong contrast to preschools in rural West Africa. The region has traditionally been stable, but this is changing with immigrants moving into the area from other countries. Classroom environments are beautifully designed; indeed, northern Italy is well known for the quality of the preschools. Educators from around the world look to the Reggio Emilia schools to understand and implement the uniqueness of their preschool programs. Nearly all children from ages 3 to 6 years are in the preschool programs.

Classroom environments in many of the countries reflect the arrangement of typical primary classrooms in many countries. Children sit at desks or tables and classrooms have appropriate materials for young children. Mexico and Slovakia are two countries with this type of physical arrangement. On the contrary, the school in Russia represents an extreme adaptation to climate and culture. Located in Siberia, there is a comprehensive, elaborate indoor environment to teach historical culture, physical development, and maintenance of good health in a region where children are unable to be outdoors for much of the year.

Curriculum Content and Pedagogy

One of the important findings of the symposium held in Switzerland in 1999 to establish global guidelines was that early childhood caregivers and educators from both developing and developed countries held very similar views in terms of how very young children develop and learn. According to the Global Guidelines curriculum should be based on real world experiences and family and cultural contexts. The curriculum is centered on the child and appropriate levels of development. All categories of development are included in the curriculum and pedagogy should be supportive and nurturing for the child.

Two countries that demonstrate how the curriculum and pedagogy can be very different in spite of commonalities in belief of what the curriculum should do are Russia and Korea. The school in Russia described earlier is located in a dark and cold region. The region includes different indigenous groups who engage in traditional

occupations of hunting and fishing. These groups feel isolated from Russia and experience high levels of poverty.

The curriculum at the kindergarten school in the city of Magadan, Russia focuses on acquisition of learning skills, developing self-concept and to appreciate the surrounding world. Children are also taught to appreciate the national culture and to love nature. The curriculum reflects the needs of the children. Classes requiring higher cognitive activity are held in the morning. Cognitive activities are alternated with time for culture, music, and swimming. The culture curriculum focuses on a mini-museum that helps children understand how Russian families lived in the past. Everyday objects used by indigenous peoples are available for the children to explore. A pilot health program has been initiated for weakened immune systems. Some of the program activities include air baths, immunostimulatory therapy, vitamins, a swimming program, physiotherapy, massage and herbal medicine.

Cultural concerns are quite different for preschool educators in Korea. Korean preschools have been heavily influenced by American culture and parents' desire for their children to learn English. To counter these influences, the Korean preschools are stressing the traditional culture. The curriculum is designed to develop identity, self-esteem, and appreciation of traditional culture. Children are taught to speak politely, use good manners, respect elders, and consider the needs of others. Confucianism is an important tradition and affects how children relate to people in a hierarchical structure and use of language. Children are taught about their heritage through traditional games and folktales. Children engage in traditional practices such as dance and tea ceremonies. Teachers believe that teaching heritage and culture will help the children to make sound judgments when faced with western influences.

Children with Special Needs

When the Global Guidelines Assessment (GGA) was administered in pilot studies, the section on children with special needs tended to have lower ratings. In some developing countries, the overwhelming lack of schools to serve the country's children means that there are no resources to serve children with special needs. At the international level, recent initiatives have brought significant change in a developing awareness of the need for inclusion of children with special needs in preschool programs. However, even when services are provided for children with special needs, the programs may be of poor quality. Many countries have reformed or are in the process of reforming services for children with special needs. Efforts in China and Mexico are discussed in this book.

The Chinese government has started to support services for children with special needs and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) practitioners believe it is critical to provide these services. The long- range goal is to include 85 % of children with disabilities in preschool programs; nevertheless, in 2000, only 45 % of children with special needs were receiving appropriate special education services. A narrower

definition of children with special needs in China limits services to physical and mental disabilities and delays related to child development.

Although much progress has been made in China's efforts to serve children with special needs, there are many challenges. There is a lack of availability in services in rural areas when compared with urban areas. Quality training for special education is another challenge. There is progress in the acceptance of children with disabilities into kindergartens but there is a need to improve the learning environments as well as improve the quality of textbooks, assistive technology, and classroom equipment.

Special education services in Mexico have a history that parallels those in the United States. The first programs were implemented in the 1970s. Children could be served under two categories of indispensable or complementary services. Various settings housed these services in a similar manner to special education classrooms in schools in the United States. By the early 1990s educational integration and inclusion of children with special needs became important. By 1993 national legislation was passed that specifically provided for the education of children with disabilities. This legislation led to the inclusion of children with disabilities into general education settings.

Since 2002 education reform resulted in organizational changes and emphasis on reform in preschool education; however, there are challenges in equal access to a quality education and special education services are seriously lacking. There is concern that efforts to reach universal coverage for preschool may increase the inequalities in education, especially in addressing the diverse needs of multicultural and indigenous people in Mexico. There is also a concern that the educational reforms in preschool education must be researched and evaluated to determine the quality and outcome of the reforms on children's development and learning.

Information on serving children with special needs in these two countries gives a sample of how countries are working to provide services and the challenges that they are experiencing. Russia is also addressing the needs of children who are at risk for development and learning, as described earlier. As was found in administering the GGA in other countries, most are experiencing challenges in providing services for all children with special needs.

Early Childhood Educators and Caregivers

The quality of a preschool program depends on the knowledge, caring characteristics, and teaching performance of the teachers and caregivers. This category of the GGA looks at the knowledge and performance of teachers, personal and professional characteristics, and moral and ethical issues faced by teachers. The chapters in this section address three different situations in the nature of teachers in preschool programs. In Guatemala, there is a hierarchy of status between the caregiver niñeras and the teachers. Teachers are the professionals, while the niñeras work under them in a paraprofessional status. Reorganizing the status of teachers in a newly formed country has been a challenge in Slovakia. Teacher training for preschool teachers in

the past was at a less professional level than that of elementary teachers. Within the reorganization of the system, teachers at both levels receive the same training, but the equality of professionalism for all is difficult to achieve.

In China, bilingual teachers are engaged in developing a program for English Immersion in a private kindergarten. Unlike concerns in Korea that their children are becoming too westernized, there is enthusiasm for bilingual education among parents who want their children to learn English. The English immersion programs are based on current research and reflect the work of Piaget, Bruner, and Vygotsky. The curriculum continues the acquisition of Chinese while the target language, English, is introduced. The learning takes place in a play-based environment including children's own experiences and language activities to expand and extend their English. Classroom experiences include chanting, singing, dancing, and role play for children to demonstrate what they are learning. These Chinese teachers are engaged in a leadership role in developing a bilingual program.

Family, School, and Community Partnerships

The Global Guidelines stress the importance of partnership between the school, family, and community that shares responsibility for the care and education of young children. This shared relationship on behalf of children is explored in two very different countries. The role of the family and community is very different in a remote area of Senegal than it is in Italy where there is a long tradition of leadership in early childhood education.

The partnerships in rural communities in Senegal reflect cultural and religious traditions, national laws, and educational policies. Family relationships are based on Muslim traditions and tribal customs. Examples are the role of the father as head of the household with the wife in a submissive role. Men own land, but women cannot. Rural women are less likely to have had an education than men. There are both governmental officials and tribal leaders in the community. Because residents are descended from ancient tribes, the village leaders still have important roles in the schools.

There are two types of schools in Senegal, government schools and community schools. All the rural schools discussed in this chapter began as community schools. These schools are organized and supported by the local villagers with oversight provided by educational inspectors. Each school has a committee composed of parents, village leaders, and school staff. The committee is responsible for planning projects to improve the school. It is a federal policy for local villagers to have a voice in decisions that are made at the national level.

Schools in the Reggio Emilia region of Italy are also located in a rural area. The culture and traditions come from the farming and wine producing locations. Many different types of wine are produced that are dependent on different grapes and types of soil that are present.

Preschools and infant–toddler centers have a long history in the Reggio Emilia area. Women had a major role in establishing centers since women in working class families worked outside the home and needed care for their children. Municipal administrations were also active in supporting the working classes and providing services for workers' children. From these early beginnings, early in the twentieth century, this philosophy of support and education continued throughout the century.

It was after the end of World War II that the most innovative Reggio Emilia programs emerged. Again, women had a major role through women's organizations. By the 1950s, there were 60 preschools run by women's associations and trade unions to meet the needs of women workers. Thanks to the ongoing work by women, the care and education of young children became a community concern. As a result, municipal preschools and infant-toddler centers expanded in the 1950s and 1960s; however, existing laws and the Catholic church's position against working mothers had to be resolved before municipal infant and toddler programs and preschools could expand. In 1971, the first municipal infant-toddler center was opened. During the 1970s the municipal network of schools grew to 20 preschools and 13 infant-toddler centers.

The partnership between schools, family, and community in the Reggio Emilia experience is discussed in terms of participation and social management. Everyone is a participant, each child, teacher, parent, and community member. All belong to a larger group. Teachers are part of the professional groups; the community are large participates in co-responsibility. Everyone is responsible and everyone plays a part.

Social management emerges from collaboration and interaction among all segments of the larger community regarding the schools. Social management is the participation of all levels of the community with the school institution. Some of the bodies involved in social management of each school are the Community-Early Childhood Council, the City Inter-Council comprised of representatives from the community councils, and class meetings that include the children, teachers, and parents. Within the schools there is the Working Group that includes all the staff at the school, the Pedagogical Team that works with several schools, and the Enlarged Team that coordinates the work of the various groups at the community level.

Since 2008, a group of citizens, teachers, students, parents, researchers, and pedagogists have worked to protect the public schools against changing national policies. Called "The School We Want," the group meets to discuss ideas, current issues facing Italian schools, and proposals to be made to local government bodies.

Summary

All the countries described in this book have some form of preschool program. Some are national models and show what is best in a country. Others are struggling to establish programs under difficult circumstances and few resources. All the teachers who work in preschool programs, regardless of their situation, want the best for the children they serve whether the community and school are affluent or in a poverty area. Regardless of circumstances, all parents want the best preschool possible for their children.

Music, dancing, and storytelling are a part of all of the preschools. Music is of special importance in programs for children with special needs in China. Many programs reflect religious influences and/or cultural practices that are diverse.

While Italy reports that a majority of preschool children are served in a program, many countries struggle to provide programs for all children. This is especially true of preschool programs for children with special needs. Nevertheless, all the authors of the chapters have provided us with an insight into preschool programs of various types. We can begin to have a global perspective of nurturing environments where the youngest children experience and learn with the support of caring adults. These few chapters show us the possibilities to further enrich our understanding of commonalities and differences in preschool care and education by exploring the nature of preschool programs in many other countries.

The Global Guidelines Assessment: Contributions and Challenges

Beyond the interesting information acquired from the reports from different countries present in this book, there are stark contrasts in how the GGA standards were met. These differences do not diminish the usefulness of the GGA, but give us an opportunity to understand the nuances of cultures and settings represented in the programs. Most of the program that used the GGA for self-evaluation are the best examples of programs in that country. The results did not represent the average or marginal programs far from more affluent areas of the country. Interestingly, the range of programs in Kenya was described with all the diversities in location, culture, and religion that impacted how preschools organized their programs. The preschools in rural Kenya and Senegal meet in very primitive settings, sometimes without a building. Although they would score poorly in the GGA section on environment, they serve children who live in nature in wide-open areas without fences or other barriers. It is delightful for these children to meet under a leafy tree in the rainy season and see and hear the birds singing above them. They can also see and hear the sounds of domestic animals and village people passing the school on their way to the fields and pastures.

The children in the Russian school, in contrast, have a large, beautiful school that is well equipped and provides all kinds of instruction and services. Nevertheless, the children are very limited in opportunities to be outdoors because of the bitter cold most of the year. Children in both locations have benefits and limitations in their preschool opportunities.

The Future of the Global Guidelines Assessment

The numerous studies conducted with the GGA proved its flexibility and applicability in many languages, cultures, and locations around the world. The initial studies revealed important steps toward inter-rater reliability and validity. They also revealed

Fig. 16.1 Primary school children in rural Burkina Faso. (Photo courtesy of Marshal Wortham)

areas where the instrument needed to be improved. The next step after the series of pilot studies conducted over the past few years is to conduct large-scale studies in global locations that will lead to the qualities needed to develop a standardized measure. Nevertheless, the stories that emerge from its application reveal much more about a program and the people involved that cannot be measured on a formal instrument. In the end, it is the stories of the children, their families, and the local community that will teach us about the importance of looking at both the local and the global perspectives of early childhood programs (Fig. 16.1).

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