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Strong foundations: early childhood care and education

Early Childhood Education Policies in Chile: From pre-Jomtien to post-Dakar

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Abstract

This paper analyses how Chile's national early childhood education policies have evolved historically, before the year 1990 (pre-Jomtien), during the 1990s (post-Jomtien) and after the year 2000 (post-Dakar). The paper argues that since 1990 the early childhood education policies of Chile reflect fully the EFA vision promoted in Jomtien and Dakar and aim at expanding coverage, improving quality and giving priority to the most vulnerable children. Moreover, the national curricular bases for children between 0 and 6 years, launched in 2001, arguably go beyond the EFA vision related to ECCE by defining children's expected learning outcomes and providing pedagogic orientations. The concluding remarks of the paper point out Chile's old and new challenges in ECCE, in spite of its progress achieved toward this first Dakar goal.

List of Acronyms

CASEN	National Socioeconomic Characterisation Survey (<i>Encuesta de caracterización socioeconómica nacional</i>)
CELADE	Latin American and Caribbean Centre for Demography (<i>Centro Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Demografía</i>)
CPEIP	Centre of Perfection, Experimentation and Pedagogic Research (<i>Centro de Perfeccionamiento, Experimentación e Investigaciones Pedagógicas</i>)
CONPAN	Food and Nutrition Board (<i>Consejo para la Alimentación y Nutrición</i>)
ECCE	early childhood care and education
EFA	Education for All
FUNACO	National Foundation of Community Help (<i>Fundación Nacional de Ayuda a la Comunidad</i>)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
INTA	Nutrition and Food Technology Institute (<i>Instituto de Nutrición y Tecnología de los Alimentos</i>)
INE	National Institute of Statistics (<i>Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas</i>)
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
JUNJI	National Board of Kindergartens (<i>Junta Nacional de Jardines Infantiles</i>)
MECE	Programme of Education Quality and Equity Improvement (Programa de Mejoramiento de la Calidad y Equidad de la Educación)
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education (<i>Ministerio de Educación</i>)
MIDEPLAN	Ministry of Planning and Co-operation (<i>Ministerio de Planificación y Cooperación</i>)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OEI	Organization of Ibero-American States
OMEP	World Organization for Early Childhood Education
OREALC-UNESCO	UNESCO/Santiago Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (<i>Oficina Regional de Educación de la UNESCO para América Latina y</i>

el Caribe)

PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SIMCE	Education Quality Measurement System (<i>Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación</i>)
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (formerly known as the Third International Mathematics and Science Study)
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1. Introduction

This paper presents the evolution of national early childhood care and education (ECCE) policies in Chile as a case study. Its general aim is to analyse how Chile's national early childhood education policies have evolved historically, before the year 1990 (pre-Jomtien), during the 1990s (post-Jomtien) and after the year 2000 (post-Dakar). In so doing, it examines how these national policies may or may not reflect the Education for All (EFA) vision related to ECCE, as adopted in the World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien 1990) and the Dakar Framework for Action (Dakar 2000).

The choice of Chile for this study is inspired foremost by its recent publication (2001) of the national Early Childhood Education Curricular Bases (*Bases Curriculares de la Educación Parvularia*), designed to be adapted to any types of ECCE programmes for children between 0 and 6 years of age. Chile has a long history of early childhood education (see the Section 5), and through the recent efforts it has achieved a high coverage of children of 4 to 6 years (Transition Level) without making this education level compulsory. Moreover, the year 1990, when the world celebrated the World Conference on Education for All, was significant to this South American country for many reasons: the democratic government was restored in March 1990 replacing the military regime since 1973; the constitutional education law (*Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Enseñanza*) was approved in March 1990, establishing norms and minimum requirements of each educational level; Chile ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in August 1990; and the government began a large-scale six-year education investment through the Programme of Education Quality and Equity Improvement (*Programa de Mejoramiento de la Calidad y Equidad de la Educación*, MECE, 1990-1996).

The value of this study lies in its in-depth analysis of national early childhood policies vis-à-vis the EFA goal related to ECCE, presenting at the same time relevant statistics and indicators. The level of analysis is limited to the national level and mostly focuses on the education-component of ECCE, while maintaining the holistic view of the child and their development and learning. The paper is divided into the following sections: the Section 2 highlights some of the key ECCE vision expressed in the Jomtien declaration and the Dakar Framework for Action. In the Section 3, the national education system of Chile is briefly described, while some key indicators related to ECCE are presented in the Section 4. Then the national policies of the three periods (pre-Jomtien, post-Jomtien and post-Dakar) are analysed in the Sections 4, 5 and 6, respectively. The last section presents some concluding remarks.

2. ECCE in the Jomtien Declaration and the Dakar Framework for Action

The Jomtien declaration and the Dakar Framework for Action emphasise the fundamental right of every person —child, youth and adult— to benefit from educational opportunities to satisfy their basic learning needs. In this sense, the objectives and strategies stipulated in these documents should

apply to early childhood as well. On the other hand, there is one short paragraph in each document that makes specific reference to ECCE:

World Declaration on Education for All (1990), Article V:

“Learning begins at birth. This calls for early childhood care and initial education. These can be provided through arrangements involving families, communities, or institutional programmes, as appropriate.”

The Dakar Framework for Action (2000), the first of six EFA goals:

“expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.”

From these few lines, it should be emphasised that the Jomtien declaration recognises learning needs from the moment of birth, which should be met through care and education provided through different modalities. This was a significant and new concept of learning or education at the time, since “basic education” was often assumed to begin with primary schooling and early childhood education was considered merely preparatory, as the terms such as “pre-school” and “pre-primary” indicate. On the other hand, the Dakar framework puts emphasis on the comprehensiveness of ECCE and the strategic directions to be followed: expanding coverage, improving attention and giving priority to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged (Table 1).

Table 1. Analysis of the Jomtien and Dakar Declarations regarding ECCE.

Categories	World Declaration on Education for All	Dakar Framework for Action
Beneficiary population	begins at birth	especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children
Responsible entities		
Nature of attention	early childhood care and initial education	comprehensive early childhood care and education
Strategies	through arrangements involving families, communities, or institutional programmes	- expanding and improving - especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children

Although both declarations stress the unique obligation of national governments to ensure EFA, as far as these two paragraphs are concerned, the place of responsibility remains rather ambiguous and non-governmental actors, including families and communities, are expected to play an important role. Moreover, compared to the second Dakar goal (ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to free,

compulsory primary education of good quality), the first Dakar goal does not have quantitative targets (“by 2015 all children”—i.e., 100%) or concrete policy and legal recommendations (“free and compulsory”). This emphasis on primary education access is not new—present in the structural adjustment programmes during the 1980s as well as the education-related Millennium Development Goals¹. And in reality, countries with limited financial resources usually give priority to primary education, and for this reason, the first Dakar goal appears to be a general statement of good will rather than a firm political commitment. Nevertheless, the first Dakar goal does address three aspects of ECCE policies: the access aspect (“expanding”), the quality aspect (“improving comprehensive early childhood care and education”) and the equity aspect (“especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children”).

3. Education System of Chile and its Early Childhood Education

The Political Constitution of the Republic approved in 1980 establishes the right to education for the full development of the person as well as the freedom of teaching, understood as the right to open, organise and maintain schools within certain regulations. In the same vein, the Constitutional Organic Law of Teaching (*Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Enseñanza*, 1990) sets the ultimate goal of education as “to reach [the person’s] moral, intellectual, artistic, spiritual and physical development through the transmission and cultivation of values, knowledge and skills, framed within our national identities, which then builds their capacity to live together and participate in the community in a responsible and active manner” (*my translation*). The same law affirms that parents have the preferential right and duty to educate their children, whereas the State has the duty to provide the special protection of this right and the community has the duty to contribute to the development and improvement of the education.

The education system of Chile is characterised by its decentralised organisation, in which municipalities, autonomous public institutions or private entities (individual or corporative) assume before the State the responsibility to offer educational services. This current system was introduced by the military regime (1973-1989) which pursued political neo-conservatism and neo-liberal economic policies. The profound changes were also brought into the education system and the role of the state in education provision. On one hand, by decentralising the public education administration, the management responsibility of the education system was transferred to the regional and then to provincial governments, and public schools became municipal. On the other hand, privatisation based on the “freedom of teaching” doctrine allowed private entities to open and manage schools on the State’s behalf, receiving subsidies (and additional school fees from families) per student. There are four levels of education: early childhood education (*educación parvularia*, from

¹ The Goal 2 (achieve universal primary education, with the target of ensuring that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015) and the Goal 3 (eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015).

birth to the entry to basic education²), basic education (*educación básica*, 8 years of duration), secondary education (*educación media*, 4 years of duration) and higher education (*educación superior*). Although primary education of 6 years was compulsory since 1920, the current structure of basic and secondary education was established in 1965, extending the compulsory basic education to eight years. In 2003, the secondary education was also made compulsory, resulting in the longest duration of compulsory schooling among Latin American countries (12 years).

Early childhood education is not compulsory, although it is recognised as the first level of the education system. In 2004, the Constitutional Organic Law of Teaching was modified to include the duty of the State to promote development of all education levels, but especially early childhood education. It is divided into three levels: Day Care (*Sala Cuna*, 0-2 years of age), Middle Level (*Nivel Medio*, 2-4 years of age) and Transition Level (*Nivel de Transición*, 4-6 years of age). All levels are divided into the first and second sub-levels. The two sub-levels of the Transition Level (4-5 and 5-6 age groups) are commonly called *pre-kinder* and *kinder*, respectively, and this is the level on which ECCE coverage is concentrated, as shown in the next Section.

As in other education levels, early childhood education services can be classified according to the administration (public or private) as well as the source of finance. Municipal educational centres offer free early childhood and basic education with state subsidies per child attended. The coverage was concentrated on the second level of the Transition Level (*kinder*) but is being expanded to the first level of the Transition Level (*pre-kinder*), as the state subsidies began to be given to the latter group in 2001. Private educational centres with state subsidies are administered by private entities (e.g., private companies or individuals, churches, etc.) that receive state subsidies (i.e., a voucher system that allows parents to pay their children's education at a school of their choice). Fee-paying private educational centres, on the other hand, are financed fully with private funding, mostly fees paid by families. Unique to this education level, however, are the two autonomous state-funded institutions attending children under six years of age from poor families: the National Board of Kindergartens (*Junta Nacional de Jardines Infantiles*, JUNJI) is an autonomous public corporation entrusted by the President of the Republic under the direction of the Executive Vice-President; the INTEGRA Foundation is a non-profit private foundation, presided by the wife of the President of the Republic³.

² To enter primary school, learners need to be 6 years on 31 March of the same year, and this date limit was extended to 30 June by the decree of February 2005.

³ At the time of writing, it is unclear who will preside this foundation following the election of Chile's first female president, who is a single mother.

4. Indicators related to Early Childhood in Chile

This section aims at illustrating the situation of young children in Chile and their participation in early childhood education, analysing to the extent possible changes from 1990 (Jomtien) to 2000 (Dakar) and to the latest available year (2003-2004). The statistics and indicators presented below are principally based on official information available from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Planning and Co-operation (MIDEPLAN). The former publishes an annual report, whose latest figures are from 2004, whereas the latter ministry administers periodically a national household survey (*Encuesta de caracterización socioeconómica nacional*, CASEN), the latest of which was based on the 2003 data⁴. These data are particularly useful in obtaining disaggregated data within the country (e.g., according to income level, rural/urban residence, type of ECCE programmes). On the other hand, they do not allow cross-national comparison, and the enrolment data, for example, may differ from those reported to the UIS due to the different definitions and classification used in collecting and presenting the data. In fact, the early childhood education coverage rate of children between 0 and 6 years of age reported here is usually much higher than the figure available from UIS, because the former includes six-year-old children enrolled in early childhood education programmes, while the UIS data based on the national adaptation of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1997) for international data reporting do not⁵. Information regarding education financing is drawn from OECD *Education at a Glance 2005*.

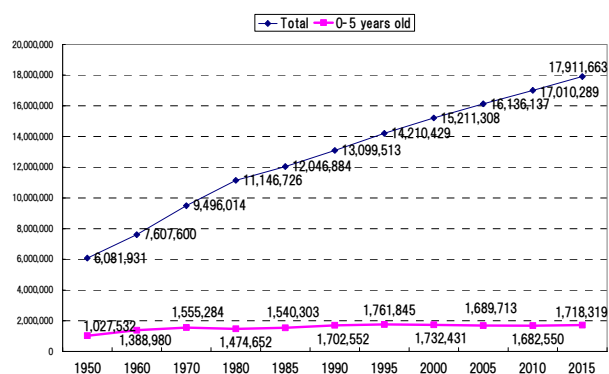
4.1 Demography

In 2005, the estimated population of children under 6 years of age (0 to 5 years old) in Chile is 1,689,713, which represents 10.5% of the estimated total population (16,136,137). As shown in the Figure 1, despite the relatively stable population under 6 years of age and of the fertility rate (Figure 2), the total population is in a steady increase, principally owing to the reduced infant mortality (Figure 3) —and of the child mortality rate not shown here— and the prolonged life expectancy (Figure 4). As a result, the proportion of this age group has been shrinking from 16.9% in 1950 to 11.4% in 2000, and it is projected to be 9.6% in 2015.

⁴ While CASEN offers a valuable analysis of the socioeconomic situation of children as well as the demand and offer of early childhood education. Its statistics, however, may substantially differ from the official data that Ministry of Education collects directly from sub-national governments and educational institutions. This is because a) a household survey is mostly based on parents' self-declaration and b) sampling errors may occur.

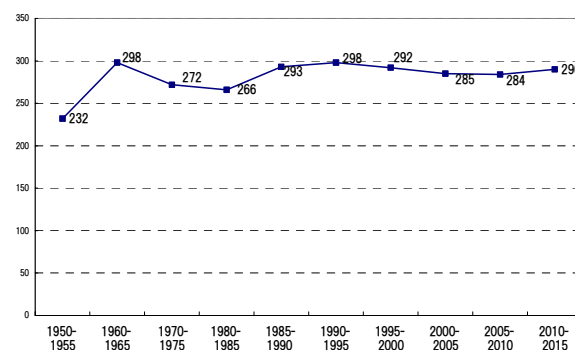
⁵ The Chilean legislation establishes that children who are 6 years of age by 30 June enter basic education. With respect to ISCED 1997, the Ministry of Education reports 6 years as the official age for the first grade of basic education, resulting in the exclusion of 6-year-olds from the pre-primary (3-5 years) net enrolment rate presented by UIS. According to the official data presented here, however, the same Ministry of Education reports a high percentage of six-year-old children enrolled in early childhood education level. This is presumably because children's ages are not registered on 30 June, but much later in the school year when many children in the *kinder* level have already turned six.

Figure 1. Population estimates and projections 1950-2015 (total and 0-5 years of age)



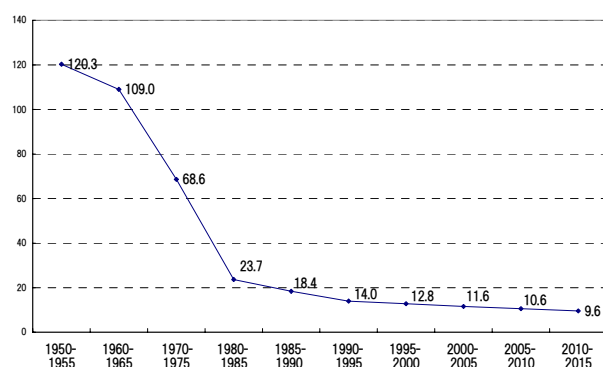
Source: CELADE, 2000.

Figure 2. Fertility rate 1950 – 2015 (annual births in thousands)



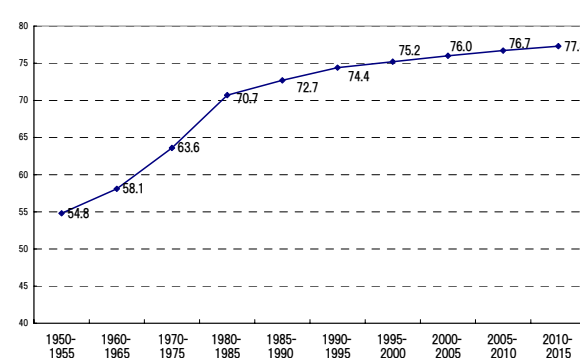
Source: CELADE, 2002.

Figure 3. Infant mortality (deaths of 1000 live births)



Source: CELADE, 2002.

Figure 4. Life expectancy at birth



Source: CELADE, 2002.

4.2 Poverty

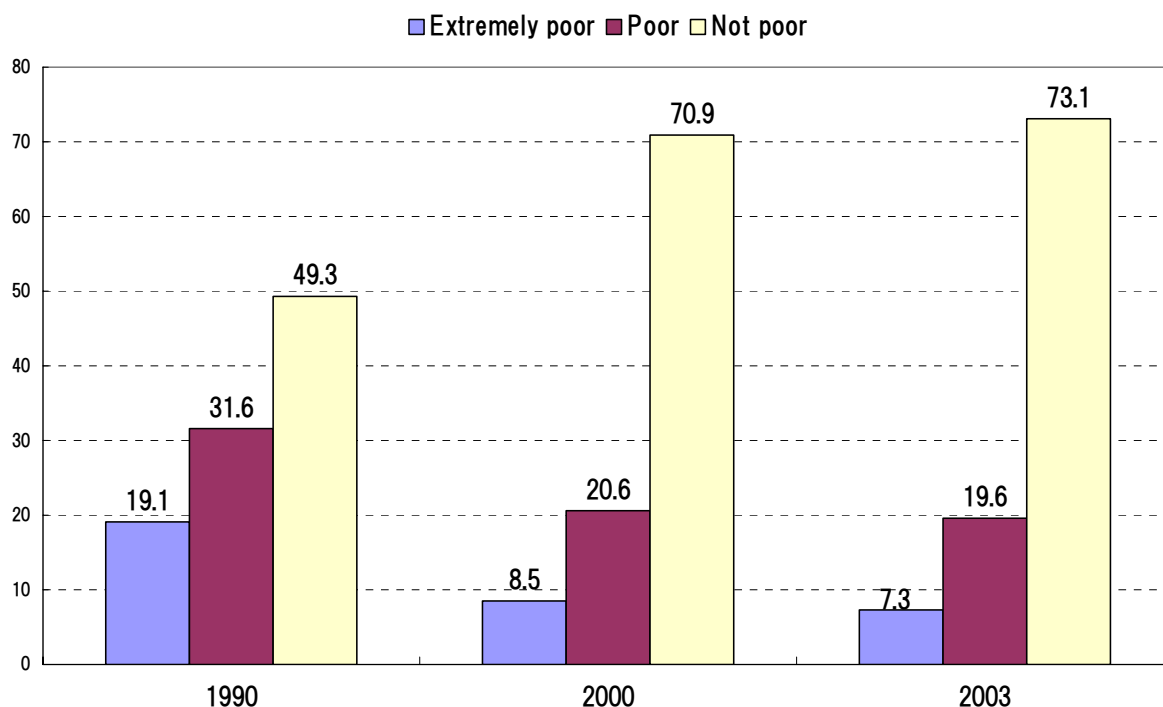
The proportion of Chilean children (under 18 years of age) in poverty has been significantly reduced from 50.7% in 1990 to 29.1% in 2000, while the proportion of children in extreme poverty decreased from 19.1% to 8.5% (Figure 5)⁶. However, in 2003 one in every four children (26.9%) are still found in poverty, and its reduction represents a major yet basic challenge to the wellbeing of all children. What is worrisome is that although poverty is generally in decrease, households with children have a much higher incidence of poverty than those without children (Figures 6a and 6b). Although the poverty rate among households with children has been halved from 1990 (43.5%) to 2003 (21.40%), this latter figures is four times as high as the poverty rate among households without children (5.4%).

Poverty is also consistently more present among households headed by females and among households with children under 18 years of age. In 2003, more than one in every four female-headed

⁶ A household in poverty is defined in CASEN as a household whose income per capita is less than twice the value of a basic food basket in urban area, while a household in extreme poverty has per-capita income less than one food basket. A smaller proportion of a food basket is considered for rural areas due to their lower living costs.

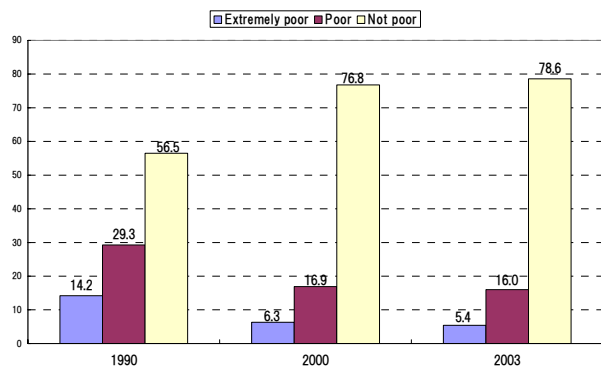
households with children (26.0%) is found in poverty, whereas one in five male-headed households with children (20.1%) and only one in every twenty male-headed households without children (5.1%) are in this situation (Figure 7b). The situation has been markedly improved since 1990 (Figure 7a), when nearly half of households headed by women with children were found in poverty (48.9%). Nevertheless, even today one in every twelve households headed by women with children (8.3%) —mostly single mothers— are found in extreme poverty and unable to provide even basic food needs to their children. Given that one in every four households (26.2%) is headed by a female in Chile today (MIDEPLAN 2003), the urgent need for ECCE provision is evident, so as to meet children’s basic needs and give them better development opportunities and at the same time to allow their mothers to work to earn income for herself and her family.

Figure 5. Shift of the population under 18 years of age in poverty (in percentage)



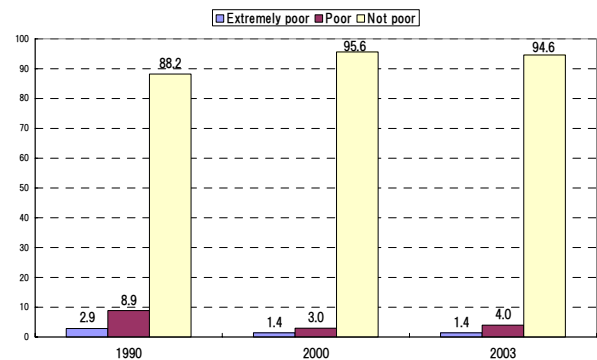
Source: MIDEPLAN (2003).

Figure 6a. Incidence of poverty among households with children under 18 years (in 1990, 2000 and 2003)



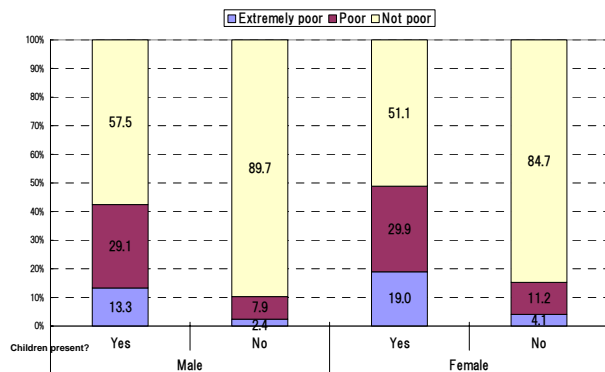
Source: MIDEPLAN (2003).

Figure 6b. Incidence of poverty among households without children under 18 years (in 1990, 2000 and 2003)



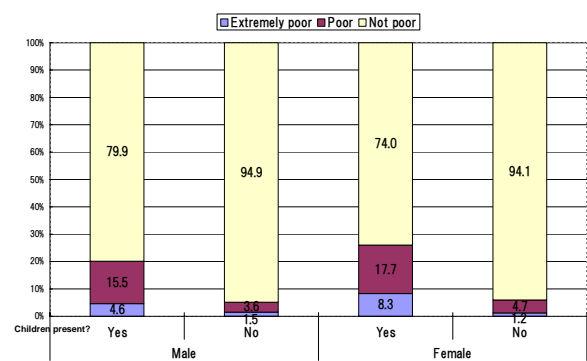
Source: MIDEPLAN (2003).

Figure 7a. Presence of children under 18 years of age in households, by sex of head of household and poverty line (1990)



Source: MIDEPLAN (2003).

Figure 7b. Presence of children under 18 years of age in households, by sex of head of household and poverty line (2003)

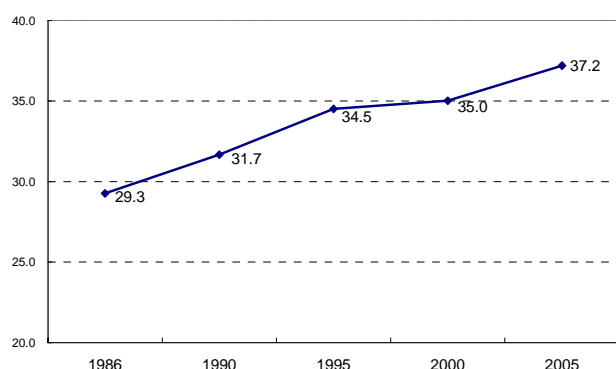


Source: MIDEPLAN (2003).

4.3 ECCE Coverage

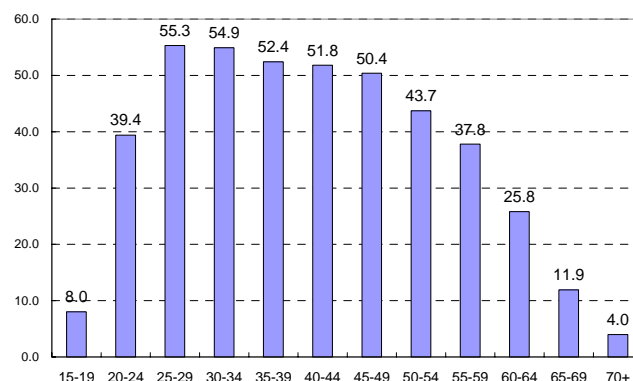
The demand for early childhood education has increased steadily as more women participate in labour market. As illustrate in the Figure 8a, the labour market participation of women aged 15 years or older has steadily increased from 29.3% in 1986 to 37.2% in 2005. Moreover, the Figure 8b indicates that today one in every two women in child-bearing and rearing ages (e.g., 20-40 years of age) participate in the labour force, indicating the need for care and education services for their young children.

8a. Rate of female labour force participation 1986 - 2005 (female population 15 years, in percentage)



Source: Based on the INE database. The labour force participation rate is calculated for the October-December of the respective year.

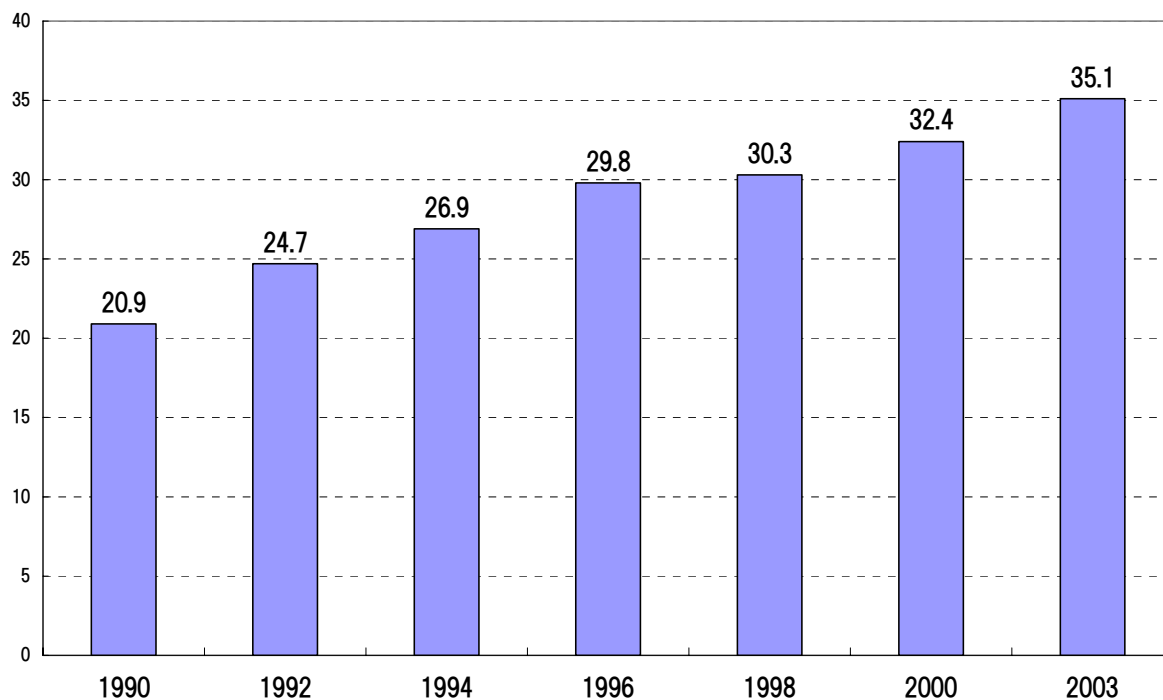
Figure 8b. Rates of female labour force participation by age group (2005, in percentage)



Source: INE data corresponding to June-September 2005, cited in Ministry of Labour (2005, p.3).

In effect, the coverage of early childhood education for children under six years of age has expanded steadily from 20.9% in 1990 to 32.4% in 2000 and to 35.1% in 2003 (Figure 9). However, the Figure 10 demonstrates that ECCE coverage is concentrated on the Transition Level, achieving nearly universal early childhood education for the *kinder* year (92.6%) and covering half of the children of the *pre-kinder* age. On the other hand, only one in every four children of the second level of the Middle Level (25.9%) and less than one in every five children of the first level of the Middle Level (18.4%) participate in early childhood education. The coverage of children between 0-2 years of age (Day Care Level) is dismal (4.8% for children of Day Care Level). Such distribution is not surprising, and it is ironically the result of the government's recent efforts —through the Ministry of Education— to give at least 2 years of ECCE experiences to all children, so that they can have a fair start of basic education. In fact, many Transition Level offers are found within basic education school premises. It cannot be stressed enough, however, that all children should receive adequate ECCE services from birth, without necessarily bringing them to pre-school centres.

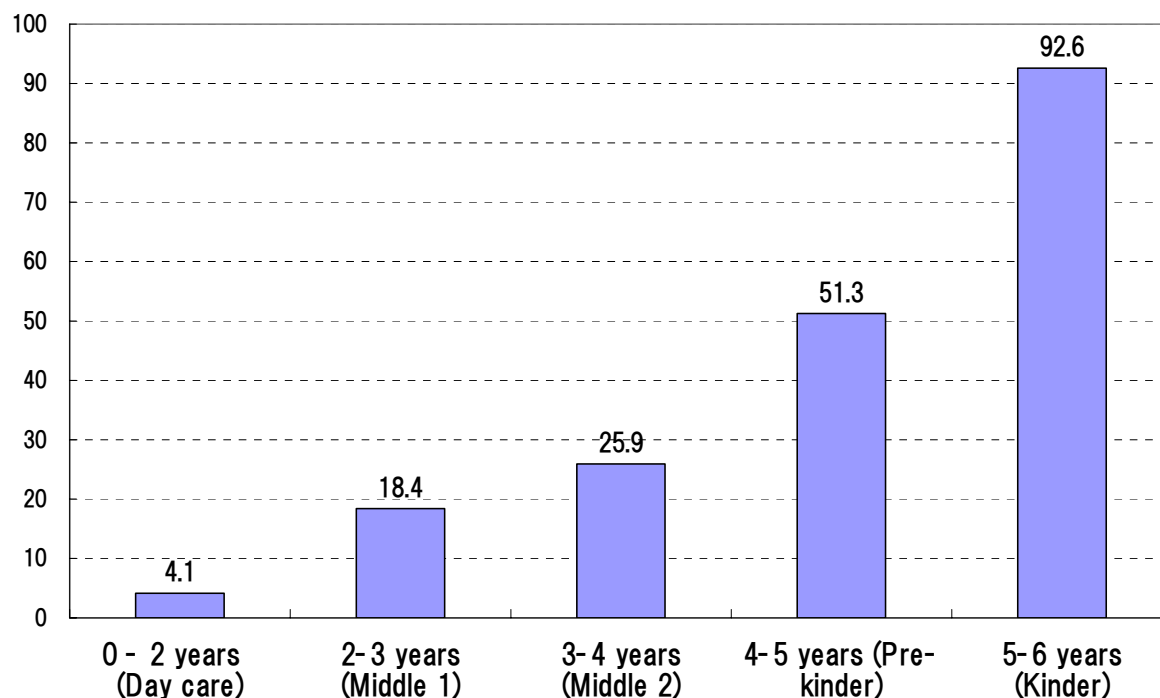
Figure 9. Expansion of early childhood education coverage from 1990 to 2003 (children under 6 years of age, in percentage)⁷



Source: MIDEPLAN (2003).

⁷ The CASEN survey asks the respondent about each member of the household, “does he/she currently attend any educational centre, kindergarten, day care centre or another non-conventional preschool programme?”.

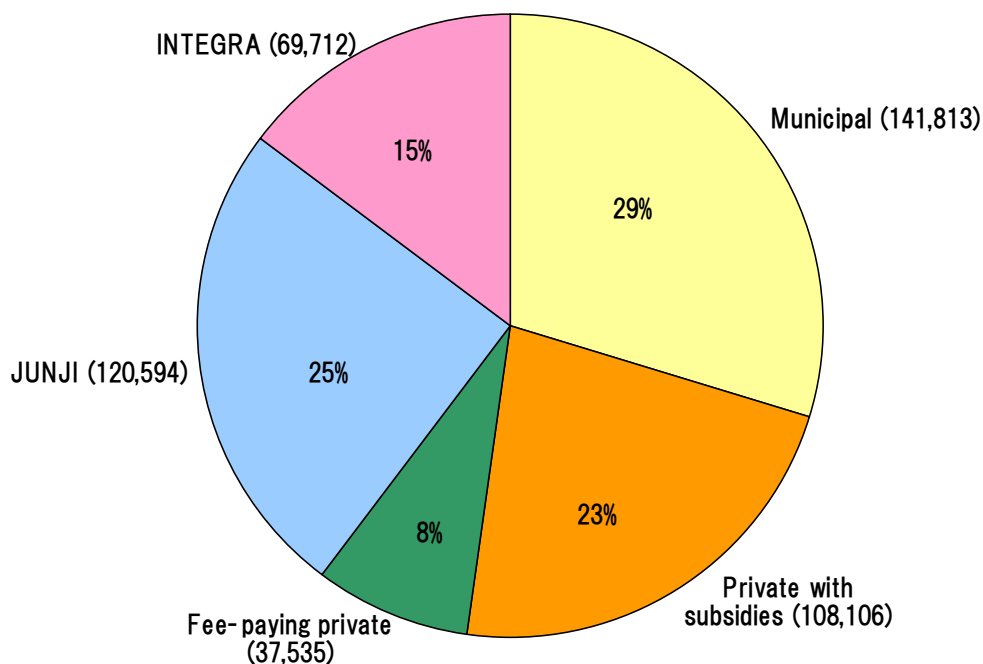
Figure 10. Early childhood education coverage by official ECCE ages or levels (2003, in percentage)



Source: Ministry of Education (2005) using the population projection based on the 2003 Census.

In terms of the distribution of ECCE enrolments by responsible agency, the Figure 11 illustrates that private centres have the largest coverage (31%), of which 23% is subsidised by the state and the remaining 8% is financed fully with private contributions. Municipal ECCE centres, co-ordinated and supervised by the Regional Secretariats of the Ministry of Education, occupy 29% of the total coverage. While JUNJI plays a role as an accreditation and supervisory agency of private ECCE centres, it also administers directly formal and non-formal programmes, covering as much as 25% of the total enrolments. The coverage by the INTEGRA Foundation represents 15% of all ECCE enrolments. Both JUNJI and INTEGRA attend children from poor families belonging to the first and second income quintiles.

Figure 11. ECCE enrolments by responsible administrative agency (2004, all age)



Source: Ministry of Education (2004).

The Ministry of Education has pursued the policy to expand the coverage of the two years of the Transition Level (*kinder* and *pre-kinder*), particularly for children coming from poor families and in vulnerable situations, by providing subsidies to municipal and subsidised private ECCE centres. As illustrated in the Figure 12a, less than 10% of children enrolled in the ECCE centres registered by the Ministry of Education⁸ are 4 years or younger, and some 90% of them are 5 or 6 years old. On the other hand, enrolments in centres administered by JUNJI (Figure 12b) and the INTEGRA Foundation (Figure 12c) are mostly on 4 years or younger. For JUNJI, 98% of their children are 4 years or younger, and children of 1 year or younger occupy as much as 17% of their enrolments. Similarly, 97% of children enrolled in ECCE services of the INTEGRA Foundation are 4 years or younger.

⁸ The Ministry of Education collects data of children enrolled in municipal and private (subsidised and fee-paying) institutions. The enrolments in INTEGRA and JUNJI centres are collected and reported separately (see Figures 12a to 12c).

Figure 12a. Enrolment in municipal and private ECCE centres by single age⁹ (2004)

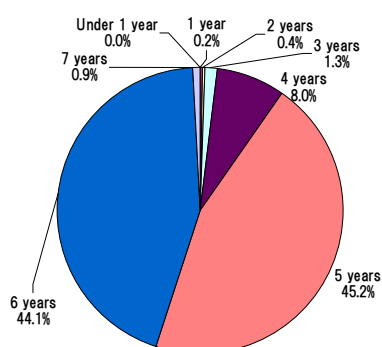


Figure 12b. Enrolment in JUNJI centres by single age (2004)

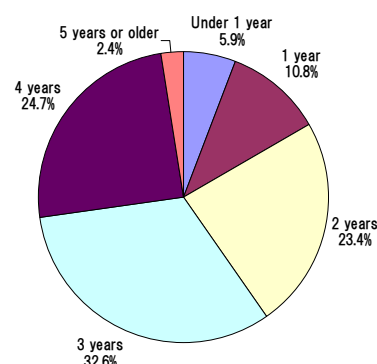
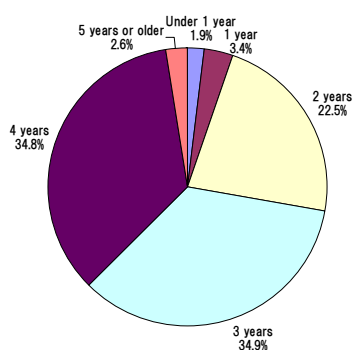


Figure 12c. Enrolment in INTEGRA centres by single age (2004)



Source: Ministry of Education (2004).

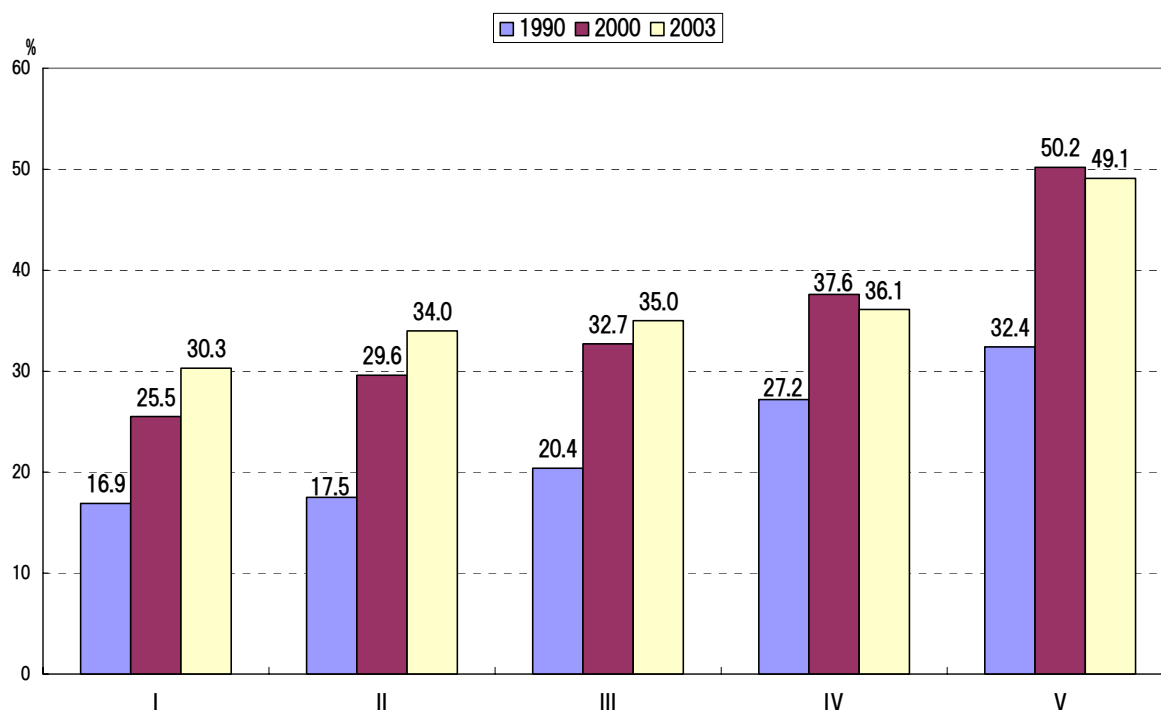
Latin American countries, including Chile, have achieved the gender parity at early childhood and primary education levels. In fact, pre-primary level is the most equitably distributed between the genders, with gender parity indices equal to (parity) or greater than one (more girls than boys) in all countries (OREALC-UNESCO, 2004a, p. 52).

On the other hand, educational inequities embedded in Chile's socioeconomic structure are apparent even at early childhood level, as children coming from lower-income families have fewer opportunities for early childhood education. Nonetheless, due to the systematic governmental efforts to cover the poorest and most vulnerable young children coming from the first and second income quintiles (the 40% poorest), the differences have been significantly reduced by 2003. As shown in the Figure 13, in 1990 children belonging to the first and second income quintiles had half the chances of accessing ECCE services, compared with their peer group at the fifth quintile (wealthiest 20%). The upward steps illustrated in this bar graph (i.e., the higher the income, the higher the coverage) is still visible in 2000, despite the increased overall coverage (11.5 percentage points, see the Figure 8).

⁹ It includes enrolments in municipal, subsidised private and fee-paying private ECCE centres.

However, by 2003 the differences in ECCE coverage by family income quintile are reduced, ranging from 30.3% to and 36.1%, with exception of the fifth quintile, whose ECCE services are likely to be fully financed by families (fee-paying private centres). The difference has not disappeared, though, as only 30.3% of children of the first income quintile are covered, compared with 49.1% of their peers of the fifth quintile (difference of 18.8 percentage points).

Figure13. Early childhood education coverage by income quintile in 1990, 2000 and 2003 (children under 6 years of age, in percentage)



Source: MIDEPLAN (2003).

According to the CASEN household survey, the principal reason why children under 6 years do not attend education services (presumably answered by their parents) is their belief that they are not old enough. As illustrated in the Figure 14a, three-quarters of the respondents of all income levels raise this reason for not having their children attend ECCE programmes. It is worrisome, on the other hand, as many as 62% of children of 4 to 5 years who do not attend ECCE services are not given such educational opportunities¹⁰, because their parents believe that they are not old enough (Figure 14b). In fact, the survey indicates that the majority of children of 4 to 5 years of age from poor or extremely poor families do not participate in ECCE services due to this belief, rather than economic difficulties. Only 5.8% of non-attending children in extreme poverty and 3.7% of those children in poverty raise economic difficulties as the reason, while as many as 60.6% of non-attending children in extreme poverty and 64.4% in poverty do not attend because their parents think that they are not old enough.

¹⁰ even though this number may be relatively small in absolute terms, given the high enrolment rate at the *kinder* and *pre-kinder* levels (Figure 9).

These figures are not significantly different from those among non-poor children: 3.9% of non-attending children do not attend due to economic difficulties and 61.3% because they believe they are not old enough (MIDEPLAN, 2003, p. 24).

In light of the well-established importance of the positive stimuli received in early childhood, these figures are alarming and indicate the need for further family sensitisation and education. On the other hand, we do not know from these CASEN survey results why these parents think their children are not old enough: since children in younger age groups are overrepresented as non-participants (cf., Figure 10), it could be the case that the problem is on the “supply” side and that there are not (affordable and accessible) ECCE services available to these young ones. Therefore, a better demand-supply analysis as well as the coverage through alternative ECCE service provision (e.g., parent education, community-based programmes) need to be incorporated into the analysis of ECCE coverage.

Figure 14a. Reason for children under 6 years not attending ECCE programmes (2003)

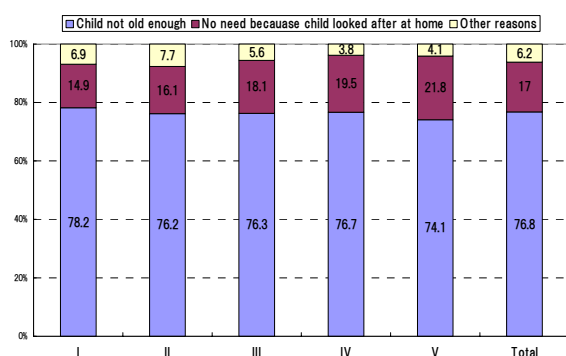
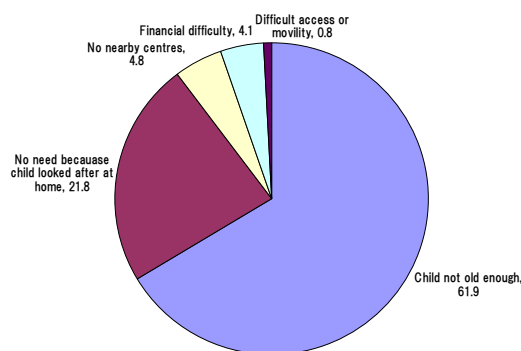


Figure 14b. Reason for children of 4 to 5 years not attending ECCE programmes (2003)

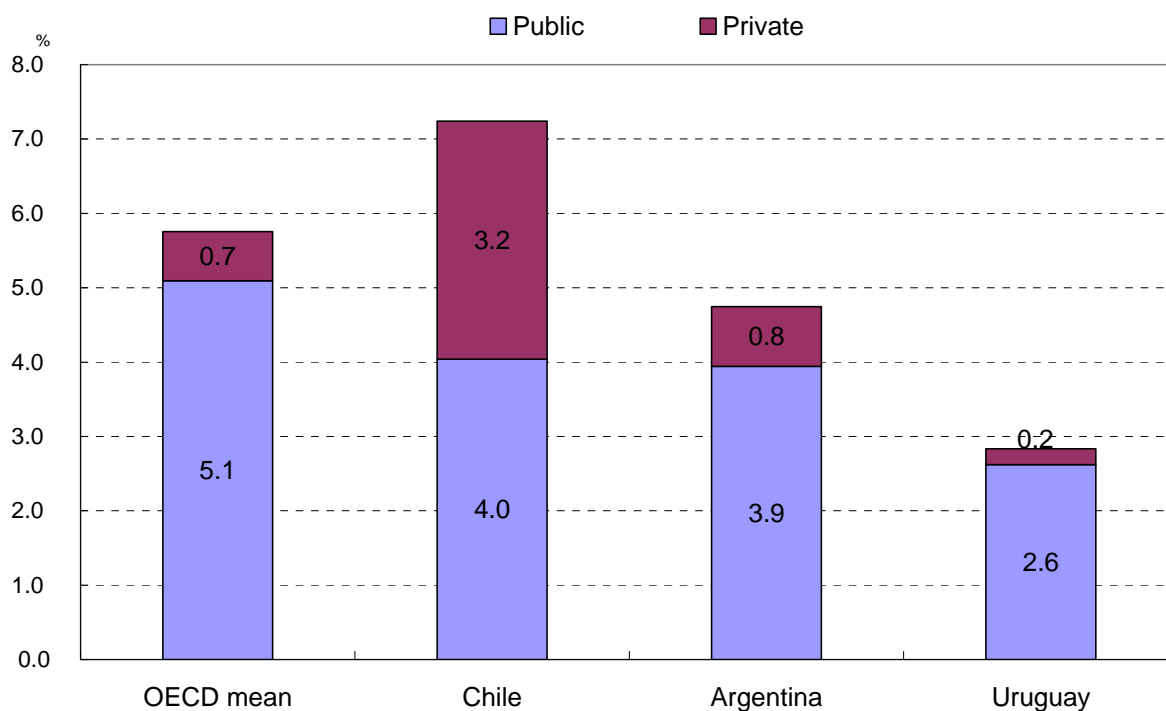


Source: MIDEPLAN (2003).

4.4 Investment in ECCE

A proportion of GDP spent on education is often cited as an indicator of a country’s political will given to education, although there are no empirical data that indicate what the ideal or minimum number is. Chile dedicates 7.3% of its GDP on education — a large proportion compared to 5.1% of the mean of OECD countries or 3.9% and 2.6% in Argentina and Uruguay (two Latin American countries with similar levels of economic and educational development), respectively (Figure 15). Nonetheless, the proportion of private investment (mostly by means of tuition fees paid by families) as part of GDP is striking in Chile, as it represents 3.2% of GDP (public investment is 4.0% of GDP), which is much higher than the figures of OECD countries or Chile’s regional peers, Argentina and Uruguay: 0.7%, 0.8% and 0.2%, respectively. Given Chile’s inequitable socioeconomic structure and unequal income distribution, this figure indicates the challenge of guaranteeing the equality of quantity and quality of education.

Figure 15. Annual expenditure on educational institutions per student in c. 2002 (in equivalent US dollars converted using PPPs for GDP, based on full-time equivalents)

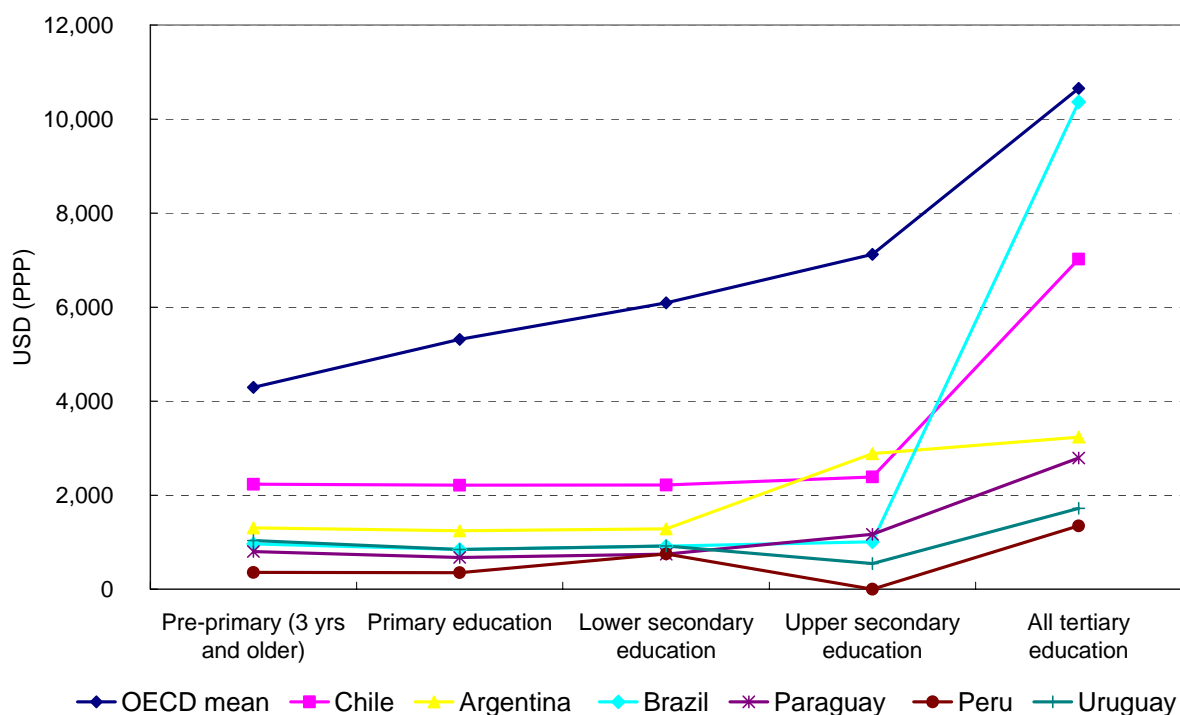


Source: OECD. 2005.

Chile: 2003 figure.

The Figure 16 presents the annual expenditure on educational institutions per student by education level. On one hand, it indicates that Chile invests similar amount to all education levels except tertiary education, which receives considerably higher investment per student. In fact, Chile's expenditure per student at pre-primary and basic education levels is higher than that of other South American countries analysed by OECD. On the other hand, the figures point to the challenge of expanding the budgetary increase for pre-primary (no data are obtained as to the expenditure on children below 3 years of age), especially for younger age groups, because ECCE level tends to be more costly than other levels due to the smaller number of children per adult. In other words, it is a major challenge for the country to expand substantially the ECCE coverage from birth, while maintaining the expenditure per child and the quality of services provided.

Figure 16. Annual expenditure on educational institutions per student in 2002 (In equivalent US dollars converted using PPPs for GDP, by level of education, based on full-time equivalents)



Source: OECD. 2005.

Chile: 2003 figure.

Brazil: 2001 figure. Brazil and Peru: Public institutions only.

5. Pre-Jomtien Early Childhood Education Policies (before 1990)

The following historical analysis of the early childhood education in Chile is based on the analysis of national legislations available on internet, published studies and other documents (Ministry of Education, 1998, 2001, 2002 and 2005; JUNJI 2005; Ministry of Education, JUNJI and Fundación INTEGRA 2005; UNESCO-OREALC 2004c; Ministry of Education and UNESCO-OREALC 2004) and semi-structured interviews conducted with key ECCE specialists in Chile¹¹. In discussing the history of early childhood education in Chile, several interviewees mentioned that Chile is a “pioneer” of Latin America in the area of early childhood education, and it is memorable that some of them affirmed with confidence that the notion of “comprehensive attention from birth” has always existed in its policies.

Obviously, the first period selected for this analysis is by far the longest, and the space does not allow the characterisation of different policies of different times. Therefore, this study focuses on the four

¹¹ The semi-formal interviews were conducted during my visit to Santiago, Chile in March 2006, in which I interviewed representatives of Ministry of Education, JUNJI, INTEGRA Foundation, Universidad de Arte y Ciencias Sociales, Universidad Central de Chile/OMEP and UNESCO-OREALC.

areas of analysis given in the Section 2 (beneficiary population, responsible entity, nature of attention and strategies) as a guiding framework and looks at the most significant landmarks in the 20th Century with emphasis on the two decades immediately before Jomtien (1970s and 1980s).

The preoccupation for young children's education before entering schools can be traced far back in the history of Chile: *kindergartens* were set up in private schools of German communities and Catholic churches as early as the mid-19th Century (Chile became officially independent in 1818). At the dawn of the 20th Century, the need for public kindergartens was advocated as part of the discussion on the renewal of public education (General Conference on Public Education in 1902), and in 1906 the first public kindergarten was opened for children between 3 and 6 years of both sexes, with "student-teachers" recently trained in the Froebelian tradition (*kindergarteninas*). Later in 1925 the Montessori method was incorporated in Chile. With strong European influences introduced by early German and Austrian educators and trainers of early childhood educators, Chile's history of early childhood education evolved with limited coverage but supported by a series of legislations: following the 1920 Law of Primary Education, in which primary education became compulsory, the Decree with Force of Law N°5.291 in 1929 established that in each primary school an early childhood section could be set up.

In 1944, the first School of Early Childhood Educators was created at the University of Chile—very prestigious at the time—, giving students professional training based on philosophy, psychology and pedagogy to attend children between 2 and 6 years of age and conferring on them the professional title of Early Childhood Educators. Students were taught to work systematically with children's parents and attend children by observing them carefully and working closely with other professionals. Their academic and professional work contributed greatly to sensitising the society on the diverse needs of the child and expanding ECCE coverage (Ministry of Education, 2002, pp. 31-32). On its part, early childhood education was incorporated into the plans of the Ministry of Education in 1948, establishing the first "Plan and Programme of Studies" as an orientation tool for schools and kindergartens. In 1965, the education system was modified by the Supreme Decree N°27.952, in which early childhood education was incorporated as the first level of the education system with the fundamental objective of "integrated development of the child's personality and his/her intelligent adaptation to local and natural environment".

The single most important pre-Jomtien ECCE law in Chile was the Law N°17.301 of 22 April, 1970, which created JUNJI as an autonomous public corporation, linked to public entities via the Ministry of Education. The creation of JUNJI—the oldest institution in Latin America specialised in integrated attention of early childhood—is the result of the ardent work of the parliamentary commission to conceive pre-basic education aiming at improving and complementing parental efforts in fostering their children's development and at the same time allowing their mothers to participate in

the labour force (JUNJI, 2005, pp. 21-22). In this law, early childhood education for children under 6 years of age is defined as “integrated attention that encompasses adequate feeding, education appropriate for their age and medical-dental attention”, which has to be offered by early childhood educators with collaboration of well-prepared auxiliary personnel and community members (Ministry of Education, 1998, p.15). At the same time, this law established a series of requirements for construction agencies and companies to establish kindergartens per housing units as well as fiscal measures to support these kindergartens, though these measures were abolished by the subsequent military government. The creation of JUNJI contributed to the rapid expansion of ECCE services through setting up many kindergartens in poverty-stricken areas.

The coup d'état of 1973 and the following military regime that lasted until 1989 brought profound changes to the concept of early childhood and education policies. The Law N°17.301 was declared “in revision”, and the Presidential Directive N°87 (1974) stated that the attention for children between 0 and 4 years should focus on health and nutrition, while it is desirable that children between 4 and 6 years of age “have the opportunity to receive scientifically guided education in kindergartens”. In the same year, the Commission 17, presided by the wife of the President *de facto*, reviewed the early childhood education system and developed new education policies as part of the overall policy revision. The education policies at the time addressed the need to reduce the marginalised population and improve children’s conditions through family care programmes. In this context, the Commission 17 developed the educational programme for the Transition Level on one hand, and the objectives for children between 0 and 4 years with emphasis on health and nutrition on the other. Children between 0 and 2 years old were attended by the National Health Service. In 1975, the wife of the President *de facto* created the National Foundation of Community Help (*Fundación Nacional de Ayuda a la Comunidad*, FUNACO), which aimed at co-ordinating community social welfare programmes and offering free welfare services to children in disadvantaged households. JUNJI, on its part, was transferred from the Ministry of Education to the Interior Ministry in 1976 as part of the government’s Social Action Programme, losing formal co-ordination channels with the Ministry of Education, which was developing early childhood education policies with the Interior Ministry and the Food and Nutrition Board (*Consejo para la Alimentación y Nutrición*, CONPAN).

On the other hand, Chile was the first Latin American country to implement far-reaching trade and market liberalisation, and in the 1980s it privatised its social sector services, such as education, health care and pension system. The country emerged as a fast-growing, stable economy but at the same time, these economic and political reforms produced profound social inequities. Moreover, when the debt crisis hit the region in the 1980s, some of the ECCE development achieved in the 1970s was interrupted. The Ministry of Education had to increase the children-per-adult ratio from 30 to 45, and JUNJI, restored its administrative adherence to the Ministry of Education in 1981, had to reduce its early childhood educators and entrust direct attention of children with under-qualified auxiliary

personnel (Ministry of Education, 1998, p.18). At the same time, with the purpose of promoting free schooling for poor children, special school vouchers (subsidies per student) were issued and extended to the second level of the Transition Level (Decree N° 3.529 in 1980). The Ministry of Education developed and implemented a series of normative plans as curricular orientation in the early 1980s: Day Care (1980), Middle Level (1981) and the first level of the Transition Level (1981).

As mentioned in the previous section, Chile's education system and the role of the state in education provision underwent profound changes during the late 1970 and 1980s, particularly as a result of the decentralisation and privatisation of school management. In 1983, by the Summary of Norms of Early Childhood Education (*Compendio de Normas para la Educación Parvularia*), the Ministry of Education and JUNJI were designated as responsible institutions for organising and supervising early childhood education, resulting in today's divided ECCE administrative structure: municipalities were given the responsibility to administer public and subsidised private ECCE centres that formerly depended on the Ministry of Education; JUNJI, in addition to its own kindergartens, held the responsibility of accrediting and supervising fee-paying private centres. The Ministry of Education became responsible for the overall policy development and planning, supervision, co-ordination and evaluation. This division of labour between the Ministry of Education and JUNJI coincided with the division of specialisation: the Ministry of Education focused on the second level of the Transition Level (later also the first level), and JUNJI on the first level of Transition as well as the Middle and Day Care Levels.

On the other hand, during the 1980s many alternative ECCE services were developed for children from poor families, principally promoted by NGOs (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 33). Particularly of note is the sustained efforts made on the nutrition and health of the poorest population during this period (e.g., INTA of University of Chile), which led to the reduction of child mortality and malnutrition as well as the longer life expectancy. By the end of the 1980s, however, Chilean society was characterised by its profound inequalities and increased poverty due to the high unemployment rate and other economic factors (Ministry of Education, 1998, p.20). It was precisely this point in history when the nation voted for democracy in the 1988 referendum and the government ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

6. Post-Jomtien Early Childhood Education Policies (1990-2000)

In 1990, democracy was restored in Chile under the coalition government, which declared education as a priority for the decade. This historical moment of the country coincided with the celebration of the World Conference on Education for All and the World Summit for Children. Moreover, the constitutional education law (*Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Enseñanza*) was approved during the last days of the military regime (March 1990), which reaffirmed the decrees and policies of the early

1980s and established the mechanism to exercise the freedom of teaching. The economic and educational policies of the 1980s were maintained by the democratic government. However, as the grave educational inequalities between state-funded schools (public and subsidised private schools) and fee-paying schools were manifested conspicuously in student academic performance at basic education level (in the standardised student test SIMCE), the democratic government launched the new policies for the education sector to “increase coverage with equity and quality” and committed itself to implementing the medium-term strategy, Programme of Education Quality and Equity Improvement (*Programa de Mejoramiento de la Calidad y Equidad de Educación*, MECE), which lasted six years with funding from the World Bank loans and the national budget (Ministry of Education, 2002, pp. 33-34). The MECE Programme also had the preschool component, to which 16% of the total resources was assigned, with the aim of improving teaching quality and offering opportunities to children under 6 years from poor households—same as the two objectives of the basic education level. To these two general objectives, preschool component had the third objective of expanding ECCE attention.

The National Commission for Early Childhood Education was set up in 1990, in order to improve co-ordination among institutions serving children under 6 years in the areas of service provision, studies and training activities¹². JUNJI and the Ministry of Education jointly co-ordinated this inter-sectoral commission, and the participating institutions jointly organised activities (e.g., national symposia, analysis of the preschool component of the MECE) or incorporated other sectors’ contributions to their regular activities (e.g., incorporation of health and food services provided by the Ministry of Health into JUNJI’s education services). In 1990, FUNACO modified substantially its objectives and actions and was reconstituted as the INTEGRA Foundation, a private entity linked to the Interior Ministry. The Programme MECE generated new formal and non-formal programmes, not only services provided at formal ECCE settings but also those based on parent and family education, distance services and teacher training (see descriptions of different programmes implemented by Ministry of Education, JUNJI and INTEGRA in Ministry of Education 2002).

At the level of the overall education system, “modernisation” has become the third principle (in addition to quality and equity) by the mid-1990s, and in 1996 the series of transformations proposed in the system came to be called the Education Reform, which established four areas of intervention: a) pedagogical improvement and innovation programmes, b) curricular reform, c) professional development of teachers and d) extension of school hours. In the area of ECCE, the pedagogical improvement was sought through the curricular diversification for children from indigenous groups or with special education needs, the evaluation system of children’s development, and the creation of undergraduate and graduate-level courses for early childhood educators (Ministry of Education, 2002, pp. 36-37). Since 1990, early childhood educators are required to have a five-year university degree

¹² Experiences of this inter-sectoral co-ordination mechanism are documented in UNESCO-OREALC (2004b).

in education (*Licenciatura en Educación Parvularia*), while auxiliary personnel need technical training at technical-professional centres or educational centres recognised by the State (OEI, 2004, p. 32). In order to increase and diversify ECCE service provision, all three institutions (MINEDUC, JUNJI and INTEGRA) have been working with families and community members and supporting non-formal programmes in which trained mothers and other community members play the role of educators.

While Chile had such advantages as having several institutions and agencies specialised in early childhood, highly trained ECCE professionals and a variety of ECCE provision modalities and programmes, it also had the difficulties co-ordinating those different institutions and provision modalities and making linkage between the three levels of early childhood education and with the basic education level (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 9). The most significant development in the area of early childhood education was the initiation in 1998 of the early childhood education curriculum development by the inter-sectoral Commission, this time under the leadership of the Curriculum and Assessment Unit of the Ministry of Education, which was responsible for developing curricula for other education levels. The curricular bases were developed in response to the needs 1) to reorient the learning opportunities of young children to the political, socio-cultural changes in the country, 2) to harmonise early childhood education with the curricular reform implemented at other levels and 3) to integrate the three existing levels (i.e., Day Care, Middle and Transition) through one single curricular instrument based on the common criteria with learning objectives and educational orientations for the country (*ibid.* p. 8).

It took three years of intensive discussions among relevant institutions as well as wide consultations of public and private ECCE institutions, early childhood educators and parents¹³. The first draft was prepared by the Consultative Commission composed of the Ministry of Education, JUNJI, INTEGRA, OMEP, Early Childhood Educators College (*Colegio de Educadoras de Párvulos*) and Teachers College (*Colegio de Profesores de Chile*, the largest teachers union), in addition to other relevant institutions and specialists. The first version of the curricular bases was piloted in 20 ECCE centres—mostly public—in three regions, and at the same time, it was discussed at the National Consultation with teachers, parents, institutions and organizations related to early childhood education (universities, regional commissions for early childhood education, NGOs, the church, National Service of Women, Ministry of Health, owners and parent association of private schools, etc.).

Much of this successful co-ordination of the curricular development can be attributed to the leadership and recognised technical capacity of the co-ordinator of Early Childhood Education Unit of the Ministry of Education, who left the position of the head of JUNJI to take up this Ministry position to

¹³ Anecdotes include the challenge to persuade the high-ranking Ministry officials about the need for early childhood educational curriculum in the same way as other education levels as well as the difficulty of agreeing upon the content of one single curricular reference for all programme types—public or private, formal or non-formal, etc.

lead the curriculum development. The Curricular Bases for Early Childhood Education (*Bases Curriculares de la Educación Parvularia*), approved as a presidential decree in October 2001, is historical in many senses. First, it enjoys a high level of legitimacy: it was developed on the basis of updated scientific knowledge in neuroscience and child development as well as through wide consultations; and it is contextualised in the country's social and cultural conditions and the agreed-upon definition of “for what, what and when” of learning opportunities for all Chilean young children. Secondly, it is a flexible curricular orientation designed for 0 to 6 years as one single level, with two learning cycles (based on development stages, roughly 0-3 and 3-6 years), rather than separate levels: earlier curricular existed as plans and programmes for separate levels. Third, the new curricular bases focus on the integrated wellbeing and full development of the child as a person, with view to promoting the child's holistic development. Fourth, the curricular components are based on the areas of learning experiences and the respective learning nuclei, defining 232 expected learning outcomes with corresponding pedagogic orientations.

The emphasis is on placed the role of the child as an active subject of learning, through his or her interaction with the environment (people and other beings, nature, immediate and remote surroundings, etc.) as well as on the respect for the diversity of children and their families. Moreover, the curriculum includes emerging issues such as the gender, environment conservation, inter-cultural relations and security, including prevention of drug abuse or child abuse. By incorporating judicial, philosophical, anthropological, scientific and pedagogical aspects into one framework of learning orientations, this curriculum represents a more integrated vision of early childhood than the traditional sectoral preoccupations (i.e., education, nutrition, health, family welfare, etc.) (Ministry of Education, 2001, pp. 14-15),

The structure of the Curricular Bases summarised in the Table 2 appears simple at a first glance, but the content is in fact very dense and exhaustive. The first level is the areas of learning experiences within which all early childhood education actions are organised: personal and social formation, communication, and relation with national and cultural environment. Within each of the three areas of learning experiences, general objectives of the learning are formulated as “learning nuclei”, and each learning nucleus represents a set of capacity, values and knowledge that each child should aim at developing through early childhood education. While these first two levels provide broad categories, the third level specifies the learning outcomes that the child is expected to demonstrate and the pedagogic orientations (theories, guidance and possible activities) for educators. The third level is divided into two cycles corresponding to the age groups (birth to 2 years and 3 years to 6 years or entry to basic education). For example, for the first learning nucleus “Autonomy”, there are 16 expected learning outcomes for the first cycle (e.g., to adapt to certain basic routines related to eating, waking, sleeping and hygiene in a context that is different from his/her home and to be conscious of his/her personal needs) and 6 pedagogic orientations. In the second cycle of the same learning nuclei,

there are 21 expected learning outcomes related to motor skills and healthy lifestyles on one hand (e.g., to co-ordinate fine psychomotor skills with more precision and efficiency, stimulating and developing necessary co-ordination skills according to his/her interests to explore, construct and express graphically his/her representations and recreations), and initiative and confidence on the other (e.g., to propose games and activities, suggesting how to organise and play them according to his/her interests and ideas). There are 13 pedagogic orientations for the second cycle of “Autonomy”.

Table 2. Structural Components of the Curricular Bases for Early Childhood Education

Areas of Learning Experiences A set of substantive opportunities that the curriculum has to consider	Learning Nuclei (General Objectives) Focus of experiences and learning within each area: a general objective is identified for each focus	Expected Learning and Pedagogic Orientations Organised in two cycles: what children are expected to learn and criteria to manage activities to achieve expected results	
Personal and social formation	Autonomy	First Cycle	Second Cycle
	Identity	First Cycle	Second Cycle
	Living together	First Cycle	Second Cycle
Communication	Verbal language	First Cycle	Second Cycle
	Artistic language	First Cycle	Second Cycle
Relation with natural and cultural environment	Living things and their surrounding	First Cycle	Second Cycle
	Human groups, their life styles and relevant events	First Cycle	Second Cycle
	Logical-mathematic relations and quantification	First Cycle	Second Cycle

Source: Ministry of Education (2001). *My translation.*

7. Post-Dakar Early Childhood Education Policies (since 2000)

Chile entered the new millennium with the new curricular bases for early childhood education, reaching the momentum when it was officially approved as Decree N° 0289 by the President of the Republic and the Minister of Education in an official ceremony held at the Presidential Palace. This symbolic act, in which national and regional authorities as well as all institutions involved in the curriculum development and other ECCE researchers and institutions participated, gave a political impulse early childhood education. The curricular implementation that began in 2002 was planned in three phases: the first phase (2002-2003) of setting the foundations and understandings, the second phase (2003-2004) of curricular implementation, and the third phase (2004-2006) of developing curricular diversification and more specific didactics (MINEDUC, JUNJI and INTEGRA 2005). One important characteristic of this curricular installation is the trust given to the early childhood educator as an education professional who can bring together a community (families, children,

management teams, community, etc.) for an educational project to promote children's learning with high expectations in their development and learning.

The curricular installation proposal was modified based on the results of the pilot experience, and the Ministry encouraged the schools across the nation to incorporate the curricular bases at the Transition Level. The first official curricular installation during the 2001 school year was implemented at 47 schools, in which all educators and supervisors were given training and guidance (UNESCO-OREALC and Ministry of Education of Chile, 2004, pp. 25-26). This first experience proved that all schools were capable of implementing the curricular bases but with different levels of achievement depending on several aspects: the degree of understanding and use of the curricular bases, the support provided by school principals and technical teams, the existence of family and community support, the existence of peer support or mentorship for educators, and the use of audio-visual instruments for educators to record and analyse later how they are progressing with the curricular implementation (*ibid.* p. 26). In 2002, the Inter-institutional Commission for Curricular Reform Perfection, composed of the Ministry of Education, JUNJI, INTEGRA and CPEIP, was set up with the purpose of designing the process of training all early childhood educators in the public sector. In the same year, 9,000 early childhood educators of Ministry of Education, JUNJI and INTEGRA were trained in the use of the curricular bases at universities and through distance or correspondence courses. In 2003, the number of centres in which the curricular bases were implemented increased to 350, while 12,000 educators in the public sector across the country were trained. The author could not find evidence, however, whether or how the curricular bases are implemented at private ECCE centres, which have no obligation to follow them under the freedom of teaching doctrine. Moreover, even though the curricular implementation is still at its initial stage, it appears that it has been implemented mostly at the Transition Level and not many experiences are documented at the Day Care or Middle Levels¹⁴.

Undoubtedly, one of Chile's advantages, in addition to the presence of committed and highly competent early childhood education leaders, is the continuation of its education policies since 1990. Despite the changes of the president, education ministers and other key positions, the education policies that have oriented the MECE and the Education Reform remained virtually unchanged. Early childhood education policies since 2001 are briefly: 1) the expansion of coverage, ensuring equity for the most vulnerable sectors and the integrity of educational offer; 2) improvement of education quality, strengthening the entire system (through both formal and non-formal means) and taking the Curricular Bases as the integrating framework to work with children, families, communities and early childhood educators; 3) strengthening the management system through the modernisation of administrative procedures (Ministry of Education, JUNJI and INTEGRA, 2005, p. 21). And it is likely that these policy lines and the importance placed on early childhood education will continue as

¹⁴ Only one of 20 experiences documented by UNESCO-OREALC and the Ministry of Education includes the Middle Level in addition to the Transition Level, and the other 19 experiences are only at the Transition Level.

the new President of the Republic from the same coalition government assumed the office in March 2006. The government of Mr. Ricardo Lagos Escobar (2000-2005) committed to and achieved incorporating 120,000 children into early childhood education, with emphasis on the first level of the Transition Level, as the Ministry of Education was to absorb 75% of this goal. The new government of Ms. Michelle Bachelet has made a series of commitments to be achieved during the first 100 days of her government, including the issuance of preschool vouchers for children of 0 to 3 years old coming from the 40% poorest households of the population, the creation of space for 20,000 children at the first level of the Transition Level and the disposition of 800 day care centres to cover 20,000 children¹⁵.

8. Conclusion

As illustrated in this study, in the past few decades, Chile has undergone a series of changes in policies related to early childhood education—sometimes through gradual development and other times by authoritarian imposition. Chile officially incorporated early childhood education as the first level of the education system in 1965. As early as in 1970, Chile had an agency responsible for co-ordinating integrated care and education for children under 6 years. However, policies for younger children (0-4 years) during the military dictatorship (1973-1989) became less educational and more of relief service due to the high poverty and malnutrition rates. Since the restoration of democracy and economic development achieved by 1990, the country has made consistent efforts to expand ECCE coverage from birth through focalisation and with participation of parents and communities and to improve the quality of service provided. The Table 3 summarises the analysis of early childhood education policies in the three periods.

Table 3. Analysis of Early Childhood Education Policies in Chile in the pre-Jomtien, post-Jomtien and post-Dakar periods

Categories	Pre-Jomtien	Post-Jomtien	Post-Dakar
Beneficiary population	Under 6 years of age (before entering basic education) Most disadvantaged, marginalised populations	- Under 6 years of age (before entering basic education) - Children of poor and vulnerable sectors	- Under 6 years of age (before entering basic education) - Children of poor and vulnerable sectors
Responsible entities	Parents as the primary educators - (before 1973) JUNJI, University of Chile to train early childhood	Parents as the primary educators - Ministry of Education JUNJI INTEGRA	Parents as the primary educators - Ministry of Education (co-ordination) JUNJI

¹⁵ Extracted from her speech on December 2005 when she presented her 36 commitments for her first 100 days in the government (http://www.gobierno.cl/gob_100dias/tema3.asp).

Categories	Pre-Jomtien	Post-Jomtien	Post-Dakar
	educators - (military regime) First Lady and Ministry of Education - (from 1980s) more presence of NGOs	- Incorporation of communities (especially parents), in addition to professional and technical personnel - National Commission on Early Childhood Education	INTEGRA
Nature of attention	Before the military regime: - Integrated attention under JUNJI (feeding, education and medical-dental) During the military regime - Relief/ assistance for 0-4 year olds (health and nutrition) and pre-basic education for 4-6 year olds - Plans by levels (day care, middle and transition)	Integrated attention through inter-sectoral co-ordination (e.g., health services given at kindergartens) and working with parents, families and communities.	Based on the areas of learning experiences and the respective learning nuclei for integrated wellbeing and development of the child as a person.
Strategies	Before the military regime: - JUNJI before 1973: collaboration among professional early childhood educators, auxiliaries and families - Construction and fiscal measure to set up early childhood education centres. During the military regime: - Decentralisation and privatisation of provision - Freedom of teaching (voucher system) - Relief work and family	Expand coverage with quality and equity, modernisation (MECE): - Improved teaching quality (“Criteria of curricular quality”, curricular diversification) - Focused attention on children from poor households (focalisation and positive discrimination) - Expanded attention (incorporation of non-formal programme for diversify offer)	Continued policies to expand coverage with equity, improve quality and modernise administrative procedures - Opening of new spaces for ECCE services (with vouchers given to day care levels) - Implementation of the Curricular Bases

Categories	Pre-Jomtien	Post-Jomtien	Post-Dakar
	programmes for poor children (0-4 years); normative plans for Transition Level	- Decentralisation – pedagogical autonomy	

It appears that since 1990 early childhood policies in Chile has reflected fully what was promoted in the Jomtien and Dakar commitments, in terms of expanding coverage, improving service quality and giving priority to the most vulnerable children. Moreover, the flexible curricular bases launched in 2001 arguably go beyond the EFA vision related to ECCE by addressing the whole population from 0 to 6 years of age, defining children’s expected learning outcomes and providing pedagogic orientations. They also reflect the changing conceptualisation of the child from an object of attention and protection to a subject of rights and of active learning.

The indicators related to ECCE reviewed in this study also show the admirable progress achieved in Chile, in terms of survival, poverty reduction and ECCE coverage in the past decades. It can be asserted that Chile is one of the leading nations of Latin America in early childhood education. Nonetheless, it still has many challenges ahead, particularly where it relates to equity of ECCE access and quality, in order to ensure holistic development and learning for all children. Moreover, further efforts are needed to fill the following gaps between the policy rhetoric and challenging reality:

- While the rhetoric of the Curricular Bases presents 0-6 years as one education level (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 8), the provision structure of three levels (Day Care, Middle and Transition) remain and the public efforts and the State subsidies (vouchers) are concentrated on the *kinder* and *pre-kinder* levels. In fact, only 4.1% of children of the Day Care level (0-2 years of age) are covered by ECCE programmes. Given the increased female labour participation and the high incidence of poverty among single mothers, provision of quality ECCE service can be a win-win solution: while it allows mothers to participate in the labour market, it gives their children more development and learning opportunities. Since the resources of the state for ECCE services are limited, alternative provision modalities with participation of families and communities need to be further mobilised and co-ordinated with the official provision structure. Moreover, in order to increase ECCE coverage of children under 4 years of age, coverage needs to be understood as reaching children, rather than bring them to centres.
- Giving all children at least one or two years of ECCE experiences in an enriched learning environment is vital for them to have a fair start of schooling. Universalising the ECCE services at the Transition Level, however, should be carefully distinguished from schooling children, particularly, as many Transition Level programmes (*pre-kinder* and *kinder*) are given at basic

education schools under the direction of the Ministry of Education. Chilean society, as in others, is particularly sensitive to the scores of standardised tests (SIMCE) and international comparative studies (e.g., PISA and TIMSS), and the student achievement scores in core subjects (mathematics, language and science) became a synonym of the quality of education. Moreover, the Ministry of Education initiated in 2002 a campaign to enhance reading, writing and mathematics at basic education level ("*Campaña LEM*"), which now includes the *kinder* level with specific learning materials and teacher training provided (UNESCO-OREALC and Ministry of Education, 2004, pp. 11-12). While there is no question about the importance of these learning skills and of the transition from early childhood education to the basic education level, it is equally important to remember that language and mathematics are only two of the eight learning nuclei of the curricular bases, and there are other crucial values and skills that need to be developed during this early period. The current overemphasis on "school readiness" has the risk of underestimating children's social and emotional development as well as their formation of essential values. Some of the ECCE experts interviewed indicated their concern that children are increasingly losing their childhood or "chilliness": on one hand children's cognitive development tends to be overemphasised and they often spend much of their activity time sitting at the desk rather than playing and enjoying different activities. On the other hand, their exposure to the adult media (TV, internet, etc.) creates another concern about children's socialisation, which has the increased tendency toward consumerism and early "promiscuity".

- The curricular bases are rightly made flexible in order to meet children's diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, interests and development levels, giving educators the pedagogical autonomy to plan activities. However, the curriculum is complex and a high level of knowledge and skills is expected of each educator. Adequate support and training of educators and auxiliary personnel is thus primordial. While new educators are introduced to the new curriculum during their university training, it takes time for them to acquire practical application skills and for veteran educators to incorporate the new curriculum into their practice. In addition to formal training courses offered by the Ministry of Education and universities, sharing experiences through workshops, dissemination of good practices, and peer discussions within the centre (if there are several educators) as well as between different centres would be beneficial to educators. Moreover, it is important for educators to work as a team —of educators, auxiliary personnel, parents and families, etc.— with the common objective of facilitating children's holistic development and wellbeing.
- Co-ordination among the three institutions (Ministry of Education, JUNJI and INTEGRA) is still a major challenge. Although the Ministry of Education increasingly focuses on the Transition Level, clearer division of labour and better co-ordination need to be established for a coherent education system. The implementation of the curricular bases is also uneven, and INTEGRA

developed and implements its own curriculum with emphasis on the language and logical-mathematic components (Venegas, no date). Moreover, many private ECCE centres and non-formal programmes, which can offer diverse educational opportunities for children, are often not co-ordinated with or not always accountable to the state, and they may disregard the curricular bases. This lack of co-ordination among different institutions is evident from the absence of a centralised information system: the sole source of early childhood education coverage under 6 years old is the estimate based on the household survey (CASEN), since each institution collects and publishes its enrolment data according to its own definition. The information system of this level (0-6 years) needs to be improved to make a better supply-demand analysis.

- Despite the policy discourse of “learning from birth”, many children do not attend early childhood education programmes because their parents/families believe that they are not old enough, which implies the limited ECCE provision for younger age groups on one hand and the need for further advocacy and awareness-raising on the other. Furthermore, it cannot be emphasised enough that Chile has serious social inequities, which manifest themselves in educational inequities between public schools, subsidised private schools and fee-paying private schools. The differences in student academic achievement between these schools have not been closed despite the sustained education policies in the past 15 years. This indicates not only Chile’s socioeconomic structure as the robust determining factor of educational inequities, but also the crucial importance of early childhood care and education for children from poor and vulnerable sectors to have a better and fairer start.

This year (2006) Chile celebrates the 100th birthday of its first public kindergarten. The pioneers of ECCE at that time may never have imagined that early childhood education would be put so high in the country’s political agenda as it is today. Or would they be wondering why it took so long? The recent research discoveries in neuroscience and cognitive psychology have helped prove “scientifically” what good parents and educators always knew: positive stimuli given to the child during the first years of life are crucial to his/her development and wellbeing. What is also certain is that it took the strong commitment and hard work of generations of early childhood educators, whom Chile has been fortunate to have. This study has demonstrated some of Chile’s achievements in ECCE policy development as well as its challenges in meeting the first Dakar goal of education for all and learning from birth.

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