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Country profile prepared for the
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Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education

Argentina

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

Compiled by:
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ARGENTINA

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

A. GENERAL INFORMATION, STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

Starting age of compulsory education (if applicable):

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, education is compulsory for children aged five to 14 (including the final year of preschool education).

1. ISCED 0 PROGRAMMES (USUALLY, PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION)

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

National definition of ISCED 0 programmes:

Early education

1.2. Normative age group(s) covered by ISCED 0 programmes:

Ages three to five

1.3. ISCED 0 programmes: statistics and indicators *(Please include the most recent data if available)*

1.3.1. Enrolment:

	Percentage	Year
Gross enrolment ratio	61.0 (F = 61.3)	2004
Net enrolment ratio	60.8 (F = 61.2)	2004
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	91.9	2004

Source: National Service for Education Quality Information and Evaluation (DINIECE). 2004 Annual Survey. CELADE population projections.

1.3.2. Enrolment ratio by age group (percentage, also including the first years of primary education when applicable):

Less than 3 years of age	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7
Early		28.8	57.3	96.5	0.2
Primary			1.3	99.8	99.8

Source: National Service for Education Quality Information and Evaluation (DINIECE). 2004 Annual Survey. CELADE population projections.

1.3.3. Teachers (2004):

Total number of teachers	Of whom female (%)	Percentage of trained teachers (all)	Percentage of trained teachers (males)	Percentage of trained teachers (females)
95,221	95.5	97.8

Source: National Service for Education Quality Information and Evaluation (DINIECE). 2004 Teacher Census (provisional data).

(...) Data not available.

1.3.4. Funding:

	Percentage
Public current expenditure per pupil as percentage of the Gross National Product per capita	9.44 (2004)

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

In 2004, expenditure per pupil was 11.2% of per capita gross domestic product.

N.B.: Provisional data subject to revision. Expenditure, and thus enrolment, covers the preschool and primary/general basic education levels. These figures are based on budgetary information submitted by provincial districts and include sums transferred by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology for these levels of education.

Source: CGECSE/SsCA/Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MECyT), on the basis of budgetary information supplied by district education authorities, DINIECE/SE/MECyT, Directorate of the Budget and Directorate of Accounting and Finance/SsCA/MECyT, UFI/SsCA/MECyT and INDEC, Ministry of Economy and Production.

1.3.5. Main source(s) of financing:

Indicator	Value
Consolidated public expenditure on education ⁽¹⁾ as a percentage of gross domestic product. 2004	3.8%
Estimated private expenditure on education as a percentage of gross domestic product. 2003 ⁽²⁾	1.1%

Provisional data subject to revision. Consolidated public expenditure includes spending by all levels of government.

The most recent private expenditure estimate is for 2003.

Source: CGECSE/SsCA/MECyT on the basis of budgetary information supplied by district education authorities, DINIECE/SE/MECyT, Directorate of the Budget and Directorate of Accounting and Finance/SsCA/MECyT, UFI/SsCA/MECyT and our own estimates.

N.B.: There is not enough information available to provide the funding breakdown requested (government, NGOs and families). There are data on expenditure by the

Argentine State and estimates for private education expenditure. It is possible to break down Ministry of Education, Science and Technology expenditure by financing source (own funding and external), but this cannot be replicated at the provincial level.

Regarding the contribution of the Argentine State, the recently passed Education Financing Act No. 26075 provides for education, science and technology expenditure to rise gradually to 6% of gross domestic product by 2010.

Year	CEE⁽³⁾ as % GDP
2006	4.7
2007	5.0
2008	5.3
2009	5.6
2010	6.0

CEE = Consolidated expenditure on education, science and technology.

GDP = gross domestic product.

The increased investment in education, science and technology provided for by the above-mentioned law will be allocated on a priority basis to attain the goals described below (see 3.2).

2. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMMES

(Generally preceding ISCED 0 programmes)

2.1. National definition of other ECCE programmes:

Preschool education in the Argentine Republic has expanded and developed substantially owing to the efforts of the 24 districts in the national education system to increase the number of pupils attending at the two component levels, namely the nursery and the kindergarten.

The early education stage covers children from birth to six. This is the first stage in the education system, and as such it represents an important and unique experience in the personal development of individuals. In some cases it has a critical influence on prospects for learning later in life and for completing school.

Particular mention should be made of the “*Primeros años*” (“Early Years”) National Infant Development Programme sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the aim of which is to assist and sustain families in the upbringing of children from birth to 4 and to create national awareness of early childhood rights and the need for a comprehensive approach to ensure proper development of the youngest children (see also 3.6).

2.2. Normative age group(s) covered by other ECCE programmes:

The early education level caters to children aged from 45 days to five years, inclusive. It is compulsory for five-year-olds. The first cycle of early education (nursery), which is for children aged 45 days to two years, is the least developed in the 24 education districts (see also 3.6).

2.3. Estimated number of children covered by other ECCE programmes:

In the second cycle (ages 3 to five), the initial level caters to approximately 1,400,000 children, according to official data from 2004.

B. BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING ECCE PROGRAMMES (INCLUDING ISCED 0)

3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:

Federal Education Act (1993).

Core Learning Priorities (NAP).

Budget Law No. 26075 (2005, ANNEX I).

3.2. Official body/bodies in charge of supervision or coordination:

Article 52 of the Federal Education Act states that: *“the government and administration of the education system is a concurrent, concerted responsibility of the national executive, provincial executives and the Municipality of the City of Buenos Aires”* (now the Autonomous Government of the City of Buenos Aires).

The district education authorities are responsible for planning, organizing and administering the education system in their district, which involves conducting periodic assessments of the education system in their own sphere of competence, ensuring that it conforms (in the context of the local community) to national education policy and to policies and initiatives agreed by the Federal Council for Culture and Education and promoting quality education.

The Education Financing Act, passed in December 2005, stipulates that the gradual increase in education, science and technology investment (the target is 6% of GDP by 2010) will be allocated on a priority basis to the objectives set out below.

Bring all five-year-old children into early education and continuously extend coverage of three- and four-year-olds, giving priority to the most disadvantaged sections of society.

Ensure a minimum of 10 years' compulsory schooling for all children and young people. Ensure that children and young people with special education needs are included. Ensure that at least THIRTY per cent (30%) of basic education pupils have access to schools offering a full or extended day, giving priority to the most disadvantaged sections of society.¹

Progress towards universalization of the intermediate/polymodal level by enrolling or reintegrating young unenrolled people who are the right age to be studying at this level into the education system so that they can complete their schooling.

Eradicate illiteracy throughout the country and enhance the education received by young people and adults at every level of the system.

Change teaching methods with a view to improving the quality of the country's education system at all levels and in all categories, ensuring that the core learning priorities are internalized by all pupils at the early, basic/primary and intermediate/polymodal education levels.

¹ Another goal is to achieve quality education. If opportunities are to be equal for all, at least 30% of pupils need to have access to a full or extended school day. It is essential for inequalities of background to be offset by more hours of classes.

Expand the use of information and communication technologies in educational establishments and extend second language teaching.

Enhance technical education and vocational training by modernizing them and harnessing them to the needs of production and employment. Increase investment in infrastructure and equipment for schools and vocational training centres.

Improve the working and pay conditions of teachers at every level of the education system. Establish a hierarchical career structure in the teaching profession. Strengthen and improve the quality of initial and further teacher training.

Make the education provided by the country's university system better and more democratic, innovative and relevant.

Establish a scientific and technological research hierarchy and ensure that the goals set for the country's science and technology system are met.

3.3. Other entities involved in the provision (e.g. municipalities, local governments) and main types of providers (e.g. public, private, mixed, community-based, etc.):

Early education is provided at establishments operated by the provinces and by the Autonomous Government of the City of Buenos Aires, some of them run directly by the public sector and others privately.

The private category includes establishments set up by unions and businesses and also those administered on a mixed basis, that is, receiving a State grant for teacher salaries.

3.4. Type of personnel involved (teachers, assistants, other staff):

ECCE programmes are the responsibility of preschool teachers, a title to be awarded by teacher training institutions for the early education level in accordance with the provisions of Agreement A-14 of the Federal Council of Culture and Education. They can also draw on physical education, arts and language teachers specializing in psychological and cultural development and the characteristics of early education institutions.

In each education district, anyone wishing to work in educational institutions must possess the professional qualification recognized by the district concerned.

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):

Early education teachers may train at teacher training colleges (non-university tertiary education) or at universities.

In accordance with the provisions of the above-mentioned Agreement A-14, teacher training will cover the following fields:

General: Common to all teacher training.

Specialized: Relating to the characteristics of pupils' psychological and cultural development and the characteristics of institutions at this level.

Directed: Covering all the disciplinary content corresponding to the level or centring on the acquisition of knowledge specific to the field concerned (teachers of special subjects).

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:

Education Financing Act, No. 26075 (ANNEX I)

Early Education Service

Core Learning Priorities

“Early Years” National Infant Development Programme

Early Education Service. Education Secretariat. Curriculum Management and Teacher Training Department of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

The aim is to create a federal focal point to provide opportunities for discussion and dialogue with a view to determining education policies for early childhood, placing the early education level at the heart of these policies.

The early education level consists of the nursery stage, which caters to children aged 45 days to two years, and the kindergarten stage, which caters to children aged three, four and five; education has been compulsory for five-year-olds since 1993 (Federal Education Act).

The objective is to put the decisions involved in the passing of the Financing Act at the centre of the political agenda as a guide to the drafting of comprehensive working plans that give priority to educational inclusiveness in both urban and rural contexts.

The strategic measures proposed are:

- to introduce policies at the national State and education district levels to create the conditions for the universal provision of quality education services for five-year-olds, gradual expansion of coverage for three- and four-year-olds, and further development of education provision at the nursery stage;
- to coordinate existing national and provincial public policies on early childhood. This requires coordination between governmental and non-governmental agencies to identify areas of convergence in the formulation of early childhood policies in a consistent and comprehensive manner;
- to improve the quality of early childhood care programmes by considering not only problems of a quantitative nature, but also the need to deal with the enormous inequalities that remain in terms of the quality of the education offered through the different systems;
- to build a consensus in respect of the institutional and curricular policy for the preschool level. This will entail different measures to enhance the framework of inquiry and identify strategies for educational action;
- to encourage all education districts to create an early education department and a dedicated technical team within the structure of the provincial education system;
- to collaborate in planning the facilities needed (equipment and teaching resources) to ensure that the best teaching and learning tools are available to children and teachers;
- to continue to compile quantitative information on services for under-sixes in urban and rural areas;
- to join forces with the Comprehensive Programme for Educational Equality (PIIE) to promote coordination between basic education (EGB) institutions and infant

- sections and nurseries nearby. The aim is to establish joint projects to enhance the professional development of teachers at both levels and optimize the use of book and toy libraries, computers and other opportunities for the cultural enrichment of children;
- to enhance teachers' professional development by means of various training measures for teachers and management teams in the country's education districts;
- to give education districts greater support in decision-making aimed at expanding coverage and improving teaching practices in rural areas;
- to implement Core Learning Priorities (NAP) policies further through various joint initiatives with education districts to design institutional, curricular and training measures that enhance teaching practices;
- to work jointly with provincial early education departments to support federal consensus-building institutions dealing with political, educational, social and cultural issues;
- to promote linkage between early education departments in the provinces and the "Early Years" National Infant Development Programme so that they can play a central role, together with the adult education departments and the Literacy Plan, in administering and implementing the Programme in their provinces.

Core learning priorities (NAP): an opportunity for all. Purpose of the Federal Council's agreement

The Federal Agreement to Identify Learning Priorities was a response to concerns about inequality and fragmentation in our country's education system, given that situations have varied greatly between different provinces and even within education districts since the painful crisis recently experienced by Argentine society. It was to address this that, on 27 April 2004, the Federal Council of Culture and Education (CFCyE) unanimously approved Resolution No. 214/04 in order to "implement policies that give the national education system a basis of unity and ensure that all inhabitants attain equivalent knowledge irrespective of social and geographical position".

This resolution endorses the core learning priorities identified and embodies a commitment to take whatever action is necessary to give all children access to such learning. The process of determining Core Learning Priorities required several rounds of consultation involving all the provinces and the City of Buenos Aires before consensus could be reached, the starting point being a consultation document drafted by the technical teams of the Ministry of Education, which was submitted for consideration by the technical teams and management and teaching staff representatives of all the education districts so that they could make contributions and ensure that it was compatible with their respective curriculum designs.

This means acknowledging and respecting decisions made in each education district and taking account of the diversity of situations in kindergartens and nursery sections and the varying ways in which childhood may express itself. There is no place for a monolithic approach, for it is necessary to take in account the heterogeneity of cultural and social frameworks and the new demands these have created for the teaching profession.

It is known that agreements to improve the practical work of schools cannot be effective unless a range of joint measures are taken by all actors in the education system. Accordingly, it is hoped that when the learning content known as NAP (Core

Learning Priorities) is introduced, it will be treated as a contribution that enhances the “toolboxes” already available to kindergartens and teachers in this province as a result of the vigorous and fruitful efforts that have been made here by schools and society alike.

It is from this point of view that the Core Learning Priorities have been judged indispensable for the early education level, providing a common basic teaching platform for all the country’s kindergartens. It is important to emphasize that this decision does not mean that the NAP alone will be taught, nor will the children’s learning be confined to NAP. The aim is to ensure equality of rights and opportunities so that all children acquire knowledge deemed essential for full integration into society.

In summary, the purpose of this curricular strategy is to ensure united action in taking up the challenges and responsibilities faced by the national State and provincial governments, with teachers, families and communities joining forces nationally to assist in rolling back injustices and achieving full social integration by recognizing the value of the role that education can play.

In relation to the **Core Learning Priorities for the early education level**, “classroom notebooks” have been produced and will soon be in all the country’s kindergartens. These set forth discrete teaching guidance on a variety of situations and approaches, the aim being to initiate dialogue with teachers about the interpretation of the NAP.

The first classroom notebook deals with “Games and Toys”, suggesting possible ways of approaching this familiar subject and raising questions about the past social and cultural significance of these everyday objects that are so essential to children, encouraging the rediscovery of family and community histories.

It includes the section “Classroom Libraries and Storytelling”, which is an invitation to read and write, communicate and tell stories so that the different texts provided can be appropriated by all. The section also aims to build up a community of readers and suggests alternative ways of organizing classroom libraries. Information on book genres and formats is included for this purpose, opening up a whole range of possibilities.

The first classroom notebook will continue to be produced and a second will be published shortly. It will deal with the complexity of play at the early education level from different perspectives: dramatic play, building play, work play, and games with conventional rules.

In addition to this curricular material there are also “notebooks for families” entitled **“Together. For a better education”**. The purpose of this material is to re-create the link between schools and families by providing settings in which children can be supported from the very beginning of their school careers. It includes suggestions for facilitating and supporting continuity and learning, together with a brief summary of the NAP, as it applies to preschool education.

“Early Years” National Infant Development Programme

The outstanding features of the “Early Years” National Infant Development Programme sponsored by the Ministry are its intergovernmental organization model, target population, and human and material resources.

The purpose of the programme is to assist and support families in bringing up children from birth to the age of four and to raise national awareness of early childhood rights and of the need for a comprehensive approach to ensure the proper development of the youngest children.

One of the strategies to achieve this will be to produce written and audiovisual information and guidance material on children's rights, significant aspects of infant development and suitable practices for the development of children under the age of four. Other strategies include producing television programmes and training provincial teams to carry out activities to promote family involvement. Families will receive the collection of booklets entitled "Educating the smallest", dealing with various aspects of the upbringing of children under four.

The proposed linkages with the early education services of education districts are:

using the material to train mothers who care for children, teaching assistants, health workers and teachers working in early childhood care institutions;

using Youth Activity Centres (CAJ) to make the material available to young parents in different settings (public areas, playgrounds, municipal facilities, and so on);

presenting and publicizing the programme and materials in the early education systems of the different districts and with other community sectors and actors so that they can promote the Programme and assist in constructing social networks to reinforce this work;

disseminating and implementing the programme in nurseries that are part of the PIIE.

These institutions can use various family communication strategies to publicize the programme. Meetings can also be held with early education teachers wishing to act as promoters and/or distributors of programme material.

Measures have included presentation of the video produced by the three ministries, and further information will be provided on aspects of the operational model so that the provinces can anticipate the intended sequence of design activities in their own districts.

3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:

See Early Education Service and "Early Years" Infant Development Programme above (point 3.6).

3.8. Special projects/programmes aiming at expanding or improving ECCE:

See point 3.6 above.

3.9. Information concerning the curriculum (if applicable) or the contents of ECCE programmes

3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

The aims of early education, as stated in the Federal Education Act (1993), are as follows:

to stimulate the structuring of thought, creative imagination, personal expression and verbal and graphic communication;

to support children in their sensorimotor development, ability to express themselves aesthetically and through play, introduction to sports and the arts, socio-emotional growth and ethical values;

to stimulate habits of social integration, group living, solidarity and cooperation, and conservation of the environment;
to strengthen the links between the educational institution and families;
to forestall and deal with physical, mental and social inequalities deriving from biological, nutritional, family and environmental deficiencies by means of special programmes and activities coordinated with other community institutions.

3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:

The common basic content (CBC) for the final year of the early education level is organized into the following areas:

language and literature;
mathematics;
expression (physical education, acting and dance, music and the visual arts);
society, nature and technology (integrated area).

Each education district has curriculum documents for the early education level. Curriculum standards depend on the orientation of each education district, as traditions and levels of development differ where curricular standards are concerned. As noted earlier, the 24 education districts have agreed to a set of basic knowledge areas known as the Core Learning Priorities (NAP).

3.9.3. Average number of hours per week and average amount of weeks per year:

Data not available

3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information

See point 3.6 above.

C. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION ON ECCE (TO BE COLLECTED IF POSSIBLE IN COLLABORATION WITH UNICEF OFFICES)

See the information provided in the earlier sections. The Core Learning Priorities (NAP) are accompanied by “notebooks for families” entitled “**Together. For a better education**”. The purpose of this material is to re-create the link between schools and families by providing settings in which children can be supported from the very beginning of their school careers. It includes suggestions for facilitating and supporting continuity and learning, together with a brief summary of the NAP, as it applies to the early education level.

As noted earlier, the “Early Years” National Infant Development Programme is intended for people with vulnerabilities.

4.1. Parenting programmes are usually addressed to parents and families of children less than six years of age. Please give information on any parental education programme in your country in the table below:

Type of programme	Yes or No (note for each programme)	Please estimate the number of beneficiaries (if possible)
Parenting education through early learning centres and child care centres		
As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits		
Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development		
As component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes		
Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with media for and with children		
Other (please specify)		

Are any of these programmes targeted specifically toward the vulnerable, poor, disadvantaged or excluded? If so, which ones? (Please provide/attach any additional and relevant information if available)

4.2. Is there a national-level system for monitoring children's development or school readiness prior to entering primary school?

4.3. Is there a policy on early childhood (ECCE, ECD, etc.) that has been accepted? If not, is there one under development?

[Information revised and additional data provided by the Ministry of Education, March 2006.]