

Country profile prepared for the
Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007
Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education

Nicaragua

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

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Geneva, (Switzerland)

2006

This profile was commissioned by the Education for All Global Monitoring Report as background information to assist in drafting the 2007 Report. It has not been edited by the team. Information included in the series of profiles has been compiled by the IBE. In several cases data have been revised and/or expanded thanks to the helpful support of Ministries of Education and UNICEF offices worldwide. The views and opinions expressed in the present document are not necessarily those of the EFA Global Monitoring Report or UNESCO. The profile can be cited as follows: "Country Profile commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, Strong foundations: early childhood care and education". For further information, please contact: efareport@unesco.org

NICARAGUA

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

A. GENERAL INFORMATION, STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

Starting age of compulsory education (if applicable):

Education is compulsory for children aged seven to 12.

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

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programmes:

Preschool education.

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

Children aged three to six years.

1.3. ISCED 0 programmes: statistics and indicators (*source: UIS. Please include the most recent data if available*). *In general, data refer to 2002-03.*

1.3.1. Enrolment:

| | Percentage | Year |
|--|-----------------|------|
| Gross enrolment ratio | 32.5 (F = 32.5) | 2005 |
| Net enrolment ratio | 32.5 (F = 32.5) | 2005 |
| Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience (<i>estimate</i>) | 38.9 | |

Source: Ministry of Education, December 2005.

1.3.2. Enrolment ratio by age group, 2002/03 (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 |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------------------------|-----------|
| 12,201(***) | 21.3 | 40.0 | 58.7 | 9.6 | 0.0 |
| | | | 2.9(*) | 61.6 (2005) 55.5(**) | 79.9 (**) |

(*) Enrolled in primary education. (**) Primary education enrolment ratio. (***) Coverage of Integrated Provision Programme PAININ (Ministry of the Family (MIFAMILIA)).

Source: Ministry of Education, December 2005.

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) |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| 8,998 | 97 | 27.8 | 15.4 | 28.3 |

Source: Ministry of Education, December 2005.

1.3.4. Funding:

| | Percentage |
|---|-------------|
| Public current expenditure per pupil as percentage of the Gross National Product per capita | 0.66 (2004) |

Source: UIS.

1.3.5. Main source(s) of financing:

Apart from treasury funding, the main sources of financing are UNICEF, World Bank, IDB and cooperation from the Canadian and Danish Governments.

2. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMMES (Generally preceding ISCED 0 programmes)

2.1. National definition of other ECCE programmes:

An early education and preschool project is being implemented with financing from UNICEF. An integrated provision programme (PAININ) is being carried out through the Ministry of the Family (MIFAMILIA) with funding from IDB, and the project entitled "Learning at home" is to begin in 2006 with the support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

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

Under three (MIFAMILIA) and ages three to six (MECD and MIFAMILIA).

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

Coverage is provided for 2,411 children under six with technical and financial support from UNICEF and OEI, and PAININ covers 12,201 children under three.

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

3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:

Constitution of the Republic; Educational Participation Act; National Education Plan 2001-2015; basic and secondary education policies; Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD) common plan of work for 2005-2008.

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

Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD), through the Department of Preschool Education.

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.):

In Departments and Municipalities, MECD offices.

Non-formal preschool education is provided in urban, marginal urban and rural areas. It is aimed at broadening coverage and improving the quality of provision for children, and actively involves parents and the community.

Preschool communities operate in classrooms attached to primary schools, in community premises (such as community centres and children's kitchens) or in private homes. They are run by voluntary educators chosen by the community. This form is financed by the national treasury and by a number of international children's agencies.

Parents' circles and the children they cater to are monitored by field visitors selected by the community and supported by MECD/UNICEF/OEI.

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

Specialists, mobile field trainers, teachers and community educators.

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):

Primary teachers who work at the preschool level specialize through distance education packages, involving self-training modules, over an 11-month period.

Community educators must have completed the sixth grade of primary school. Many have a primary teacher qualification and some have completed the 11-month specialization in preschool education.

All receive training in methodological strategies and contents for the groups or programmes they are to work with (early education, preschool, adult education) in order to update and enhance their teaching and technical knowledge.

Preschool teachers in the formal sector must have a primary or preschool teaching qualification, a degree in preschool education, a bachelor's degree or teaching diploma (*maestro*) in primary education, or be a university student studying for a similar qualification.

Community educators, supervisors and mobile field trainers must be selected by the community and have gained the sixth grade diploma.

Under both arrangements, staff are selected for their commitment to children, drive to achieve and suitability for cooperative work.

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:

MECD currently has three policies that are based on the findings of an assessment of the education system. They basically target three areas:

- (1) educational reform: relevance and quality;
- (2) expansion of supply and stimulation of demand: access, adaptability and equity;
- (3) improvement of governance: participation, results, accountability and efficiency.

3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:

The UNICEF programme is aimed particularly at children in more vulnerable areas, through mobile field educators in the departments of the north of Nicaragua (Estelí, Madriz and Nueva Segovia).

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

- School readiness vacation project, which was implemented countrywide in 2005 for children aged six and seven who had no experience of preschool education. It aimed to build up their knowledge and stimulate the development of abilities and skills for entry to the first grade in 2006.
- Learning at home project, which will cover 720 families and impact directly on 3,600 children between the ages of 0 and eight over a three-year period, from 2005 to 2008.
- Project for low-income mothers, implemented through adult education circles.

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

3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

The purpose of preschool education is to contribute to children's physical, intellectual, emotional and moral development. Its general objectives are to:

- help to develop attitudes, abilities, skills and habits that are relevant and important for children aged three to six years in order to contribute to their full development;
- instil in children the ideals of love, respect and acceptance of themselves, their families, others and their country in order to aid social integration;
- integrate children with special education needs into different activities appropriate for their level of development in order to ensure proper and timely provision;
- strengthen the use of the mother tongue as a basic element of communication, encourage free expression and stimulate children's critical awareness and creativity, involving them in the culture of their immediate surroundings and other cultural environments;
- stimulate curiosity and interest in science and technology through systematic observation, exploration, learning and enquiry, and help children to participate actively in their contemporary world;
- provide children with experiences that facilitate autonomy and help to meet their needs and interests, gradually developing their personality and preparing them for systematic education at higher levels and for life situations;
- encourage children to develop attitudes conducive to the conservation, protection and rational use of the natural resources in their environment;
- promote knowledge and practice of the Rights of the Child among children themselves, in the family and in the community;
- empower the family and the community with regard to their educational role in order to ensure children's participation in preschool and thus promote their all-round development;
- teach children to take care of their physical health, respect their bodies, feelings and thoughts about themselves, and encourage them to develop an attitude of self-care, within the limits of their capabilities.

3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:

The Preschool Education Department coordinated the compilation of curricular guidelines known as the Multilevel Guide in order to provide methodological guidance and support for voluntary educators and teachers.

The Multilevel Guide is organized around six thematic lines of emphasis, which are integrated into five areas of development: socio-emotional, cognitive, psychomotor, expression and communication, and creativity. The cross-cutting themes are community participation, the Rights of the Child, integrated health, environmental education, education for work, education for peace and democracy, education for sexuality, love and coexistence and gender mainstreaming.

Work with preschoolers takes a constructivist approach, using active methodologies and play.

Institutions and agencies involved in education for children aged three to six use the Multilevel Guide and its supporting documents, which were drawn up on the basis of consensus procedures.

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

In the formal sector, five days per week, four hours per day, giving 20 hours per week.

In the community modality, 3.5 hours per day, giving a total of 17.5 hours per week.

In 2005, the school calendar had 212 working days and 200 teaching days.

3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information

Currently, the preschool, primary and secondary curricula are being reformed on the basis of educational competences. This will be piloted in 100 educational establishments during the 2006 school year. On Nicaragua's Caribbean coast, this effort is leading to the formation of a bilingual intercultural curriculum.

C. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION REGARDING ECCE (TO BE COMPILED IN COLLABORATION WITH UNICEF OFFICES WHERE POSSIBLE)

4.1. Parenting programmes are usually addressed to parents and families of children less than six years of age. Please provide information about any parenting programmes in your country according to 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 | Yes | 210 literacy circles in the departments of: Rivas: 45 Jinotega: 45 Madriz: 40 Nueva Segovia:20 Estelí: 20 Chinandega: 20 Chontales: 20 Beneficiaries: 3251 parents 2411 children 148 communities |
| As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits | Yes | Learning at home project, which is being implemented in three municipalities and covers 720 families with 3,600 children aged 0 to 8. |
| Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development | | No data |
| As component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes | | No data |
| Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with media for and with children | | No data |
| 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)

Yes, a project is now under way to strengthen literacy among low-income mothers, to help them to develop parenting skills and relate better to their children under the age of six.

The general objective is to strengthen literacy processes for mothers and other members of low-income families in order to build up better skills and experience in providing care and education for children under the age of six in Nicaragua.

With regional support from OEI, three training events have been held, involving 210 facilitators, 24 supervisors, 7 coordinators, 14 preschool technical staff and 35 parents.

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

Teachers and educators receive follow-up visits coordinated by departmental and municipal offices in order to monitor children's progress and the development of the abilities and skills needed to enter the first grade of primary school.

Teachers and educators conduct regular assessments to determine the children's progress with regard to learning achievements.

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

Yes, there is a National Education Plan. In addition, the General Education Act, which is now being approved, contains an article on early childhood education.

[Information revised by the Ministry of Education, December 2005.]