

Webinar Systematization: "Pathways to Educational Quality in Early Childhood: Standards, Teacher Training, and Pedagogical Practices"

On September 10, the third and last webinar of the **Knowledge Mobilization Cycle and Community of Practice "Use of Evidence for Early Childhood Education: Promoting Educational Justice from the Early Years in Latin America and the Caribbean"** was held, focusing on curricular frameworks, teacher training, and pedagogical practices. This cycle of dialogue, reflection, and learning focused on early childhood education, recognizing that quality education at this stage is fundamental for the holistic development of children. The discussions aimed to **contextualize the regional situation, identify the main challenges in the sector, and provide educational policy recommendations** grounded in both the comparative experience of Latin America and the Caribbean and international best practices.

The purpose of the webinar was to address the comprehensive improvement of the quality of early childhood education through three fundamental aspects: 1) the **strengthening of regulatory and curricular frameworks** that guarantee inclusive, equitable and culturally relevant trajectories; 2) the **promotion of teachers' professional development** through approaches that dignify the profession and articulate theoretical training with pedagogical practice; and 3) the **implementation of evidence-based pedagogical practices** that integrate public policies, intersectoral models, play and family and community participation. Based on these aspects, the webinar promoted the reflective analysis of national and international experiences to extract transferable lessons that enable the adaptation and scaling of strategies to improve the quality of education, tailored to the specific contexts and problems of each territory.

The session began with the words of **Raúl Chacón, Director of KIX LAC**, who reiterated the importance of early childhood education and thanked the countries for their active participation. He emphasized that, despite the progress shown by the region, significant gaps in coverage (influenced by socioeconomic and geographic aspects), infrastructure, pedagogical resources, and teacher training still need to be addressed. He mentioned that, through the current Knowledge Mobilization Cycle, [conversations on financing, regulatory frameworks, intersectoral collaboration, and the institutional framework of early childhood education](#) have been promoted throughout the year, as well as reflections and



actions focused on foundational learning and holistic development from early childhood. This was reflected in the last [KIX LAC-SUMMA Regional Meeting held in June 2025 in Antigua, Guatemala](#).

On the other hand, he stressed that KIX LAC-SUMMA proposes an inseparable triangle of quality, equity and inclusion, approached from a perspective of educational justice to narrow the gaps of the most disadvantaged groups, which requires relevant curricular frameworks, teacher training with an inclusive approach, and evidence-based pedagogical practices. He also emphasized that transforming systems, frameworks, and practices is a shared commitment that seeks collective action with a democratic approach to social justice.

At the conclusion of the session, **Florencio Ceballos, Program Officer at IDRC Canada and Senior Specialist in the KIX Program**, remarked on the need to address the complexity and multidimensionality of the challenges, bringing global experience and covering all aspects: teachers, curriculum, models, practices, and financing. He also mentioned the [GPE KIX report that systematizes learnings from early childhood research projects](#) (mainly in Africa), which confirms the importance of teacher training and professional development, community and parent participation, the role of civil society, equity, equality and inclusion from a social justice perspective, and the sustainability and scalability of programs.

Speakers and commentators:

- **Carlos Gonzalez-Sancho**, Policy Analyst, Early Childhood and Schools Division, OECD Directorate for Education and Skills.
- **Amanda Sherlip**, Executive Consultant; Director Emerita, Hands Across the Sea

Panelists on national and civil society experiences:

- **Brenda Borraro**, Head of Initial Level, Ministry of Education, Guatemala
- **Veda George**, Early Childhood Education Officer, Ministry of Education of Dominica
- **Alix Anson**, Rasmuss Foundation

Standards, curriculum frameworks and quality in early childhood education: global findings and lessons for action | Carlos González-Sancho, Policy Analyst, Early Childhood and Schools Division, Directorate for Education and Skills - OECD



The presentation began with a comprehensive reflection on the role of curriculum standards and frameworks as fundamental instruments for improving quality in early education, based on the [Starting Strong VI](#) (2021) and [Starting Strong VIII](#) (2025) reports that analyze the experiences of OECD countries in this area.

A crucial conceptual distinction was made between two dimensions of educational quality. On the one hand, **structural quality** encompasses more contextual factors such as the physical and human resources available in centers, adult/child ratios, group sizes, and educational qualifications of staff. On the other hand, **process quality**, which refers to factors more closely and directly related to children's daily experiences, particularly the interactions they establish with other children, educators, professionals, and their environment.

Through a meta-analysis conducted by the OECD, it was shown that although there is a well-documented positive relationship between structural quality and process quality, the evidence is much less conclusive regarding the direct impact of structural factors on children's development. In contrast, **the meaningful and valued interactions that children experience in centers constitute the real core of educational quality**, showing clear positive effects on the development of early literacy and basic math skills, although the evidence is less conclusive on social-emotional development.

Regarding the role of quality standards, understood as conceptual, normative, and evaluative frameworks that facilitate educational quality assurance, it was argued that these instruments fulfill multiple strategic functions. They consolidate the necessary political support for investments in the sector, allow resources and priorities to be strategically aligned, build a shared vision in both the education system and society on the importance of quality early childhood education, and help reduce differences in resources and purposes between services, promoting more uniform quality. For families, standards provide valuable information about the quality of centers and programs, facilitating their educational decisions.

A particularly relevant finding of the OECD research is the proposal to **combine universal approaches with specific adaptations** in the design of standards. This means that standards should be broad enough to cover aspects such as curriculum, professional qualifications, structural factors, and monitoring in a universal manner throughout the system, but at the same time they should allow flexibility for curricular adaptations to local contexts and different types of student groups. Based on this, it was emphasized that curricular frameworks are essential instruments for promoting quality interactions



because they give visibility to learning purposes, provide structure and logic for pedagogical action, harmonize practices and quality levels, inform families about what is happening in schools, and contribute to professionalizing and giving status to the role of early childhood educators.

Other relevant research findings revealed interesting patterns in the implementation of curriculum frameworks in different countries, which are shown below:

- Compulsory curricula are significantly **more prevalent in the 3-5 years (pre-primary) than in the 0-2 years**.
- About a quarter of the participating countries have **multiple co-existing curricula** for the same age group, and some countries have no curriculum frameworks at all, especially for the younger age groups.
- Curricula **evolve with age**, showing a natural progression from formulations based on general principles and values for the youngest children to traditional academic areas aligned with primary education for the older age groups.
- There is a **disparity in the monitoring** of these curricular frameworks. While in pre-primary education, there tends to be more rigorous follow-up through external assessments and regular monitoring practices, at younger ages curricula often exist without appropriate monitoring systems. Therefore, the importance of combining accountability purposes with quality improvement processes was emphasized, using various tools such as external inspections, observations, self-evaluations, and surveys in a balanced manner.
- There was a **growing trend toward self-evaluation** in its member countries, promoting a culture of continuous improvement that complements external evaluation processes. This approach requires providing advice and practical support to the centers so that they can develop the capacity to reflect critically on their practices and implement effective improvement plans.

Finally, some reflections specific to the Latin American context were raised:

1. The **need to align quality standards for early childhood education** within broader multisectoral strategies that involve not only the education sector, but also other sectors relevant to child development.
2. The **fundamental tension between expanding access to early childhood education and maintaining adequate levels of quality**, especially when sectoral growth is rapid and demand is high.



3. **Capacity challenges** both at the central level (ministries and agencies) for the effective use of evidence and data in monitoring, and at the local level (schools) for the implementation of critical reflection processes and improvement plans based on monitoring results.

Main ideas from the question and answer session

During the question and answer session, concerns about the implementation of quality frameworks in early childhood education in Latin America and the Caribbean were addressed. Consultations, for example, from participants from Argentina, Chile, Dominica and El Salvador, highlighted some current challenges: moving forward without ideal conditions, the role of universities, innovation management, cultural adaptation of curricula and public-private articulation. Based on these consultations, the speaker provided practical perspectives and stressed the importance of adopting gradual, flexible and context-sensitive approaches.

Transition towards approaches focused on process quality: It was emphasized that structural conditions are necessary, but not sufficient, to achieve educational quality. Countries can move in both directions simultaneously (improving structural conditions and process quality), but it is crucial to identify the minimum level of structural conditions that does not impede process quality. Perfect conditions are not required to begin; with adequate ratios and basic conditions, significant progress can be made towards process quality, which should always be the ultimate purpose.

Role of universities in educational quality: Higher education institutions have two fundamental functions: first, to generate research that documents and evidences quality problems, lack of compliance with purposes and needs for improvement; second, to align teacher training with established quality standards. It is essential that university programs to train early childhood educators be coherently aligned with curricular frameworks and quality standards, since there is no point in having excellent frameworks if professional training does not reflect them.

Evaluation, accountability and innovation: Accountability plays a crucial role in maintaining minimum levels of quality through mechanisms such as public funding and operational licensing. However, ministries must maintain flexibility to allow for local experimentation and innovation without compromising basic standards. It is essential to rigorously evaluate these innovative practices and, when successful, to disseminate them as good practices. The balance lies in maintaining general evaluation frameworks while allowing room for contextualized improvement processes.



Cultural adaptation and diversity in curriculum frameworks: Adapting curriculum frameworks to culturally diverse contexts is possible without compromising core pedagogical purposes. The key is to combine universal approaches with local curricular adaptability, allowing for variation in content, cultural references, use of diverse languages and specific contexts, while maintaining the fundamental learning purposes. This adaptation requires explicit recognition of diverse realities, avoiding artificially egalitarian frameworks that ignore cultural diversity.

Articulation between the State and NGOs: Effective collaboration between the public sector and non-governmental organizations requires dialogue to establish consensus on central educational quality purposes. Curriculum frameworks and standards should apply to all segments of the education system, regardless of their organizational nature. Balance is achieved when there is agreement on broad quality purposes at the central level, combined with local operational autonomy. This process of building social consensus requires time and continuous dialogue among all stakeholders in the education sector.

To see the complete presentation, click on this [link](#) (minute 15:00 to minute 55:00).

Panel of national and civil society experiences: Implementation of standards, inclusion and teacher professional development in diverse contexts

I. Brenda Borrayo, Head of Early Childhood Education, Ministry of Education Guatemala

The panelist explained how Guatemala is taking steps towards comprehensive early childhood care, facing a historical social debt. Her experience revealed the challenges of changing deep-rooted cultural perceptions about child care, since traditionally the Guatemalan population conceives early childhood care only as physical care (protection from falls and blows) rather than holistic education.

She commented that the country developed its first national early childhood curriculum in 2008, but experienced an impasse until 2019, when they implemented a community-based program. However, evaluations revealed that this program, based on volunteer mothers, was not generating a positive impact on child development and in some regions was even affecting it negatively. This reality led to a profound restructuring of the approach.



Currently, Guatemala is implementing a cross-sectoral strategy called "[Mano a mano](#)", which combines basic infrastructure (access to drinking water and housing improvement) with educational intervention. One of their biggest challenges is the lack of trained personnel for early childhood care, so they created a virtual diploma with three courses, focusing especially on the adaptation of materials for rural communities where Spanish is a second language and reading levels are low.

They have developed a virtual monitoring system and, since 2023, they have a holistic early childhood care policy that facilitates intersectoral work with clear goals in health, care and education. They are managing the provision of children's libraries and designing minimum infrastructure for safe spaces for groups of approximately 20 children.

In terms of cultural diversity, the Guatemalan curriculum establishes cross-cutting themes that ensure care in the mother tongue, regional and cultural contextualization processes, and considers gender equity and care for populations with disabilities under an inclusive approach. The model of care being designed contemplates different modalities: community (current), direct (care centers) and for specific populations such as children in detention centers with their mothers, hospitalized, or in situations of internal or external migration.

II. Veda George, Early Childhood Education Officer, Ministry of Education of Dominica

The panelist shared the experience of Dominica, noting that initially early childhood education was developed by the Roman Catholic Church, but since 2003, the focus changed significantly when the Education Act of 1997 was amended to include early childhood education (0-4 years) before the formal start of education at age 5.

A key milestone was the implementation of universal access to early childhood education since 2012, following the model already achieved in primary and secondary education. The strategy consisted of annexing a pre-kindergarten to each government elementary school, taking advantage of existing spaces that were improved or building new facilities. Currently, they have already managed to build seven new pre-schools and the purpose is for each government elementary school to have its own attached pre-school.

For monitoring purposes, they established the Preschool Development Committee, inspired by previous successful experience, which functions as a subcommittee of the National Parent-Teacher Association. They also created an Early Childhood Development



Unit with specific positions: early childhood coordinator, assistant for early stimulation (0-2 years) and another for early education (3-4 years).

Since 2016, they have institutionalized the Itinerant Caregivers Program, where professionals go to homes providing early stimulation from 3 months to before preschool entry. Although the government encourages public-private partnerships, they recognize that they still do not have government day care centers.

Finally, she commented that they adopted the [High Scope](#) preschool curriculum with UNICEF support since 2008, which focuses on participatory-active learning. Teachers are trained through a four-year certificate program in partnership with the University of the West Indies, where they earn certificates upon completion of each course that contribute to contract renewal. The curriculum allows the use of local languages, facilitating the transition to English as a second language.

III. Alix Anson, Rassmuss Foundation

The panelist presented the work of the Rassmuss Foundation, which began by focusing on first and second grade in Chile in 2018, but during the pandemic, they discovered that their multisensory methodology worked effectively with younger children when they created an animated television program that reached younger audiences than expected.

Their approach is based on early brain architecture inspired by the Harvard Child Development Center, using methods that make learning fun, engaging, multisensory, structured, cumulative and hands-on activities. The key innovation is to visually connect letters with sounds by matching images to the shape of the letters, facilitating connections between both brain hemispheres.

Their methodology reduces the memory load by presenting one connection at a time until it is well cemented, with each multisensory activity adding "knots" to strengthen the connection. They provide simple, structured routines for teachers of different abilities, allowing flexibility and creativity while maintaining consistency. In the Caribbean, they co-developed all resources with local teachers to ensure cultural relevance, adapting specific vocabulary. They have created "bridge" resources to facilitate the transition from kindergarten to first grade, working on executive function skills: concentration, working memory, cognitive flexibility and distraction inhibition.

Regarding assessment, she highlighted its complexity due to the diversity of contexts and needs, stressing the importance of maintaining relevant data and simple routines that



balance structure and creativity. He explained that in Chile they developed the "superteachers skills", which are linked to the 12 teaching standards of the Chilean education system, which are observed in the classroom by mentors to identify strengths and areas for improvement and offer personalized support. He also presented the individual reading assessment, where school teams listen to children read weekly, an essential practice considering that 30% of Chilean families do not have books at home. He also stressed the impact of family support, citing studies that show how listening to a child read daily significantly multiplies his or her exposure to vocabulary, so they promote strategies that are accessible to the home.

All resources related to this initiative are freely available online ([Alfadeca](#) in Chile, [Jumpstart](#) in the Caribbean) and emphasize the importance of including families, as it has been shown that listening to a child read daily multiplies by 63 the number of words they will have heard by the age of 5. Finally, WhatsApp communities are also used to share best practices among teachers, promoting continuous collaborative learning.

To see the full panel, click on this [link](#) (minute 55:00 to time 1:55).

Early Literacy from Home and Community | Amanda Sherlip, Executive Consultant; Director Emeritus, Hands Across the Sea

Amanda Sherlip joined Hands Across the Sea in June 2020, during the pandemic, as director of this U.S. NGO that originally distributed children's books in the Eastern Caribbean. In evaluating existing programs, she determined that simply distributing books did not generate significant behavioral change, so she developed the Early Pages program, focused on early literacy for children ages 0-5.

The Early Pages program was piloted in Grenada and Nevis for two years with three essential components:

1. **Creation of an explicitly literacy-rich environment in the preschool setting**, where literacy is woven into all aspects of the educational experience.
2. **Developing active parental involvement**, not just engagement, but real involvement where parents become active participants in what happens in the classroom.
3. **Building community engagement**, taking advantage of the fact that community and celebration are a fundamental part of Caribbean life, represents a unique and valuable opportunity.



The program uses the High Scope curriculum, seeking to contextualize and simplify it for teachers through training and ongoing support. As such, one book per month is used with structured action plans that are aligned with the expectations of the High Scope curriculum. On the other hand, high-quality books are provided and children are encouraged to model reading at home, taking on illiteracy or parental apathy. Results have shown active participation at home, even by parents of children who have already graduated. Social, cognitive and behavioral growth is also observed in the children.

The program also addresses cultural and linguistic aspects specific to the Caribbean context, explicitly honoring bilingualism while clarifying that children must understand in which language they are reading to improve their comprehension. This differentiation between domestic and academic language use is crucial for effective literacy development.

Finally, it was emphasized that the program has been intentionally designed to be scalable and is intended to become an open-access resource, with Grenada already discussing integrating the program into its early childhood policy review. Its philosophy stresses the importance of using global best practices while maintaining alignment with global and regional visions, but always adapting to local context and culture to leverage the best results.

To view the full presentation click on this [link](#) (time 1:55 to time 2:11).

Final thoughts

The webinar underscored the fundamental importance of quality early childhood education, recognizing it as a multidimensional process that is crucial for the holistic development of children. The challenges in the region are significant, including gaps in coverage, infrastructure limitations, the need to strengthen teacher training and a social conception that still prioritizes traditional care over early childhood education. To address these challenges, an inseparable triangle of quality, equity and inclusion was emphasized, promoting relevant and contextualized curricular frameworks that guide evidence-based pedagogical practices and promote continuous teacher training that recognizes and values diversity. The discussion highlighted that the core of quality lies in meaningful interactions between children, educators and the environment, complemented by the active participation of families and the community in the creation of literacy and learning-rich environments. Finally, the need for comprehensive and coherent monitoring



and evaluation systems that combine accountability with continuous improvement was highlighted, as well as the importance of collective action and partnerships between the state, academia and civil society to transform systems and ensure that all children, regardless of their origin or context, have the same opportunities for holistic development from early childhood.



Annex:

Shared documents (you can find them [here](#))

OECD

- Engaging Young Children: Lessons from Research about Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care
- Starting Strong VI: Supporting Meaningful Interactions in Early Childhood Education and Care
- Reducing Inequalities by Investing in Early Childhood Education and Care
- PPT: Standards, Curriculum Frameworks and Quality in Early Childhood Education: An OECD Perspective

Ministry of Education of Dominica

- Early Childhood Education Regulations – Arrangement of Regulations
- Council on Early Childhood Education – Statutory Rules and Orders

Ministry of Education of Guatemala

- Public Policy for the Integral Development of Early Childhood 2024–2044

Rasmuss Foundation

- Rasmuss Foundation Summary
- Alfadeca. Book A
- Alfadeca. Bridge Book
- Jumpstart. Leap into Learning – Vincy. Book 3

