Introduction and Policy History

The fault lines that define early childhood education policy and divide the early childhood education field have been evident in the United States for hundreds of years (Beatty, 1997). Should it be a public or private responsibility? Should it be part of the public schools? Is the primary goal child care or education? Should programs focus on children in poverty or serve all children? Can states be trusted to administer federally funded programs? Ambivalence and differences of opinion about the answers to these questions have shaped early childhood policy from colonial times and continue to do so today (Beatty, 1997; Cahan, 1989; Karch, 2013). As policy has evolved, it has intensified the divisions within the field, perhaps making them more difficult to resolve. As a result, there is no single early childhood care and education (ECCE) workforce. Instead, there are three (or four) distinct workforces.

Federal and state policies have combined to create three broadly separate early childhood sectors: Head Start, child care, and public education. The last can be subdivided into regular and special education. Head Start is a federal program that makes grants directly to local organizations; while most of these are private nonprofits, some are public schools. Child care is largely provided by private organizations (for profit as well as nonprofit) and individuals in homes and centers as well as by family, friends, and neighbors. Public education includes kindergarten through grade three, and includes both regular education and special education for children with disabilities. Nearly all public education, beginning at kindergarten, is provided in public schools. Special education is an entitlement under federal and state law for children that begins at age three. Preschool education for children without disabilities is a more recent, and complicated, development.

Although the title of this chapter refers to the workforce, the focus of this chapter is on teachers. We define a teacher as the adult in charge of an individual classroom. We recognize that there are other members of the early childhood workforce. Teacher assistants are common in many preschool classrooms, and we devote a section to them. Administrators, other support staff, and the many informal providers of education to young children are beyond the scope of this chapter. We discuss only the numbers of these other members of the workforce to provide a context to understand the data on teachers.

The separate early childhood sectors have changed over time with respect to the numbers and characteristics of teachers and other staff, and they continue to evolve. Including kindergarten through grade 3 (K-3) teachers of children, the largest sector today is public education. This is followed by child care, with Head Start now the smallest sector. Even if only teachers for children under age 5...
were to be considered, it is likely that the number of teachers is larger in public education than in Head Start. This would not have been true a decade ago. As public education has grown, it also has blurred the fault lines that define these sectors.

Although we continue to treat these four sectors as distinct, programs are being blended, and the distinctions between public and private education and child care are becoming blurred. This creates problems for defining and identifying the early childhood workforces. Some teachers belong to more than one group. The extent to which these workforces will merge in the future or just continue to be blurred around the edges is a central topic of our chapter. A number of recent federal and state policy developments can be seen as efforts to bridge the fault lines that have led to fractured policy. However, we begin by considering policy in each of these sectors separately and discussing the implications of each for teachers.

**Child Care and the Private Sector**

Young children participate in a wide range of privately provided care and education from the first year of life into the school years (including before- and after-school care). Many of these arrangements are informal and provided by family and friends, often without financial compensation. Public policy influences these services and their workforces through funding and regulation. Historically, most of these services have been viewed as child care that was the responsibility of the family. Help for families in obtaining such services was regarded as charity. The U.S. government's role was extremely limited, with the exception of during WWII when the provision of child care was seen as necessary to bring women into the labor force to support the war effort. Consistent with this tradition, Congress enacted a small tax deduction for low-income families in 1954.

Since then, child care policy has been shaped as much by failures as by successes. Attempts to develop comprehensive approaches to federal regulation and funding of early care and education for all children have failed, beginning with the Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971 (Karch, 2013). Broad support for the Act and subsequent attempts foundered on an inability to agree on the role of public schools, state control, and early education as a child's right. Instead, child care policy moved forward primarily through an expansion of tax credits and as a welfare program. Under these policies, the public schools have no role, education is not a priority, and parents are given maximum discretion by limiting state authority. The primary federal role is to provide funding to lower income families, and child care quality is not regulated at the federal level. State regulations have focused largely on health, safety, and the role of child care as a welfare program rather than a form of education.

Judged by funding amounts, the most substantial federal and state child care policies are subsidies, tax credits, and the Child Care Food Program (Barnett & Haskins, 2010). In theory, these policies should raise the quality of care by increasing the funds available. In addition, associated regulations might raise quality. However, the vast majority of subsidies have been distributed through vouchers that can be used for any form of care, including kith and kin home-based care that is subject to little or no regulation (Adams & Rohacek, 2002). The net effects of subsidy and regulation are debated, particularly the extent to which they have increased or reduced the availability of center-based programs in low-income communities and whether or not they have improved or harmed the development of children (Hawkinson, Griffen, Dong, & Maynard, 2013; Herbst & Tekin, 2010; Hotz & Xiao, 2011; Ryan, Johnson, Rigby, & Brooks-Gunn, 2011). There is some evidence that subsidies have increased the use of licensed care and center care (Ryan et al., 2011).

It is hardly surprising that the child care sector has the lowest level of quality and highest rate of teacher turnover compared to Head Start and public education (Bassok, Fitzpatrick, Greenberg, & Loeb, 2013). Low wages and poor benefits contribute to ill health, depression, poverty, turnover, and little investment in ongoing professional development (Ryan & Whitebook, 2012). The characteristics of the workforce make it difficult for teachers to provide a highly supportive, developmentally
enriching experience for young children, especially those who experience the same stresses of growing up in poverty (Institute of Medicine [IOM] & National Research Council [NRC], 2012).

**Head Start**

Head Start was launched in 1965 as part of Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty (Zigler & Valentine, 1979). The program had broad goals and has been viewed as a tool for community development and political mobilization as well as a child development program. Eligibility for Head Start was primarily defined by the federal poverty line, with exceptions for up to 10 percent of the total served (for example, children with disabilities or in foster care do not have to be in poverty). With its broad goals, the program emphasized: parent education and training, direct employment of parents, comprehensive health and social services, and supporting the development of the whole child. Most programs operate only for a part day and more than a quarter only serve children four days a week. Those that meet families’ needs for child care do so by providing these services with other funding streams.

Head Start’s political fortunes have waxed and waned over its 50-year history. It began as a massive summer program during its first year, but later shrank as the summer option was eliminated in favor of the school-year model. After experiencing substantial enrollment growth in the 1990’s, the program leveled off to enroll a little over 900,000 three- and four-year-old children a year. After more than 50 years, it is notable that Head Start still reaches less than half the eligible population. Nearly 2 million children are in poverty in this age range, and many children in Head Start live in households above the federal poverty line (poverty status changes for many after program entry). Recently, Head Start has been expanded to serve children under age 3 rather than to expand enrollment in the two years prior to kindergarten.

Head Start began with virtually no requirements for teacher qualifications and the provision of very brief training. As with other sectors, Head Start was heavily influenced by the popular notion that formal education was not required to teach young children. In addition, the rush to implement the program on a massive scale from the beginning and the imperatives of imparting maximum control to local communities and maximizing parental employment were obstacles to formal educational requirements. Justified as a political necessity to maintain support for the program, it ultimately backfired as one evaluation after another later found Head Start to be weakly effective in providing a good education (Barnett, 2011a; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). Expert advice at the time from Jerome Bruner, Frances Degen Horowitz, and others stating that the program as designed was unlikely to succeed in providing a good education to young children was ignored (Rose, 2010; Zigler & Valentine, 1979).

Gradually, Head Start teacher qualifications have increased. However, until very recently, regulations required only a Child Development Associate’s credential for lead teachers in classrooms. Such a policy was consistent with the program’s broad mandate but modest budget, and its continued emphasis on hiring adults in low-income communities who were in need of jobs, especially parents. As recently as 1997, almost half of the teachers had no education beyond high school, and about half of center directors and teachers had been Head Start parents (Barnes, Guevara, Garcia, Levin, & Connell, 1999). By 2004, 70 percent of Head Start teachers had at least an associate’s degree, with more than half of these having a bachelor’s degree (Center for Law and Social Policy [CLASP], 2014).

In the 2007 Reauthorization of Head Start, Congress required all teachers to have at least an associate’s degree by the 2011–2012 year and 50 percent to have a bachelor’s degree by fall of 2013. The degrees must relate to early childhood education or include additional coursework in early childhood education. By 2012, 93 percent of Head Start teachers had at least an associate’s degree and 62 percent had at least a bachelor’s degree. Unfortunately, Congress did not dedicate increased funding to raise compensation to levels comparable to those that higher degrees would earn in the public schools or other fields. Salaries and benefits remain far below those of teachers in public schools with similar degrees.
The low salaries of Head Start teachers raise several concerns. The average Head Start teacher salary in 2012 was $29,650 (Office of Head Start, 2014). This is basically what was required to keep up with inflation from the average Head Start teacher salary in 2004 of $24,221 (CLASP, 2014) without any increase to account for the improvement in degree levels. Low salaries also give rise to higher turnover and may contribute to the fact that more than one-third of Head Start teachers report symptoms of mild to severe depression (Aikens et al., 2011).

Early Head Start was created in 1994 to provide comprehensive child and family development services to low-income children under age 3 and pregnant women. Early Head Start enrollment was quite modest, with about 60,000 prior to 2010. In 2012–2013, the program enrolled about 110,000 (because of turnover, cumulative enrollment was about 165,000 including 150,000 children). About half of the children served attend center-based programs. To put this number in context, about 3 million children under age 3 are in poverty, and Early Head Start reaches less than 4 percent of that number. Nearly 60 percent of Early Head Start classroom teachers have at least an associate’s degree, and nearly 30 percent have a bachelor’s (Office of Head Start, 2014). Early Head Start teacher salaries averaged $25,495 in 2012; they were lower than those of Head Start teachers because of lower average qualifications (Office of Head Start, 2014).

**Public Education**

Public education includes several subsectors of the early childhood workforce. These include teachers grades K–3, preschool special education, and state-funded pre-K programs (which are not always in public schools). In addition, public schools provide some preschool programs outside of state-funded pre-K at their own discretion, though data on these programs are not systematically collected. The largest group of these teachers is in kindergarten through grade three classrooms.

About 1 million early childhood teachers serve in kindergarten through grade 3 (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2014). These teachers are essentially integrated into the K–12 workforce and have more in common with their colleagues than with teachers of younger children. However, until relatively recently, kindergarten teachers would not have been included in this group. The Kindergarten Movement in the United States began in the 1800s, but it was a very long time before kindergarten became a widely accepted part of public education. In the early 1960s, about 70 percent of children attended kindergarten, and public kindergarten enrolled around 50 percent of children at age 5 (Tanner & Tanner, 1973; United States Census Bureau, 1966). By 1975, about 75 percent of children attended public kindergarten. It was barely 25 years ago that kindergarten reached near universal enrollment.

The incorporation of kindergarten into the public school brought kindergarten teachers into the K–12 teaching force. Today they have qualifications and compensation comparable to those of other teachers in the primary grades. These are quite different from those in other sectors. The entry level educational qualification expected of all teachers is a bachelor’s or higher degree. Public school teachers also must obtain a state license, or certification. How policy continues to develop regarding the preparation of K–12 teachers is beyond the scope of this chapter. Our primary point is that full inclusion of kindergarten into the public school system was a route to professionalization of kindergarten teachers including their preparation.

State-funded pre-K is much more diverse than other parts of public education. Although most are administered by state education agencies, some are under other agencies, and many are jointly administered with human services (Barnett, Carolan, Squires, & Horowitz, 2013). Provision is often through a mixed delivery system that includes the private sector and Head Start, as well as the public schools. Most teachers in state-funded pre-K are not fully integrated into the public education system. Even when working in public school buildings, preschool teachers do not always have the same qualifications, status, and compensation as other public school teachers, though they are paid much better...
on average than teachers in state-funded pre-K programs in the private sector and the other sectors generally (Barnett et al., 2013; Bassok, Fitzpatrick, Loeb, & Paglayan, 2013). The pay advantage for preschool teachers in public schools compared to state-funded preschool outside the public schools or private programs generally was about 60 percent (Barnett et al., 2013; NIEER, 2014; NSECE Project Team, 2013; Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). The continued outsider status of preschool with respect to public education is evident within the state-funded pre-K sector. In some states pre-K is essentially part of public schooling, even if provided by private providers contracting with public schools (Barnett et al., 2013). Here preschool teachers have preparation, working conditions, and pay comparable to that of K-12 teachers. In some states, a mixed delivery system results in a split workforce, with teachers in contracted private providers having lower levels of qualifications (often an associate’s degree) and lower levels of compensation (Barnett et al., 2013). In yet other states, qualifications requirements are low for all teachers, but where preschool is administered by public schools at the local level, preschool teachers may have the same qualifications and compensation as other teachers.

In 1986, the provision of intervention services to children with a delay or disability under the age of 5 and their families became a national policy. Currently, all states and eligible territories participate in early intervention for children from birth to age 2 (early intervention) and preschool special education. Preschool special education teachers have largely followed kindergarten teachers into the public education system. Federal legislation incentivized, supported, and eventually required the provision of a free appropriate public education to all children ages 3 to 5 with disabilities (Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000). The preschool special education workforce is relatively small, with about 24,000 teachers (BLS, 2014). Their qualifications and compensation are comparable to that of other teachers in the public schools. The Division of Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children has developed standards for the preparation of teachers in partnership with the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and worked with the accreditation organizations for teacher preparation programs (Klein & Gilkerson, 2000; Lifter et al., 2011). These efforts appear to have had greater success in influencing higher education programs than shaping state requirements.

Annual funding to each state for early intervention is based upon census figures of the number of children, birth through age 2, in the general population. Federal fiscal support via formula grants to states exceeded $419 million annually in 2013 (Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center [ECTAC], 2014a), with roughly 350,000 infants and toddlers, or just under 3 percent of the population aged birth through 2, served. Improved access has been a great success of early intervention, but the percentage of those served can vary by state by as much as 5 percent. This can suggest that there are substantial numbers of infants and toddlers who are identified for services in some states and are not being identified in others (Hebbeler, Spiker, & Kahn, 2012). While other early childhood programs have used Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) to measure, report, and improve quality, nothing comparable exists for early intervention (Spiker, Hebbeler, & Barton, 2011). Collecting outcome data on children participating in early intervention is relatively new, with a start in 2007, and many states continue to work on the quality of these data collected. However, what has been collected demonstrates children achieving more growth than would have been expected without intervention (ECTAC, 2014b). Work is still needed on the transition between the two programs of early intervention and preschool special education.

Summary Description of the Current Workforces

Burton et al. (2002) estimated 2.3 million people are paid to provide early care and education, with roughly 24 percent working in center-based programs, 28 percent working in family child care programs, and the majority of individuals working as family, friend, and neighbor caregivers. More recently, and similarly, the National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2013) published information from surveys in 2012 with an estimate of 1 million paid staff in home-based programs

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and 1 million in center-based programs. Somewhat less than 450,000 of these are identified as lead teachers. Other estimates have been somewhat higher (IOM & NRC, 2012). Center-based programs show 6 percent in school-sponsored centers, 14 percent in Head Start, 21 percent in public pre-K programs, and 59 percent in “other centers, all remaining programs offering ECE” (p. 9). Although these reports provide a general look at the landscape, there are several challenges in identifying and accurately describing the early childhood care and education workforces (Rhodes & Huston, 2012).

The ECCE workforces vary in location (homes, houses of worship, centers, public schools), funding source (tuition, subsidies, state or federal dollars), and licensing status (licensed or unlicensed). Responsibilities and expectations for the workforces also vary from providing basic safety and care (feeding, dressing, etc.) to implementing high-level educational goals (implementing a research-based curriculum, individualizing instruction based on assessment, etc.). Data systems are generally maintained separately by sector (child care, Head Start, state pre-K programs) causing difficulties in aggregating the information for a complete picture of the workforce landscape. Additionally, imperfect labor categories in federal data systems often group preschool teachers with kindergarten teachers, and within the child care sector, teachers may not be distinguished from assistants. This makes even a basic description of education, wages, qualifications, knowledge, and beliefs difficult to produce.

Nevertheless, we provide a brief comparative description by sector of center-based teachers of children under age 5 as an aid to understanding the impacts of past policies and future policy improvements. As noted earlier, this is about 500,000 teachers, which is roughly half the number employed in K-3. The characteristics and preparation of teachers of older children are extensively addressed elsewhere (Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, McIntyre, & Demers, 2008; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2010; Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996).

The Importance of the Teacher

Early childhood teachers are working with children at the most critical and impressionable stages of children’s development (Kagan, Kauerz, & Tarrant, 2008). Genetic studies indicate that although genetics can account for some development, a larger percentage of variability in skills is open to interventions. ECCE has the opportunity to provide the experiences necessary to support learning at this critical point of rapid brain development. The science of teaching and learning affords us a strong understanding of the types of experiences young children need. However, the complexity of the delivery of these experiences is sophisticated and teachers in these roles need extensive training and support to do so effectively (Dickinson, 2011).

Kagan et al. (2008) describe the specific demands placed upon teachers of young children. They note that teachers are responsible for all domains of young children’s development; they need to attend to children’s different learning styles, meet the needs of individual learners, and understand theoretical and practical pedagogy as they interact with the children. Teachers must wear the hats of teacher, researcher, and advocate as they enhance the learning outcomes of children. To be effective, early education teachers must have a strong knowledge base of content and child development. They must understand the role of culture and the value of family engagement. They need to assess children, deliver curriculum, and be intentional in their teaching and interacting with children. There are also high professional and moral expectations.

Challenges to a High-Quality Workforce

Given the demands of early education for highly intellectual, well-educated personnel, we see a serious mismatch between the demands and responsibilities of this workforce and the professional preparation, support, and compensation afforded those who work with children under age 5 (Whitebook & Ryan, 2011; Kagan et al., 2008). In the next part of this chapter, we discuss three interrelated
challenges for recruiting, developing, supporting, and maintaining a high-quality workforce. These
three challenges relate to compensation, education, and training. All three challenges are rooted in a
fundamental economic problem. Current levels of funding (public and private) severely limit three
things: (1) teacher compensation, (2) the pay-off to teachers and the organizations in which they work
from investing in education and training, and (3) the desirability of staying in the preschool classroom
as teachers acquire greater skills and experience.

For two reasons, this fundamental economic problem is more severe in the preschool years than
at older ages and becomes even more severe among teachers of younger children. First, as the age of
child falls, the staff-child ratio that is considered appropriate increases, which raises the cost per child
(National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies [NACCCRA], 2011). Second,
as the age of the child falls, the extent to which the public believes anyone (or, at least, any woman)
can perform the work with no specialized education or training rises. Preschool special education is
an exception, as it has come to be viewed as requiring highly specialized skills and knowledge. Kind-
gerden for children at age 5 was viewed this way prior to its incorporation into public education
(Child Care Aware of America, 2013).

Compensation

To the extent that the teaching of young children is viewed as requiring no preparation to acquire
specialized skills and knowledge, teachers in the formal sector essentially compete with workers in the
informal sector. This severely limits pay. Yet, even if public attitudes change there remains the problem
that a higher ratio of teachers to children is more expensive. For infants, the appropriate ratios may
be 1 to 3 or 4 children. For preschoolers, this is commonly 10 children or less, though staffed by a
teacher and an assistant rather than two co-teachers. Compare this to K-3, where teachers commonly
have many more children and do not have an assistant.

There is relatively little research regarding the relationship of higher wages with lower turnover,
better classroom practices, and outcomes for children, and the existing results are mixed (Early et al.,
2007; Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). Evidence regarding teacher compensation is similarly mixed for
K-12 education, but it is difficult to eliminate confounding factors in such studies (Darling-Hammond,
Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2012). The basic principles of
supply and demand dictate that better compensation would permit the hiring and retention of better
teachers (Barnett, 2003). It is difficult for the ECCE workforces to have sustained commitment to
the field if not compensated in a manner reflective of the importance of their work and the demands
placed upon them.

Wages for early childhood workers overall are relatively low. In 2009 American Community Sur-
vey data showed that 61 percent of full-time workers in ECCE occupations earned less than $22,000
per year, approximately the federal poverty level for a family of four (USGAO, 2012). Teaching
assistants averaged $13,000 and preschool teachers averaged $18,000. However, there is considerable
variation across workforces, as previously discussed (NSECE Project Team, 2013). Teachers in K-3 are
the best paid and teachers in public pre-K are next, followed at quite a distance by teachers in Head
Start and then teachers in private sector preschool programs. Differences in fringe benefits contribute
even greater disparities between those in public and private programs.

There is additional diversity within the public pre-K sector. Preschool special education teachers
are on par with primary school teachers. Teachers in state-funded programs receive quite different
salaries from state to state and even within states (Barnett, Epstein, Friedman, Sansanelli, & Hustedt,
2009). While seven states require the same pay and qualifications regardless of whether state pre-K
is provided in public schools or private programs, others have different standards for the qualifications
and pay of teachers in the two settings. In state pre-K programs able to report salary ranges for pre-K
teachers in public settings, 83 percent were paid less than $50,000; in nonpublic settings, 88 percent
were below that figure. The median salary range for teachers in public school settings was $40,000 to $44,999, while in private settings the range was $30,000 to $34,999. Knowledge about compensation in state-funded pre-K is limited, as most states could not even report data on pay range.

Assistant teachers are paid even more poorly than teachers (NSECE Project Team, 2013). Although the majority of states could not report data on salaries of assistant teachers, the available data indicate that assistants generally are paid at quite low levels even in state-funded pre-K. In the 2008–2009 state pre-K program survey, no program reported an average starting salary for an assistant teacher above the $25,000 to $30,000 range (Barnett et al., 2009). Across public and nonpublic settings, the most commonly reported pay range for assistants was $15,000–$24,999.

**Educational Preparation**

The National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2013) reports data that showed more than half of center-based classroom teachers had some level of college degree with one quarter having four-year degrees and 9 percent having a graduate or professional degree. The home-based staff reported less educational attainment than the center-based staff, about 30 percent with college degrees. Interestingly, these data show that the educational attainment differs for teachers of older versus younger children. Educational attainment was higher for those serving children ages 3 through 5 than for those serving younger children.

The National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER, 2014) conducted a national survey of over 2,500 lead teachers of 3- and 4-year-old children in 2011. The vast majority of teachers reported at least an associate’s degree. In public preschools, 41 percent of teachers held bachelor’s degrees and 47 percent held master’s degrees or higher. Forty-nine percent of Head Start teachers reported a bachelor’s degree, with 20 percent reporting master’s degrees or higher. Thirty-eight percent of teachers in private centers held bachelor’s degrees, but only 14 percent had master’s degrees or higher. However, there are great differences in auspice when looking at those teachers with high school degrees, some college, or less. Here, private centers had 24 percent of teachers in this degree category while there were 4 percent in public preschools and 5 percent in Head Start.

Over time, qualifications requirements have increased for the early childhood workforces, including preschool teachers. The National Association for the Education of Young Children is among the organizations that have advocated for this change (Willer, Lutton, & Ginsberg, 2011). Government also has increased its requirements for teachers of older preschoolers. Data from 2012–2013 show 57 percent of state pre-K programs require a bachelor’s degree to teach in state-funded preschool, up from 45 percent in 2001–2002 (Barnett et al., 2013). Additionally, Head Start has consistently increased the education requirements for its workforce over time. These requirements explain the high percentage of degreed teachers. However, researchers caution that a bachelor’s degree alone without other considerations may not be sufficient (Barnett, 2011b; Bowman, 2011).

More generally, there is a lack of agreement among researchers about the value of requiring that preschool teachers have preservice educational requirements comparable to those of primary school teachers. Those who have advocated for higher educational qualifications have limited this to teachers of children ages 2 and above (Burns, Donovan, & Bowman, 2000). Others oppose even this requirement (Fuller, 2011). Some researchers have concluded that inservice training is much more effective and might even serve as the primary route for preschool teacher preparation (Pianta, 2011). This might be accomplished through a certification for acquired training or competencies (Kagan et al., 2008).

Among those who advocate for a bachelor’s degree, there appears to be an emerging consensus on several points. There is a general agreement that the empirical links between teacher degree attainment and observed quality or child academic gains have been weak across the literature as a whole.
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(Burchinal, Hyson, & Zaslow, 2011; Tout, Zaslow, & Berry, 2005). However, researchers also have pointed to many reasons that the bachelor’s degree—properly implemented and compensated—may be one important component of ECCE teacher preparation nevertheless (Bowman, 2011; Barnett, 2011b; Burchinal et al., 2011; Kagan & Gomez, 2011). These same authors concur that a bachelor’s alone is not sufficient to prepare highly effective teachers and that the content of bachelor’s degree preparation for teachers currently is far from ideal and much too variable (Bowman, 2011; Kagan & Gomez, 2011). It also is recognized that preschools involve teaching teams that include other workers as well as teachers and that the quality of teaching depends on all team members, so that the preparation and training of administrators and assistants also requires attention (Willer et al., 2011).

The acquisition of higher education requirements for early childhood teachers including degrees and certifications are complicated by low wages in the field. Often, early childhood teachers can be deterred from advancing in their field with further education due to the cost of these schooling and training requirements or opportunities in relation to their wages. This returns us to the fundamental economic problem. One proposed solution is to increase ratios, allowing for increased compensation without increasing the budget. This is essentially the approach taken in the French École Maternelle (Peer & Burbank, 2004).

Another proposed remedy is the use of scholarship programs to award funds to ECCE workers to cover the costs of such higher education or training. Wage incentives and subsidies have yielded modest improvements in education and training (Bridges, Fuller, Huang, & Hamre, 2011). One such program, the T.E.A.C.H.™ Early Childhood Project, is implemented in several states. The scholarship helps increase compensation and the retention of skilled teachers. Typically, once T.E.A.C.H. participants have reached their educational goals, they receive a salary increase, often with the requirement to stay in their current position for one year or more. This program supports educational attainment for the ECCE workforce and also addresses increases in wages based on professional development. However, the funds provided by T.E.A.C.H. are quite modest and far too little to provide pay parity with primary education.

Small incentives will have only small effects on staff education and training (Bridges et al., 2011). If preschool teachers acquire the same level of qualifications as primary teachers, but their pay remains lower, there will be strong pull for them to leave to teach in primary schools. If they invest only in easily acquired, but lower quality higher education, then their actual qualifications will remain lower than those of primary school teachers. In this case, it will be much more difficult for them to obtain jobs in primary schools. However, their effectiveness as preschool teachers should not be expected to be much improved.

**Training**

Content and pedagogical knowledge is critical for the ECCE workforce as we place great demands on their expertise for guiding the learning and development of our youngest children. Teachers need a broad understanding of how children learn and their role in supporting and increasing children’s learning. First, teachers need a firm understanding of child development, both the typical trajectories and early learning expectations and standards. Further, teachers need to recognize the differences in young children by assessing their strengths and identifying their struggles and then responding appropriately. Teachers need to do this in all domain areas, including physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language and literacy, and cognitive skills (including early mathematics and early science knowledge; Snow & Van Hemel, 2008).

This is no small feat. Surely, to be able to do this for all children, each child with his or her unique set of circumstances and rate of development, requires extensive training and support. The definitive amount of support or training has yet to be identified. As a start, 81 percent of state preschool
programs report 15 hours or more of inservice training (Barnett, Jung, Youn, & Frede, 2013), up nearly 20 percent from 2002.

Ongoing intensive training demonstrates an improvement of both classroom quality and child outcomes (e.g., Wasik & Hindman, 2011; Fukkink & Lont, 2007). Research also supports the role of coaching in improving teachers’ practices and enhancing student learning (Pianta, 2011). Although there is not a standard definition of coaching across the field, most agree that coaching entails developing a supportive collaborative professional relationship between an expert and a practitioner (Joyce & Showers, 2002). This relationship is used to provide feedback based on performance, individual goal setting, and supportive implementation (through procedures such as model lessons, topic study, and collaboration) to guide improvement. The coaching cycle is not unlike that of formative assessment that teachers implement for their students.

As with any other development of knowledge and skills, such training also increases the value of the worker and can lead to increased demands for compensation as well. If there is no cost to the employee and the knowledge and skills are not transferable to other work, then it is possible for compensation to remain relatively low without increasing the extent to which the workforces leave for primary education and other employment. However, the existing levels of turnover become more expensive as the costs of inservice training rise. To the extent that compensation has to rise to retain workers who develop much stronger competencies through experience and training, the fundamental economic problem must be confronted again.

Promising Policy Developments

Public policy has had, and continues to have, tremendous implications for the early childhood workforces. Policies that favor a low-cost, nonprofessional workforce favor low wages, poor qualifications and training, and high turnover. Such a workforce has little control over its own preparation and development. Two alternative policy approaches that might dramatically change the workforces are currently under development and discussed here. One is the creation of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS). The other is to incorporate preschool into public education, as was done with kindergarten. Earlier it was noted that many advocate for policies that could raise the quality of teaching through highly directed on-the-job training (Pianta, 2011; Kagan & Gomez, 2011). This is a key component of both policies described below.

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS)

About half of the states have implemented QRIS policies in recent years and the rest have QRIS under development. The QRIS approach seeks to improve quality by introducing rating systems that provide more information to the purchasers of early care and education services regarding the quality of those services. There are multiple ways in which QRIS can influence the workforce.

The most obvious influence is by including qualifications and training of teachers in the rating system (Office of Child Care, 2014). All of the QRIS that had been implemented by 2011 included teacher preservice educational qualifications with higher ratings linked to more education. Two thirds included a bachelor’s degree as part of the standard for achieving the highest level or rating in the system for centers. Only 30 percent of states that included home-based providers in the QRIS required a bachelor’s degree for the highest rating of home-based programs. Most require just a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or similar state qualification of home-based providers for the highest rating level. By contrast, this was the qualification most often required at the lowest center-based programs. Most QRIS also have requirements for continuing professional development, typically beginning with child care licensing requirements and then increasing the number of hours with each level of the rating system.
QRIS has the potential to reduce fragmentation of the workforce to the extent that different types of programs—private child care, Head Start, and state pre-K—are brought into a single system with shared career paths. However, QRIS are voluntary for private programs that do not receive public money and often include only programs that are licensed by state child care agencies. States may exempt not only some private providers, but also Head Start and public school programs (Office of Child Care, 2014). Staff in programs that do not participate in a QRIS are unlikely to be much affected by it.

The effects of QRIS fundamentally depend on the extent to which the QRIS redirects resources based on teacher quality, qualifications, and professional development. Some QRIS require providers to reach the top levels of the QRIS in order to be eligible to provide relatively well-funded state pre-K services (Office of Child Care, 2014). In such cases, payment and teacher compensation levels may be substantially higher, providing considerable incentive for programs to help teachers to improve their qualifications, ongoing professional development, and teaching quality. However, more generally parents may not respond significantly to ratings (assigning much more importance to such other factors as location) and public funding increases associated with moving up levels may be very modest. Another complicating factor is that some QRIS levels may not be well-aligned with actual quality (Sabol, Hong, Pianta, & Burchinal, 2013).

**Public Education: New Jersey’s Abbott Preschool Model**

In 1998 New Jersey’s Supreme Court ordered education reforms that included universal, well-planned, high-quality preschool education for all 3- and 4-year-olds in 31 districts throughout the state. This ruling was a part of the landmark *Abbott v. Burke* (1985) and affected districts that collectively serve approximately one quarter of the state’s children. This decision began one of the most significant changes in early childhood policy anywhere in the United States.

Policymakers in New Jersey addressed many of the challenges outlined above when developing an adequately funded, high-quality public education system for children beginning at age 3. Essentially they did this by bringing the existing workforces and programs into the public education system and transforming them rather than replacing them with a new system. The result is a new model of public education in some key respects. In this section, we will outline the relevant NJ Abbott preschool program policies and effects on the workforce.

**Mixed-delivery model.** School districts and the state were assigned the responsibility of ensuring that all classrooms met the standards of a high-quality preschool education regardless of program auspice. These were clearly specified. However, school districts were encouraged to contract with private providers and Head Start to provide services. Roughly two thirds of children are served by these other providers. To help maintain a highly qualified staff, the preschool teacher’s salary was equivalent to those teachers in the public school regardless of auspice. It was established that each classroom would have a maximum class size of 15 students. Teachers also are required to have the same early childhood certification (i.e., license) regardless of auspice.

**Degrees and certification.** As one step toward quality, the state created a new preschool through grade 3 (P-3) teacher certificate. This enabled all early childhood educators to receive relatively uniform specialized training at the bachelor’s degree level. The state instituted incentive programs and deadlines for teachers to acquire this certification and bachelor’s degrees. Perhaps the greatest motivator was that teachers in private programs and Head Start received very large salary increases when they completed the degree and certification.

**Coaching and professional development.** In addition to a highly qualified teaching staff, master teachers, also known as coaches, played an integral role in implementing and maintaining high levels of program quality. It is recommended that one master teacher be available for support for every 20 teachers. The master teachers are responsible for providing direct classroom coaching...
using a reflective coaching model. Here the coaches observe, provide feedback in a collaborative manner, and model exemplary practices. In addition to this direct in-classroom support, master teachers are involved in planning professional development opportunities to match the needs of the teachers.

**Leadership.** Aware of the importance of the administrator in early education, New Jersey also offered a training series for P–3 educational leaders. The goal of the program was to provide the administrators with strategies and techniques to effectively implement high-quality programs (Rice & Lesaux, 2012). The program reached nearly 500 administrators, many of whom had little to no previous experience with or knowledge of effective early childhood program implementation. This may be viewed as transforming the leadership in public education to support appropriate practice in the new early childhood programs that have been incorporated into public education.

**Home language support.** The growing population of Spanish-speaking children in New Jersey mandated an approach where the home language of children is valued and developed in the preschool classroom. A variety of approaches have been used to support home language in these programs. With limited resources of qualified Spanish-speaking teachers, two-way bilingual immersion (TWI) was one approach adopted to address the needs of dual-language learners. TWI is full-immersion into the language for a set period of time rotating from the English “world” to the Spanish “world” between two teaching teams. One team speaks only English and the other speaks only Spanish. A randomized control trial demonstrated positive results for TWI, noting positive outcomes for both Spanish-speaking children and native English-speaking children (Barnett et al., 2007).

**Overall impacts of the Abbott public education approach on the workforce.** The incorporation of the early childhood workforces serving 3- and 4-year-olds into the public education system has been transformational. The essential reason for this success is that the Abbott policy addressed the fundamental economic problem. The policy began by setting out the goals to be accomplished and specifying a preschool education that could accomplish those goals. Program funding was determined by these requirements rather than the reverse. The program was fundamentally defined by its educational goals and fully incorporated into public education. Because it began with the teachers who were already serving the children, the resulting preschool teaching force was more diverse than the K–12 teaching force. However, teachers are now much more effective, better educated, better supported, and better compensated than previously.

We note that some early childhood workforces remain outside the public education system, despite the Abbott transformation. Although some programs have tried to provide seamless service quality whenever the child is present, those who provide wrap-around care outside the school day need not have the same qualifications and compensation. The “education solution” in this example addressed much but not all of the teaching force for children ages 3 to 5 and did not address teachers of infants and toddlers at all. Whether it is desirable and politically and financially feasible to bring more or even all hours of care into public education are questions for the future. If this is viewed as a continuation of the process that brought kindergarten teachers into the public education system, it may be a necessary step before those questions can be effectively addressed. Even such wealthy Nordic countries as Norway, that are willing to spend much more per pupil on young children than the United States, have not yet accomplished this goal (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2006, 2011).

**Conclusion**

Clearly, the ECCE workforce is a critical component in the system for the care and education of young children. But this workforce is complicated. First, there is a fragmentation into several workforces including Head Start, child care, and public education (regular and special education). Second,
there is the overlap of these sectors that blurs the lines across programs. Third, these teachers vary greatly on key characteristics such as preparation, qualifications, responsibilities, and compensation.

Policies are doing their part to shape the workforce and perhaps work toward cohesiveness. The increased qualifications now required for teachers of Head Start is one example of how over time there have been increases in the requirements for some teachers in ECCE. Another example is the expansion of public pre-K in some states. However, policies in this arena still vary greatly from state to state. Lastly, the advent of the QRIS will also impact the educational qualifications of teachers in the ECCE field and holds some potential to merge the workforces of the separate sectors in many aspects.

References


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