

Attracting early childhood providers to teacher education programs leading to licensure: Contexts, challenges of recruitment and retention

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The Contexts of EC Education

All different, yet relevant:

- International
- National
- State
- UMass Boston

International Context (I)

- U.S. ranks at the bottom on G-8 countries in quality and accessibility of EC education for 3-4 year olds.
- Almost all 3-4 year olds are enrolled in EC in France and Italy.
- The remaining G-8 countries have at least 75% of same population attending EC centers. (Miller & Malley, 2007)
- In both PISA and TIMSS international tests and comparisons, U.S. students lag behind many of their industrialized country counterparts, particularly in math.
- Developing countries like Latvia & Hungary outperform U.S.
- **Countries which invest in early childhood education do better in PISA (OECD, 2003).**

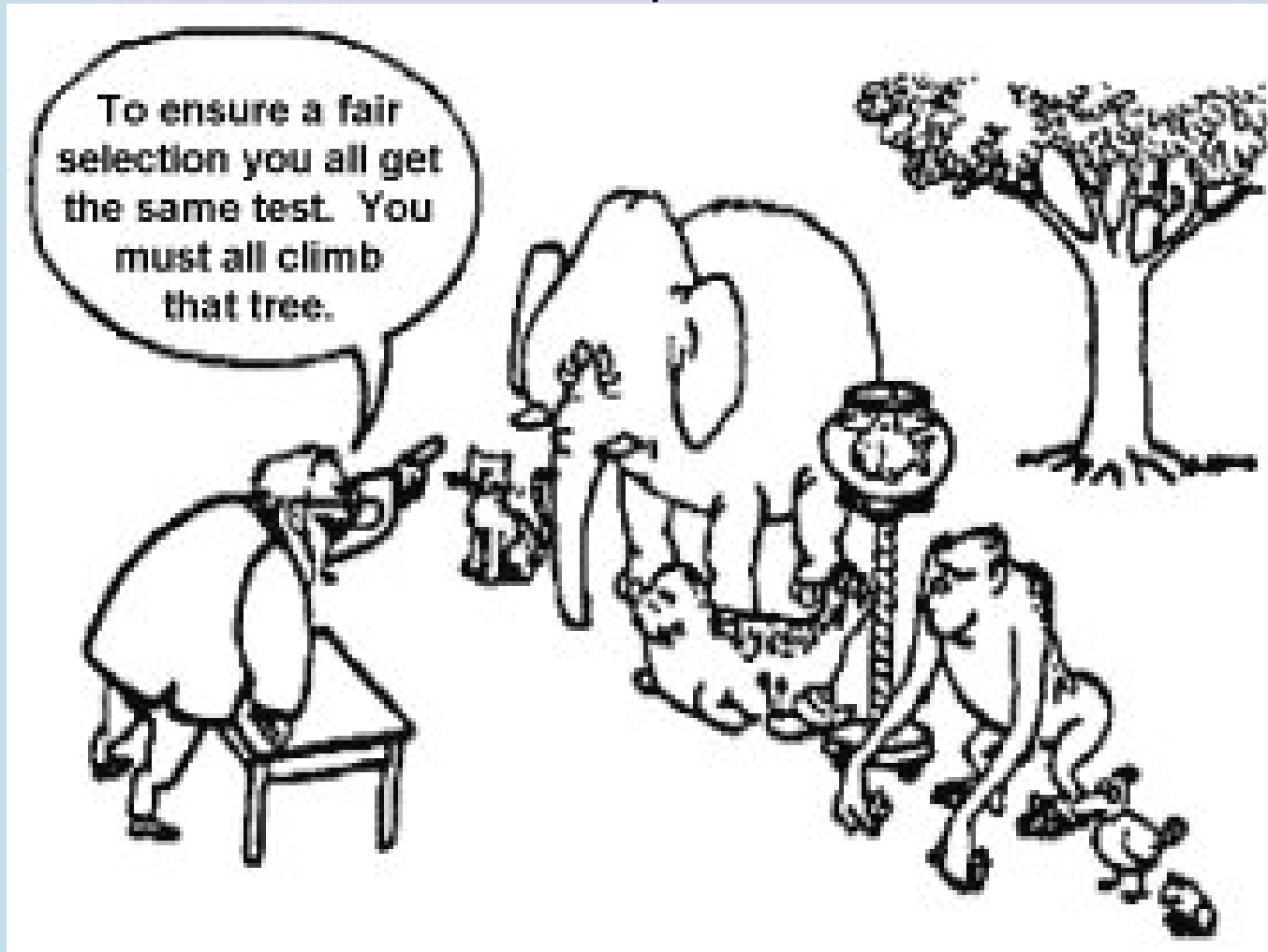
National Context (I)

- Only 53% of 3-4 year olds attend EC centers, both private and public.
- The increase of 3-5 year olds in EC education in the last 20 years is due to more non-poor children attending the growing number of private EC centers.
- Serving 909,201 nationwide, Head Start only covers a small percentage of low-income children. (NCES, 2007; Head Start, 2006)
- Some 600,000 teachers in the U.S. work in the field of EC (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007).
- Only 18 states require non public school EC teachers to undergo teacher training (Ackerman, 2004).
- Head Start teachers: from 30% with any credentials in 1997 to 36% (BAs) and 31% (AAs) in 2004, achieved through incentives—quality and scope of training varies widely (Hart & Schumacher, 2005).

National Context (II)

- NCLB defines highly qualified teachers as those who have secured an undergraduate degree in a subject matter akin to what they teach, with a high GPA.
- There is some debate as to whether the ideal EC teachers might have a broad background in liberal arts, since they teach all subjects, or in fields like psychology/human development/family studies.
- Some criticize NCLB for not including a readiness component for 5 year olds (Jacobson, 2006).
- Yet others contend that NCLB will contribute to pushing testing down further into EC/EI settings, with undesirable consequences for young children (Meisels, 2006).

And a question to ponder: Does the NCLB definition of highly qualified teachers apply to teachers of toddlers or early intervention practitioners?



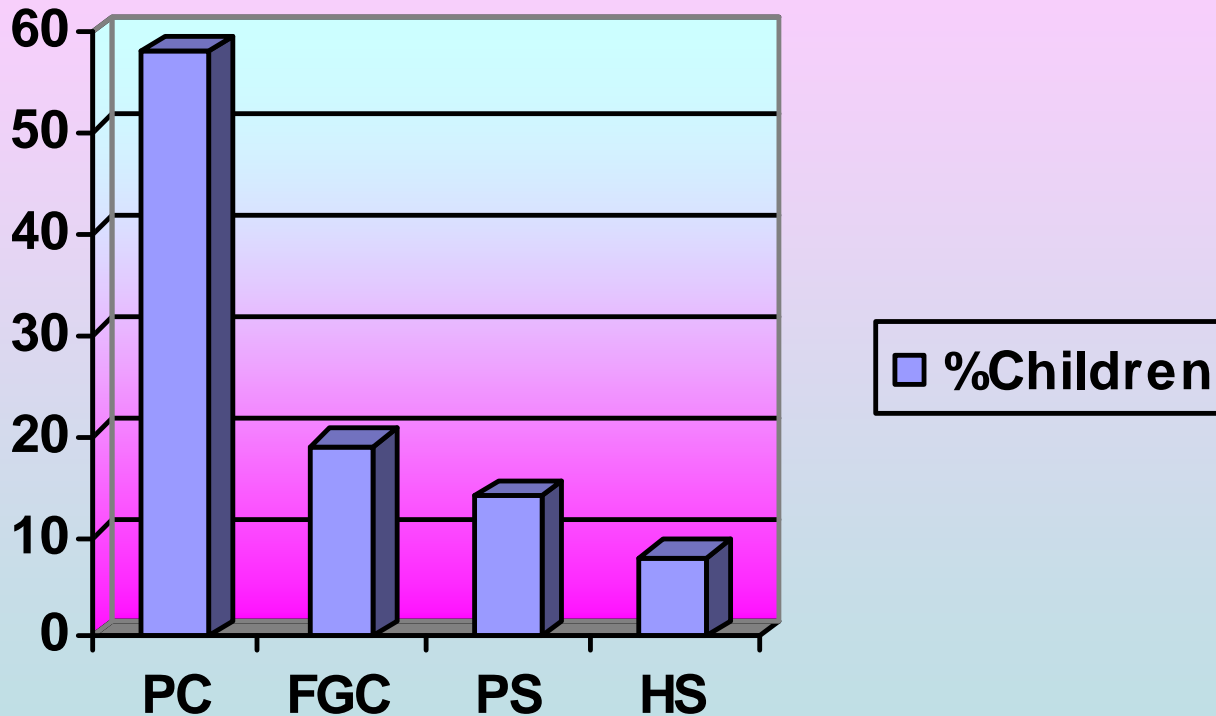
Massachusetts State Context (I)

- A high performing state ranking second in what is related to educational attainment, with 35.8% of the population holding a BA degree (U.S. Census, 2003).
- 95.1% of its public school teachers are highly qualified by NCLB standards.
- 89% of public high school seniors state an interest in pursuing post-secondary education. (Mass DOE, 2007).
- Only 14% of the 3-5 year olds are served by public schools.
- Other providers: Head Start (8%) and family group care (19%).
- The largest percentage of 3-5 year olds in Massachusetts (58%) are served in private EC centers.
- EC staff turnover in Massachusetts is 26%, much higher than the national average at 9.8%. (Marshall, Dennehy, Starr, & Robeson, 2005; Marshall, Dennehy, Johnson-Staub, & Robeson, 2005).

PC= private centers
PS= public schools

FGC= family group care
HS= Head Start

Only the 14% of 3-5 year olds who attend public schools (PS) are guaranteed teachers with a minimum of a baccalaureate degree and EC training. The remaining 86% (PC, FGC, and HS) spend their “school time” with folks of varying educational attainment.



Varying requirements for teachers of 3-5 year olds

- Different teacher credentialing systems mostly affect minority and low-income families, who have fewer choices (Darling-Hammond, 2004).
- Massachusetts is a prime example of this (Sachs, 2000; Herzenberg, Price, & Bradley, 2005).
- EC teachers with a baccalaureate degree are better prepared for the job than non degree holders (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2000).

DPH EI teachers of children 0-3	EEC teachers of children 0-5 in non-public school settings	DOE teachers of children with and without disabilities 3-8.
Early Intervention Associate: high school diploma + credentials working with infants & toddlers or AA degree in ECH; or CDA or EEC lead teacher status amongst others.	Teacher: 3 credits in child development + 9 months of work experience, as well as a high school diploma	Teacher, provisional licensure: a BA degree rich in liberal arts coursework + a defined arts or sciences major + passing MTEL scores in R&W, Foundations of Reading & Early Childhood- only lasts 5 years.
Provisional Early Intervention Specialist: minimum of a BA degree and 300 hours of experience with infants and toddlers- only lasts 3 years	Lead Teacher: Teacher requirements + 9 credits in early childhood education + a differentiated requirement of experience in the field that diminishes for those who have secured higher levels of education (36 months of experience for high school diploma holders; 27 months for certificate holders; 18 months for associate degree holders; and 9 months for bachelor degree holders.	Teacher, initial licensure: same as provisional + completing a DOE approved teacher education program to teach 3-8 year olds with and without disabilities.- only lasts 5 years
Certified Early Intervention Specialist: the above + 1440 hrs of employment at DPH certified EI program.	Next career paths are Director I and II, which can also be earned without a baccalaureate degree.	Teacher, professional licensure: same as initial + a minimum of 3 years teaching + 12 graduate credits in specialization area

UMass Boston's Including ALL Children

A federally-funded tuition assistance program at the University of Massachusetts Boston to help AA degree holders and EC workers to complete a 4-year baccalaureate degree leading to licensure:

<http://includingallchildren.wikispaces.com>

Challenges of Recruitment

- Completers of AA and even more, AS degrees do not often grasp the challenges of transferring to a 4-year degree leading to a BA.
- The process of admission to 4-year colleges and universities is complex.
- Lack of social networks to ease those processes is high.
- For candidates schooled in developing countries in times previous to massive technology, securing past transcripts may be unfeasible.
- Advising such students requires more than providing brochures and copies of information. Sometimes, faculty have to advocate for such students in admissions and financial aid units, and even with colleagues.
- As undergraduate degree completion and licensure eligibility requires meeting requirements of at least two colleges or departments in the state of Massachusetts, this fragmentation confuses applicants.
- Daytime course offerings are typically not an option for such students. Successful recruitment efforts need to go along viable course scheduling.
- The Early Childhood Compact's (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education) lax wording has an impact on the curricula completed by those who transfer to 4-year degrees with the expectation of also securing DOE licensure.

Challenges of Retention

- EC providers are typically overworked and underpaid. Some hold more than one job, so keeping up with coursework is a challenge.
- They tend to be older than traditional college students, and have more family commitments.
- Access to updated computers & fast internet connections are not a given.
- Older students tend to have “paper and pencil” habits, which makes online instruction more challenging. They overwhelmingly state to prefer face-to-face instruction.
- Past educational experiences have not helped many non traditional students develop study skills and acceptable reading comprehension levels and writing performance.
- The nature of the job EC providers perform is not in itself conducive to increasing their verbal, reading, and writing abilities for university-level work.