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Call for papers - Special issue

Submission of articles

Early Childhood Education: The Foundations of a Fairer Society

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Voces y Silencios: Revista Latinoamericana de Educación, published by the Universidad de los Andes (Colombia), is pleased to announce its Call for Papers for the special issue entitled “Early Childhood Education: The Foundations of a Fairer Society” This special issue corresponds to Volume 18, Issue 2, to be published in the May–August 2027 issue.

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Presentation

The first years of life constitute the period of greatest neurological and social plasticity in human development. The experiences that children accumulate between birth and six years of age—in their homes, educational settings, and communities—leave profound marks on their cognitive, socio-emotional, and relational trajectories (Shonkoff et al., 2012; Black et al., 2017). Scientific evidence clearly shows that investing in early childhood education and care is one of the most effective strategies for reducing inequalities that emerge early in life and that, without intervention, tend to persist and widen over time (Heckman, 2006; Burger, 2010; McCoy et al., 2017).

However, in Latin America, this evidence coexists with realities that challenge it. The region faces profound gaps in access to high-quality early childhood services, in the conditions under which caregiving takes place, and in the resources available to families according to their socioeconomic status and the territories in which they live (OECD, 2017; Berlinski & Schady, 2015). Children growing up in conditions of poverty or social vulnerability accumulate disadvantages from the very first months of life, reflected in early gaps in vocabulary, cognitive development, and socio-emotional regulation—gaps that longitudinal evidence has shown to be persistent and difficult to reverse in later stages of development (Narea et al., 2020; Telias et al., 2022; Scheidecker et al., 2024).

A central element in understanding these trajectories is the quality of the environments in which children spend their early years. The expansion of early childhood education coverage in Latin America, an unquestionable achievement of recent decades, has not necessarily been accompanied by equivalent improve-

ments in the quality of the processes that take place in classrooms and homes (Berlinski & Schady, 2015). Process quality, understood as the everyday interactions between adults and children, is a dimension that is rarely observed at the national level across the region (Maldonado-Carreño et al., 2022). When it is measured, the findings are concerning.

Studies conducted in Colombia using nationally representative samples report low to moderate levels of quality, with significant gaps between structural quality, such as the availability of resources, and process quality, such as warmth, cognitive stimulation, and language support (Maldonado-Carreño et al., 2022). In Chile, the evidence points in a similar direction: levels of pedagogical interaction in early childhood education classrooms are heterogeneous and, on average, insufficient to ensure high-quality learning experiences (Yoshikawa et al., 2015; Narea et al., 2019). This evidence is important for the region because the quality of educator–child interactions is associated with children’s outcomes across multiple domains of development, and its effects are especially significant for children in situations of greater vulnerability (Burchinal, 2018; Burchinal et al., 2016; Hatfield et al., 2016).

In addition, much of the knowledge that informs policies and practices has been produced in Global North contexts, based on cultural, institutional, and methodological assumptions that are not always transferable to Latin American realities (Draper et al., 2023; Susperreguy et al., 2024; Hermida et al., 2024). Research on parenting, caregiving, and early childhood education in the region represents only a small fraction of the international scientific production in the field of child development (Susperreguy et al., 2024), limiting the availability of contextually grounded evidence to inform public policy decisions. Consequently, producing rigorous, culturally relevant evidence capable of informing decision-making from and for our region is both a scientific imperative and an act of epistemic justice (Scheidecker et al., 2024).

This special issue is grounded in a dual conviction. On the one hand, early childhood education is not merely a preparatory stage for formal schooling, but a right in itself and a privileged space for building more equitable societies. On the other hand, understanding what happens during these early years—which types of care and education promote development, for which children, under what conditions, and with what long-term effects—requires rigorous, longitudinal empirical research that is sensitive to the Latin American context (Yoshikawa et al., 2015; Narea et al., 2019). Without such evidence, early childhood policies risk replicating imported assumptions, allocating resources without knowing whether they are effective, and perpetuating the very inequalities they seek to address (Berlinski & Schady, 2015; Yoshikawa & Kabay, 2015).

This special issue is organized around three thematic areas: (1) inequality, vulnerability, and early childhood development; (2) the quality of educational and relational environments in early childhood; and (3) policy evaluation and systems design for early childhood. An indicative list of relevant topics for each thematic area is presented below. This list is illustrative rather than exhaustive. We invite authors to submit manuscripts that, although they may not correspond exactly to the examples provided, engage with the broader aims of this special issue.

Thematic Area 1: Inequality, Vulnerability, and Early Childhood Development

- Effects of different types of care and caregiving arrangements (maternal, non-parental, grandparental, community-based, and institutional) on child development.
- Family environmental factors associated with development in contexts of adversity, including parenting practices, parental stress, caregivers’ mental health, and exposure to violence, overcrowding, or instability.
- Early developmental gaps by socioeconomic status, geographic location, ethnicity, or migration status, and the mechanisms that explain them.
- Persistence and intergenerational transmission of inequalities in early childhood development.
- Instruments and methodologies for measuring child development in Latin American contexts, including validation, cultural adaptation, and contextual appropriateness.

Thematic Area 2: Quality of Educational and Relational Environments in Early Childhood

- Quality of educator–child and adult–child interactions in both formal settings (nurseries and preschools) and informal settings (homes, grandparental care, and community-based care): measurement, quality levels, and their association with child development.
- Structural quality and process quality in early childhood education settings: correlations, gaps, and their implications for child development.
- Teacher education, working conditions, and well-being of early childhood educators, and their relationship with the quality of classroom interactions.
- Specific pedagogical practices and their role in child development, including play-based learning and emergent literacy skills.
- Use of screens and digital media at home and in the classroom, and their relationship with child development.
- Family participation and engagement in early childhood education settings.

Thematic Area 3: Policy Evaluation and Systems Design for Early Childhood

- Impact evaluations of policies and programs aimed at expanding coverage, including heterogeneous effects by vulnerability, age of entry, or type of early childhood education setting, as well as long-term effects on educational, labor market, and well-being trajectories.
- Evaluation of interventions targeting families and educators, including parenting support programs, initiatives to strengthen parenting skills, and professional development for early childhood educators.
- Design and evaluation of quality monitoring and regulatory systems, as well as transitions between educational levels (early childhood education–primary education).
- Assessment of child development: methodological challenges and policy implications.
- Conditional cash transfers, subsidies, and other economic incentives for families with young children.
- Systematic reviews and evidence syntheses on early childhood policies and interventions in Latin America.

Manuscripts in the following article categories published by the journal are welcome:

- **Empirical Research Articles and Literature Reviews:** These articles present the results of quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods research. They address a clearly defined and well-grounded research question focused on recent debates in education, pedagogy, and human development. This category also includes literature reviews, which organize, synthesize, and critically evaluate published research to assess the state of the field, highlighting its findings, gaps, and contributions.
- **Approaches:** This category of theoretical research articles provides a space for discussing ideas and proposals from a reflective and forward-looking perspective. Its purpose is to foster discussion on the development of the fields of education and pedagogy, particularly with regard to issues relevant to the Latin American context.

Length and format

Empirical research articles, literature reviews, and approaches should be between 6,000 and 8,000 words in length, excluding references. Manuscripts should be prepared in 12-point Times New Roman font and must include an abstract of up to 250 words, followed by three to five keywords. If tables or figures are included, they should be embedded within the manuscript and also submitted as separate files. Manuscripts must follow the APA Publication Manual (7th edition) citation and style guidelines. Submissions are accepted in Spanish, English, and Portuguese. For further information on the journal's editorial and style guidelines, please visit: <https://revistas.uniandes.edu.co/for-authors/vys/editorial-policy>

Voces y Silencios: Revista Latinoamericana de Educación is a peer-reviewed, electronic, open-access academic journal published every four months (since 2024), dedicated to the study and discussion of questions and issues in education, pedagogy, and human development. The journal places particular emphasis on topics of relevance to education in Latin America, while also welcoming contributions that examine and discuss these areas in other parts of the world. Its readership includes researchers, teachers, school leaders, and other professionals working in education, both in formal educational institutions and in policy-making institutions, non-governmental organizations, and non-formal and informal educational settings.

If you have any questions regarding this call for manuscripts, please contact the Editor, Nicolás Aguilar-Fo-rero, at nj.aguilar1902@uniandes.edu.co

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