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# **Pedagogy, Permeability and the Preschool Classroom: Insights from the Professional Journeys of Latina Early Childhood Teachers in the U.S**

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## **Abstract**

The field of early childhood education (ECE) in the United States is currently focused on ensuring all young learners, who stand to benefit significantly from high-quality instruction, are taught by highly prepared and skilled professionals. The creation of credentials, such as the California PK-3 Early Childhood Teaching Credential, represents an effort to unify and elevate the quality of the ECE workforce. However, this new credential—which mandates a bachelor’s degree and a rigorous 600-hour unpaid clinical practicum—poses significant equity barriers to the current ECE workforce, which is historically underpaid and largely composed of teachers of color (66%) and older educators (51%). This qualitative, ethnographic study captured the personal and professional voices and pedagogical perspectives of twelve veteran Latina bilingual ECE educators in a Los Angeles County district. Using semi-structured interviews and a testimonio-based framework, the research sought to illuminate both the professional impact of the new credential and, critically, uncover the foundational pedagogical wisdom essential for preparing high-quality ECE professionals. Key findings are organized into three themes. First, participants voiced concerns over the potential devaluation of veteran knowledge, tempered by optimism regarding the renewed institutional focus on ECE. Second, their practice centered on culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy and *cariño*, or a deep care and understanding of family realities to inform curriculum and engage in direct community advocacy. Finally, the teachers emphasized the necessity of adopting a permeable classroom to allow young learners to move freely between their words and worlds. These findings are critical for informing the preparation of high-quality ECE teachers, ensuring that future programming is authentically grounded in culturally responsive, equity-focused, and collective pedagogical wisdom.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Education; Culturally Sustaining Curriculum; Linguistic Responsivity; Teacher Preparation; Young Learners