

# Education Policy Highlight Early Learning in Spain

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In the 21st century, there is a tremendous need for high-quality early learning. In Spain, almost 2 million children are enrolled in early childhood education programs throughout the country. Thus, the importance of providing high-quality early learning is clear.

The goal of the Spanish government is to offer quality early childhood education for Spanish families as they strive to make a better life and prepare their children to succeed in school and beyond. We need to prepare all of our children to compete in an increasingly global economy.

To ensure every child in Spain has access to early learning opportunities, the government of Spain has emphasized the importance of effective early childhood learning by creating various legal and policy frameworks. Recognizing the importance of investment in early childhood for ultimate success of the Spanish youth, the government has expanded early childhood education by implementing programs such as *Educa3*.

*Educa3* is the first comprehensive program that invested in expansions of programs to provide high-quality early childhood development and learning experiences for children from birth through age 3, offering a new hope for children and families. Funded jointly by autonomous communities and the government, the program also supported teachers in implementing early childhood practices designed to improve children's school readiness. The amount of government funding over 4 years (2008-2012) was €1,087 million.

We know that early childhood education is fundamental to long-term student success; however, planning for equity can be a difficult task for early childhood educators across Spain. Under the *Educa3* plan, the government committed to achieving access to quality early childhood education for all children by 2012. While there has been an expansion of formal early education opportunities for young children, with 3,381 new early childhood centers opening their doors since 2008, too many children in Spain still are not afforded an opportunity to attend a quality early childhood learning environment.

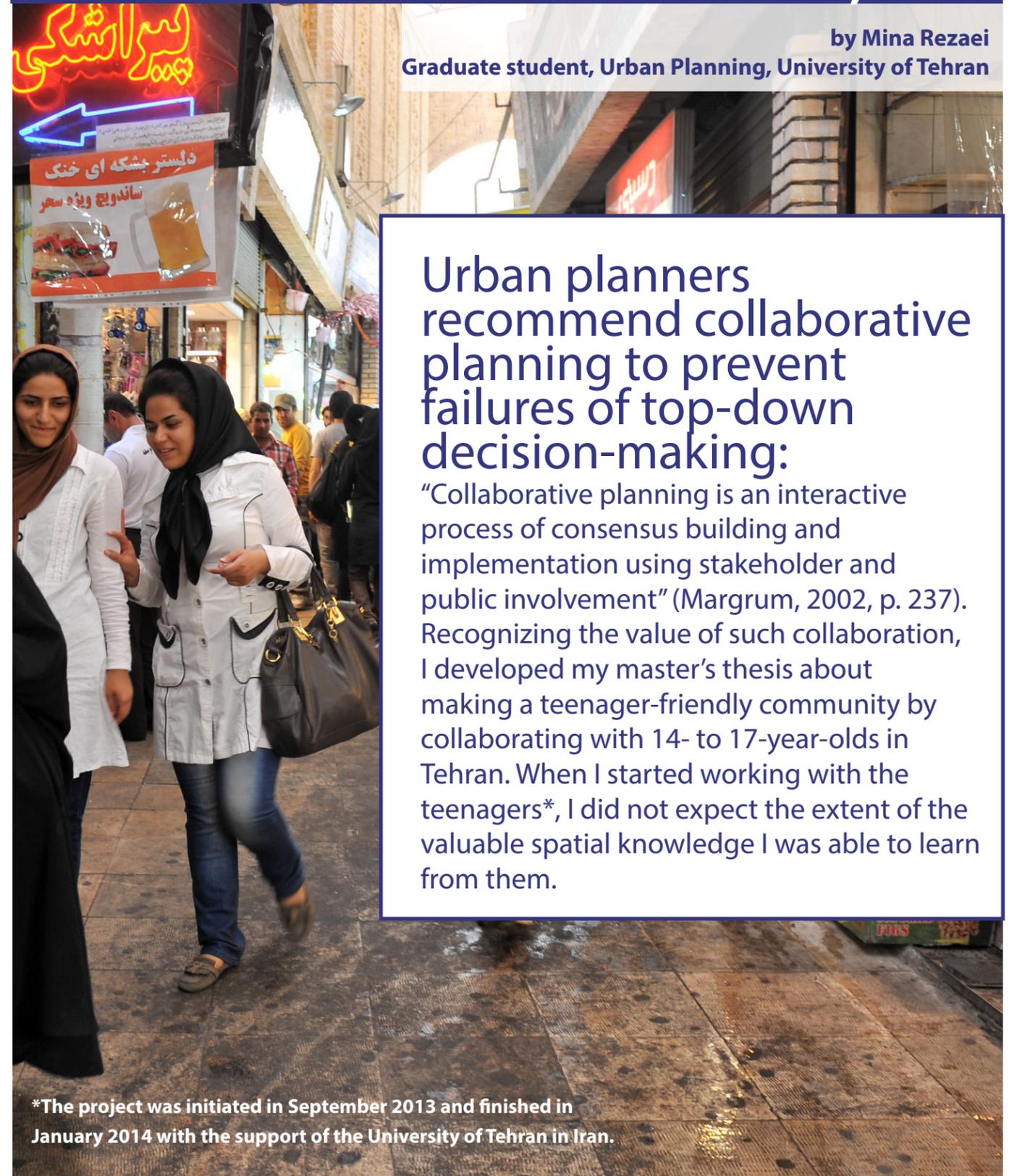
The overall enrollment rate for 0-3 year-olds has risen consistently over time. Although participation increased steadily between 2002 and 2012, children age 3 are the most likely to participate in early childhood programs. Between 2002 and 2012, the percentage of 2-year-olds enrolled in early childhood programs increased by 29.8%. The percentages of 0- to 1-year-olds enrolled in early childhood programs in 2012 (9.7% and 31.8%, respectively) were higher than the percentages in 2002 (2.2% and 9.2%, respectively), with the majority of the growth occurring between 2010 and 2011.

While positive steps have been taken to address children's access to early childhood programs, there remains a shortage of funding for early childhood education programs in Spain. All children may not have an opportunity to attend an effective early childhood environment, and parents may be left out of decisions that affect their children.



# A Teenager-Friendly Community in Tehran, Iran

by Mina Rezaei  
Graduate student, Urban Planning, University of Tehran



Urban planners recommend collaborative planning to prevent failures of top-down decision-making:

“Collaborative planning is an interactive process of consensus building and implementation using stakeholder and public involvement” (Margrum, 2002, p. 237). Recognizing the value of such collaboration, I developed my master's thesis about making a teenager-friendly community by collaborating with 14- to 17-year-olds in Tehran. When I started working with the teenagers\*, I did not expect the extent of the valuable spatial knowledge I was able to learn from them.

\*The project was initiated in September 2013 and finished in January 2014 with the support of the University of Tehran in Iran.

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