

About the editors

Priscilla Puamau is Team Leader of the PRIDE Project at the University of the South Pacific (USP). Having completed her education up to Master's level at USP, Priscilla received a PhD in Education from the University of Queensland. She began her career as a secondary school teacher of English and has worked for the Fiji Ministry of Education in various other capacities, including Head of Languages and Senior Education Officer (Fijian Education). She was also a teacher educator at the Fiji College of Advanced Education (FCAE) where she has served as Head of Education, Vice Principal and Principal. Her areas of interest include teacher education, values education, indigenous education and moral/ethical leadership.

Frances Pene was born in England and obtained her tertiary qualifications at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and London University. She has spent all her working life in Fiji. For many years she was a secondary school teacher of English in schools across Fiji, after which she moved into the field of teacher training, working for four years at the Fiji College of Advanced Education. Then came a career change and she is currently an editor at the Institute of Education, USP. She has authored and co-authored school texts, and edited many academic books and journals.

Early Care and Education in the Pacific is the fifth book in the PRIDE Project's *Pacific Education Series*.

This book is an outcome of the regional workshop on early childhood care and education (ECCE) with the theme **Supporting learning from 0 – 8: Creating the future** held in Honiara, Solomon Islands from 26 – 30 March, 2007. The workshop was attended by 42 participants, representing government policy-makers and NGOs engaged in ECCE in all the Forum countries except Palau.

The book starts with the opening speech of the workshop given by the former Solomon Islands Minister for Education, the Honourable Dr Derek Sikua, ECCE advocate and champion. The rest of the book contains chapters written by resource people and participants. Syncretising the best of the local and the global in the knowledge and practice of ECCE was a central feature of the regional workshop.

Chapter 3, a key piece, provides a historical overview of ECCE in the Pacific over three decades and captures the struggles faced by early childhood providers. It validates the place of indigenous knowledge, language and culture in ECCE programmes, challenging early childhood practitioners to “be bold in creating pre-schools or early childhood education centres that characterise who we are as a people—not just poor replicas of models copied from other countries or places”.

Chapters 5 and 6 contain global and regional overviews of ECCE development, with Chapter 5 providing useful data from the Global Monitoring Report 2007 in relation to EFA and MDG goals, and Chapter 6 demonstrating that there is “overwhelming evidence from scientific studies, as well as from accumulated data relating to social and environmental factors worldwide, to convince governments that supporting and investing in ECCE is essential”.

The other chapters include an examination of three national education strategic plans and policy documents to demonstrate an increased emphasis on ECCE in the Pacific (Chapter 2); the current status of ECCE in the region (Chapter 4); assessment, monitoring and evaluation of ECCE (Chapter 7); developing culturally appropriate and locally derived ECCE resources (Chapter 8); and teacher education (Chapter 10). Chapter 9 provides a case study on the development of the Fiji early childhood curriculum standards. The final chapter is written by the workshop critical friend. It contains critical insights and suggestions for moving ECCE forward in the Pacific.

The book is intended primarily for ECCE providers, practitioners, teacher educators, policy-makers and researchers in early childhood education.



Early Childhood Care and Education in the Pacific

Early Childhood Care and Education in the Pacific

*Edited by
Priscilla Puamau and Frances Pene*



The PRIDE Project
Pacific Education Series No.5
2008



The PRIDE Project is financed by the European Union and NZAID, through the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and implemented by the Institute of Education at USP

Early Childhood Care and Education in the Pacific is an outcome of the regional workshop on early childhood care and education (ECCE) held in Honiara, Solomon Islands from 26 – 30 March, 2007.

Forty-two participants, representing government policy-makers and NGOs, engaged in ECCE in 14 Pacific Island Forum countries listened to global, regional and local keynote speakers and engaged passionately in discussing constructive ways to move ECCE forward in the region.

The book begins with the opening speech given by the former Solomon Islands Minister for Education, the Honourable Dr Derek Sikua, ECCE advocate and champion. The rest of the book contains chapters written by resource people and participants. They cover global, regional and local perspectives. The book also includes a description of the current status of ECCE in the region, as well as coverage on assessment, curriculum standards, resources and teacher education.

The dearth of information and data on ECCE in the Pacific is somewhat rectified by Adi Davila Toganivalu's comprehensive historical overview of ECCE in the Pacific over the last three decades. In advocating for Pacific languages and cultures in ECCE, she argues that Pacific Island centres for ECCE “ought to be places where children are understood and treated with respect and dignity; where Pacific languages, stories, music, dance, art and crafts are promoted; and where beliefs, values, customs and traditions are evident and respected. When people come to these centres they must see and feel that they are in a Pacific centre for ECCE”.

ECCE providers, practitioners, teacher educators, policy-makers and researchers in early childhood education will find this book useful.



Early Childhood Care and Education in the Pacific





The PRIDE Project
Institute of Education
University of the South Pacific

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Early Childhood Care and Education in the Pacific



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Priscilla Puamanu and Frances Pene

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Preface

This book is the fifth in the PRIDE Project Pacific Education Series published by the Institute of Education, University of the South Pacific.

It is an outcome of the regional workshop on early childhood, care and education (ECCE) held in Honiara, Solomon Islands from 26 – 30th March 2007. With the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment taking the lead role in organising the workshop in conjunction with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education, this workshop was co-sponsored by five other development partners: Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education (PRIDE), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, UNESCO and UNICEF.

Another significant outcome of this regional workshop was the opportunity to influence policy through the presentation of workshop recommendations to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat for consideration by the Forum Education Ministers' meeting held in November 2007 in Auckland, New Zealand. These recommendations were endorsed by the Ministers for Education and have subsequently been added to the Forum Basic Education Action Plan.

In preparing this book, we are grateful for the contributions of the resource people, participants and development partners who are listed at the end of the book. We appreciate also the work of the secretariat – staff of the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education, UNESCO and SPBEA. In particular, we say thank you to the former Minister for Education, current Prime Minister, the Honourable Derek Sikua, for championing ECCE.





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Portraits of the contributors

Ufemia Camaitoga

With 30 years of varied teaching experience, including early childhood education, special education, primary teaching and, for the past eight years, teacher education at Lautoka Teachers' College (LTC)—Ufemia Camaitoga is one of the leaders in early childhood education in Fiji. She has represented Fiji in a number of national, regional and international workshops and conferences in this field. As local counterpart in the recent AusAID upgrade project at LTC, she was involved in course development, implementation and review. Ufemia is a key person in the current development of the Early Childhood Education Curriculum Guidelines for Fiji and other national ECCE projects.

Ufemia graduated from Wellington Teachers' College, New Zealand where she specialised in ECCE, and is currently doing postgraduate studies in leadership at the University of Fiji. Her interests are advocacy, curriculum and leadership.

Jessie Fuamatu

Jessie Fuamatu is Samoan, born in the heart of South Auckland, New Zealand. She has been teaching for 29 years and her work has taken her across the Pacific to Samoa, Fiji and Cook Islands as well as New Zealand. She has a broad experience in all sectors: early childhood, primary, secondary, and tertiary. Jessie has held positions of responsibility as deputy principal in intermediate and primary schools, and she was Programme Leader at Auckland Teachers' College and Principal Lecturer for the Faculty of Education at the University of Auckland. She is currently Head of the Department of Education at Fulton College and is, at the same time, completing a Masters degree in Education with the University of Auckland.

Her strengths and interests are in the following curriculum areas: science, music, performing arts, special education, health and languages. Her area of study is 'Gifted and Talented Pasifika children, Learning and Teaching Pasifika, Leadership and Management for Pasifika'.





Jennifer James

Jennifer James gained a Diploma in ECE at Palmerston North Teachers' College, New Zealand (1976 - 1978) and then returned to Vanuatu where she taught at the Central Primary School Kindy for 21 years (1979 - 1999). Soon after her return to Vanuatu, she started an NGO, the Pre-School Association of Vanuatu (PSABV), and is still an executive member after being President for several years.

In 2000, Jennifer started work at the Ministry of Education as the National Pre-School Coordinator, looking after the Provincial Pre-School coordinators working in the six provinces of Vanuatu. Her job involves looking for funding so that the coordinators can carry out training and upgrading of the pre-schools in their province.

Jennifer's interest at the moment is encouraging the communities to get more involved in the running of their pre-schools because the government does not have the resources, although it is giving a lot of support to training and awareness programmes. Another area of interest is producing materials in Bislama so that both the French and English-speaking teachers and parents will benefit.

Maki Hayashikawa

Maki Hayashikawa holds a BSc (Econ) in International Relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, and an MA(Ed) in Educational Planning from the Institute of Education, University of London. She is currently pursuing an MEd in Early Childhood Education with the South Australia University.

Maki worked as a Research Assistant with the International Development Cooperation Japan and joined UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, in 1993 as Associate Expert in Basic Education, focusing on literacy and non-formal education. From 1998 to 2003, Maki worked as Education Officer in UNESCO's Beijing office, covering China, DPR Korea, Japan, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea. In 2003, she took up a special two-year assignment with the Japan International Cooperation Agency in Tokyo, Japan, as Senior Advisor for Education. In August 2005, she joined the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the





Pacific, based in Bangkok, Thailand, as Programme Specialist in Gender and Quality Basic Education. Her current responsibilities include the development of the programmes and giving policy advice on gender in education, ECCE, inclusive education and right to education issues in EFA.

Desma Hughes

Desma Hughes is senior lecturer in Early Childhood Education at the University of the South Pacific, in Port Vila, Vanuatu and coordinator for the ECE Diploma and Degree programmes. She was previously a lecturer in Special Education at the University of New England (UNE). Prior to that she worked for ten years as an early intervention teacher in Armidale, NSW Australia, working with 3 – 5 year-olds. She gained a PhD at UNE in 1996 in the area of social competence in 3 – 5 year-olds. Her interest areas are early childhood development, early science, early special education and social and emotional competence.

Junko Miyahara

Junko Miyahara completed her Masters in Social Work at Columbia University, USA in 2000 with a focus on international social welfare and families and children. Since she joined UNICEF in September 2001, she has worked extensively on early childhood development. The UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office is a regional focal point for integrated early childhood development, and Junko has been responsible for regional coordination and networking, advocacy and capacity building. She has organized and coordinated a number of regional and global training workshops, collated good practice case studies publications, and contributed to country-level programme/project development and review. During 2005-2007, she was consultant for country-level projects in Malaysia, Thailand, Mongolia and Cambodia, as well as in the regional office. The projects included *Early Learning and Development Standards* and *Early Childhood Policy Review*. Her professional interests include child and family policies, programme evaluation, parenting education and support, and child development and cultural diversity.

Glen Palmer

Dr Palmer (Ph.D, M.Ed, B.Ed, Grad.Dip. Arts Therapy) has been working part-time as an Early Childhood Advisor at Lautoka Teachers' College, Fiji, for the





past four years. This has involved working with the early childhood lecturers to upgrade the programme to an Advanced Certificate in Early Childhood Education. In September 2006 she also began as an Adviser with the Ministry of Education in Fiji for the development of early childhood curriculum guidelines. Both positions are funded by AusAID.

Glen has worked for many years in teacher education and curriculum development—in Australia, Canada and, briefly, in East Timor. Most recently she was a Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Education at Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia. Prior to that she worked at the de Lissa Institute at the University of South Australia. She resigned from university life in 2005, preferring the challenges of development and education work, especially in the Pacific region.

Frances Pene

Frances Pene was born in England. She obtained a BA in Scandinavian Studies at Newcastle-upon-Tyne University and then a PGCE in Teaching English as a Foreign Language at London University. She came to Fiji and joined the civil service as an assistant teacher and, later, head of department, teaching English in secondary schools in Nausori, Rotuma, Levuka and Suva. She then taught for four years at the Fiji College of Advanced Education and studied part-time at USP for a PGDip (Linguistics) before joining the staff at USP's Institute of Education, where she works as an editor.

Priscilla Puamau

Dr Priscilla Qolisaya Puamau has worked in the field of education for 25 years in various capacities: secondary school teacher of English, Head of Languages (secondary school), Head of Education (tertiary teacher education), performance management trainer, senior education officer, and Deputy Principal and Principal of the Fiji College of Advanced Education, a teacher education institution in Fiji. She is currently Team Leader of the PRIDE Project, an acronym for the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education. Her research interests are ethical and moral leadership, values education, educational reform, educational underachievement, indigenous education and teacher education. She obtained a





PhD in Education from the University of Queensland and Masters in Education from the University of the South Pacific. Her main point of identity is Christian first, then indigenous Fijian, female, professional worker, mother, and so on.

Adi Asilina Davila Toganivalu

Adi Davila holds a Diploma of Kindergarten Teaching from the Melbourne Kindergarten Teachers' College (Dip MKTC, 1965), a BEd in ECE from the University of Southern Queensland (USQ, 1992), and a Masters in Education (USQ, 1998). She worked as a kindergarten teacher in Suva from 1966 to 1972 having established one of two kindergartens for the YWCA in Suva. These were the first kindergartens run by qualified teachers and served the multicultural community in Fiji. She later became supervisor of four kindergartens in Suva, Lautoka and Levuka.

Adi Davila took time off (1973 to 1985) to raise a family but in 1986 she returned to work as Coordinator of the Pacific Pre-school Teachers Course at Continuing Education, Extension USP until 1990. She studied in Toowoomba from 1991 to 1993 and then joined the UNICEF Pacific office in Suva as its Education Project Officer from 1994 until her retirement in July, 2005. She has held positions for many years as President of the Fiji Pre-school Association and President of the Pacific Preschool Council.

Her work has taken her to Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Tonga, Samoa, Nauru and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Although her specialist field is ECCE, she has taken a very keen interest in the early primary school years. During her term with UNICEF she worked with the Ministries of Education in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands to develop Child Friendly Schools.

In her retirement Adi Davila continues to maintain her broad interests in education, not only in the formal settings but more especially now in community education and development.





Abbreviations

ACECE	Advanced Certificate in Early Childhood Education
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIMS Unit	Assessment, Information Systems, Monitoring & Statistics Unit
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BELS	Basic Education Life Skills (Regional Project)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECCD	Early childhood care and development
ECCDES	Early childhood care, development and education standards
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
ECE	Early childhood education
ECPE	Early childhood parent education
EDI	EFA Index
EFA	<i>Education For All</i> (UNESCO)
ELDS	Early learning and development standards
EU	European Union
FALD	Foundation areas of learning and development
FBEAP	<i>Forum Basic Education Action Plan</i>
FESP	Fiji Education Sector Programme
FIC(s)	Forum Island country/ies
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GER	Gross enrolment ratio
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GPI(s)	Gender parity index (indices)
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KECEA	Kiribati Early Childhood Education Association
KTC	Kiribati Teachers' College
LTC	Lautoka Teachers' College
MDG(s)	Millennium Development Goal(s)
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development
MESC	Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture
MEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MOE	Ministry of Education





NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NCECES	National Council for Early Childhood Education in Samoa
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NEP	Niue Education Project
NER	Net enrolment ratio
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NNER	Net non-enrolled rates
NUS	National University of Samoa
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PADDLE	Pacific Archive of Digital Data for Learning and Education
PAFT	Parents as First Teachers (Programme)
PAT	Parents as teachers
PIC(s)	Pacific Island country/ies
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PPC	Pacific Pre-school Council
PREL	Pacific Resources for Education and Learning
PRIDE	Pacific Regional Initiatives for the delivery of basic Education
PSAVB	Pri Skul Asosiesen Blong Vanuatu
PTR	Pupil:teacher ratio
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
SPBEA	South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment
SUNGO	Samoa Umbrella for Non-government Organisations
TVET	Technical and vocation education and training
TWG	(Regional) Thematic Working Group
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal primary education
USP	University of the South Pacific
WHO	World Health Organisation
WUTMI	Women United Together Marshall Islands
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association





1

Opening Address at the Regional ECCE workshop, Honiara, Solomon Islands, 26 – 30 March 2007

Hon. Derek Sikua, Solomon Islands Minister for Education (MEHRD)

At the outset, I wish to acknowledge the presence of our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Livestock, Hon. Toswel Kaua; fellow cabinet ministers; senior government officials; representatives of regional and UN agencies in the Pacific; members of the media; and ladies and gentlemen. Your presence here with us this morning during your busy schedules is greatly appreciated.

I am honoured to accept the invitation of the organisers of this workshop to officiate at the opening of this timely workshop. It is timely for the Solomon Islands as we are about to wrap up the research and formulation of our Early Childhood Education Policy.

At this juncture, I am also honoured to formally convey to the co-sponsors of this workshop, namely PREL, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, SPBEA, USP, UNESCO and UNICEF our most sincere gratitude for the close collaboration with my Ministry on behalf of our Grand Coalition for Change Government.





On this note, I wish to welcome particularly two of our keynote speakers, Ms Maki Hayashikawa, UNESCO Regional Programme Specialist in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Primary Education and Gender, based in Bangkok; and Dr Glen Palmer, Early Childhood Care and Education consultant, who have come to share the global perspective and their experience on the issues listed on the agenda of this workshop.

I would also like to commend the co-organisers of this workshop for their support and decision to co-host this workshop here in Honiara. This is an indicator of harmonisation which is at the heart of the Pacific Plan. This not only indicated to me the confidence that they have in our Grand Coalition for Change Government, but also created that opportunity for the officials of my Ministry and their colleagues to be exposed to best practices and challenges when organising such events.

As many of you are aware, this workshop is a continuation of a similar workshop that was convened by UNICEF and USP in June 2004 in Fiji. This workshop will follow up and build on various initiatives to further develop current initiatives on early childhood care and education for our Pacific children in all our countries, largely through the efforts of other education stakeholders, including our NGOs and dedicated persons in each of our countries.

I am glad to note that many of these dedicated persons are also here to assist the facilitators and panellists of this workshop.

I admire the structure of this workshop as it starts with the global perspective and then shifts to a regional perspective to set the tone of the workshop. This is then continued with issues of 'brainwiring', research, culture, language and assessment, which are grounded in theory and global perspectives but will be adapted for the Pacific context.

The theme for this workshop is *Supporting learning from 0-8: creating the future*. It ties in very well with the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) and in fact emphasises a very important foundation on which the Plan must be built,





something that has been most difficult to negotiate and implement. I believe that this is an issue that Pacific Ministers for Education need to revisit at our forthcoming Forum Education Ministers' Meeting planned for Auckland, New Zealand later this year.

The next five days will be an opportune time for our facilitators, panellists, participants and observers to achieve many things: to re-confirm the importance of 0 – 8 year-olds' learning and lived experiences; to involve government policy-makers and practitioners concerned with 0 – 8 years-olds' education in developing a vision, a policy, a curriculum and a conducive learning environment for this age group; to strengthen national and regional networking amongst 0 – 8 practitioners; and to share assessment techniques used for 0 – 8 year-olds. The facilitators and participants alike will discuss various issues and build on the work that they have started.

In this regard, I wish to remind you to maintain the links between the discussions at this workshop with the two regional programmes, namely Goal One of *Education For All (EFA)* and the Regional Benchmarking endorsed by the Forum Education Ministers in our meeting in 2006 in Fiji.

There is merit in organising such workshops, as they will create opportunities and avenues for our regional educators and carers of children aged 0 – 8 years to contribute to the body of knowledge of best practice for the Pacific, rather than relying solely on speakers from outside the region.

As a starting point for this initiative, you will notice that we have invited keynote speakers both from the Pacific Region and outside our region to guide our discussion, and share their experiences with us as we search for sound policies and best practices of early childhood care and education for our region.

That said, I wish to urge our participants to fully utilise the planned discussion sessions of this workshop, as this will indicate to many of us that you are champions of this subject in your own countries.





Early childhood care and education in the Pacific

This could be that moment or opportunity that many of us have been waiting for to contribute towards quality education and create the means of accessing this quality education in the region and through our own education systems.

In conclusion, I once again wish to thank our co-hosts for the positive response to our proposal to co-host this regional workshop on early childhood care and education here in Honiara. I am confident that the envisaged objectives of this workshop are achievable, given the experiences and expertise of our keynote speakers, facilitators and panellists.

I am sure that our participants will greatly appreciate the envisaged outcomes of this workshop, as these will remind and better inform them of their commitments and responsibilities for the development and advancement of key strategic issues and activities for this sub-sector.

Colleague Ministers, invited guests, keynote speakers, workshop facilitators, panellists, participants, ladies and gentlemen, I wish this workshop every success in its deliberations, and I am honoured to now formally declare the Regional Workshop on Early Childhood Care and Education open.





2

The education and care of 0 – 8 year-olds: building strong foundations for the future

Priscilla Puamau

The years 0-8 are foundational years for all individuals. Children in this age range therefore need special attention in their care, nutrition, education and development. Importantly, they need to be nurtured and educated in the ins and outs of their cultural practices, values, traditions, knowledge and wisdom. They also need to be gradually prepared to live in a rapidly globalising world that extends beyond the shores of their local and national communities.

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is not just concerned with children who attend pre-schools or kindergartens (usually 3 – 5 age range) which, historically, is the way it has been perceived by Pacific governments and communities. Instead, there is consensus that it should be concerned with the development of children from birth, through pre-school/kindergarten to grade/class two, and that it should be holistic, embracing their physical, emotional, psychological, cognitive, spiritual, cultural and social development.





Historically, ECCE in the Pacific emerged through the efforts of concerned educators, parents, community members and stakeholders, such as NGOs and church organisations. International organisations have also played a pivotal role in advancing the development of ECCE and basic education in the region.

Because of the enormous costs associated with ECCE, Pacific governments have yet to fully commit to supporting and funding ECCE activities. However, with increased lobbying by ECCE advocates, ECCE is gaining prominence such that some Pacific Ministries/Departments of Education have developed or are in the process of developing ECCE policies and guidelines and other activities at the national level.

Pacific Vision for Education

Political recognition of the importance of ECCE is inherent in the support that Ministers for Education of Pacific Island countries have accorded it in the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP), a document guiding educational development in fifteen countries of the region.

As used in this volume, the Pacific refers to fourteen politically independent countries that have membership in the Pacific Islands Forum (more commonly known as the Forum): Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Tokelau is included as the fifteenth country—it is in the process of achieving self-government in free association with New Zealand.

The Ministers for Education of the Pacific Islands Forum met in Auckland in 2001 at the instruction of the Forum Leaders (at their meeting in late 1999) to consider issues related to human resource development in their countries. The vision of the Ministers for Education was articulated thus.

Basic education as the fundamental building block for society should engender the broader life skills that lead to social cohesion and provide the foundations for vocational callings, higher education and life long learning.





These when combined with enhanced employment opportunities create a higher level of personal and societal security and development.

Forum members recognised that development of basic education takes place in the context of commitments to the world community and meeting the new demands of the global economy, which should be balanced with the enhancement of their own distinctive Pacific values, morals, social, political, economic and cultural heritages, and reflect the Pacific's unique geographical context. (PIFS, 2001)

The goals were defined as achieving universal and equitable educational participation and achievement, ensuring access and equity, and improving quality and outcomes.

The Forum Ministers for Education reaffirmed their commitment to the Dakar 2000 Education for All Framework for Action goals which included expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. The Ministers further agreed that in relation to improving quality in basic education, early childhood education (ECE), amongst other things, was highlighted as an important component. In particular, the Ministers for Education agreed:

[t]hat while continuing with collaborative efforts with NGOs, church and community organisations in providing ECE to pre-school age children, governments should address resource requirements for ECE teacher training and assess how ECE teachers can obtain appropriate status and conditions of employment. (PIFS, 2001)

In the 2002 review of FBEAP, the shift in terminology from ECE to ECCE was obvious with Ministers for Education recommitting themselves to ECCE. Specifically, they recognised that 'high quality ECCE programmes can benefit countries by promoting intelligence of young children' and acknowledged other benefits of ECCE to other sectors of education, to society and the economy (PIFS, 2002). The Education Ministers acknowledged that 'integrated ECCE programmes may be the single most effective intervention for helping children,





families, communities, and nations break the cycle of poverty' (PIFS, 2002). Ministers agreed that they would undertake country reviews of national policies on ECCE using a set of prepared guidelines.

The PRIDE Project

The PRIDE Project¹, an initiative of the Forum Ministers for Education, was designed to implement the Pacific vision for education encapsulated in FBEAP. Implementation of this project began in 2004 and is expected to end in December 2009. Its overall objective is:

To expand opportunities for children and youth to acquire the values, knowledge and skills that will enable them to actively participate in the social, spiritual, economic and cultural development of their communities and to contribute positively to creating sustainable futures (www.usp.ac.fj/pride).

The Project seeks to strengthen the capacity of each of the 15 countries identified above to deliver quality basic education through both formal and non-formal means in order to achieve its objective. The development of strategic plans for education in each country that blend the best global approaches with local values and ways of thinking is the expected key outcome. Support for the implementation of these national strategic plans is provided by the Project. Sharing of best practice and experience amongst countries is also an important project outcome, evidenced by the development of an online resource centre (see www.usp.ac.paddle). Ministers for Education have defined basic education as all educational provision for children and youths, ranging from early childhood, through to primary, secondary and technical/vocational in both the formal and non-formal sectors. In fact, it is everything excepting higher or adult education.

In relation to ECCE, the PRIDE Project Benchmarks document (see www.usp.ac.fj/pride), a key document that contains 11 benchmarks used to review national

1. PRIDE is an acronym for the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education, a project funded by the EU and NZAID and implemented by the University of the South Pacific. More information is available on (www.usp.ac.fj/pride)





education strategic plans, articulates Benchmark 6 as a holistic approach to basic education. One of the three principles underlying this benchmark includes the following statement: ‘The Plan addresses the challenges of effective articulation between each level of education: from pre-school/early childhood to elementary/primary, from elementary/primary to secondary, and from secondary to TVET’.

There are two other PRIDE benchmarks that have relevance for ECCE. Benchmark 1, pride in cultural and national identity, clearly stipulates that national education plans of the fifteen Forum countries ought to be built:

on a strong foundation of local foundations of local cultures and languages, thus enabling students to develop a deep pride in their own values, traditions and wisdoms, and a clear sense of their own local cultural identity, as well as their identity as citizens of the nation. (www.usp.ac.fj/pride)

Implicit in this is the understanding that the language for ECCE should be the mother tongue of the child and that his/her cultural values will be valued.

The second benchmark that has salience for ECCE is Benchmark 3, alignment with National Development Plan and Regional and International Conventions, which has this statement as an indicator: ‘The Plan contains a statement of commitment to regional conventions and frameworks, such as FBEAP... and international commitments such as EFA,...Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC)...’ (The PRIDE Project, 2007: 3)

Increased focus on ECCE at national level

The increased emphasis on ECCE is evident when one searches through some Pacific national Education Strategic Plans and ECCE policy documents. An examination of three strategic plans should be sufficient evidence of this. The Tonga Education Policy Framework 2004 – 2019, for example, devotes two pages to early childhood education, the first part on the policy issue and outcome; the second part on what government’s policy response is; and the third part on the proposed new investments in ECCE. In acknowledging the ‘high rate of return from investments in early childhood education’, particularly its importance in ‘laying





the foundation for primary schooling' and 'equity dimensions' where 'children from least disadvantaged communities are likely to benefit from early childhood education', some of the policy responses include the following strategies.

- Form national working parties to survey and report on early childhood provision in Tonga
- Formal registration of all pre-schools
- Development of an early childhood education curriculum
- Production and dissemination of culturally appropriate developmental learning resources
- Provision of pre-service and in-service training and professional development programmes for early childhood teachers
- Support for parent education initiatives.

(Tonga Ministry of Education, 2004: p. 33)

Similarly, Samoa devoted a section of their education strategic plan to ECE. It recognised the importance of early childhood learning and noted that since 1999, 'government support of ECE has increased' (Samoa Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2006: 19). An ECE Coordinator was appointed in 2000 and all registered ECE centres are now eligible to obtain financial assistance from the Government through an annual Government grant.

Tokelau is in the process of developing standardised curriculum statements for each learning area from ECE to Year 11 'adhering to the policies as outlined in the National Curriculum Policy Framework' (Tokelau Department of Education, 2005: p. 5). While the focus for Tonga and Samoa is pre-school education, Tokelau's early childhood curriculum is intended to cover the years from birth to school entry age and identifies three broad overlapping age ranges: infant (birth to 18 months); toddler (1 – 3 years); and young child (1 ½ years – school entry). The Tokelau Department of Education (2007: 19) 'will develop minimum standards' for schools and will be guided by the four curriculum principles of empowerment, holistic development, family and community, and relationships.

I have already mentioned above that support for the implementation of key priority areas from national education strategic plans is a key function of the PRIDE





Project. Tonga has three sub-projects in the area of early childhood education: one on the development of an early childhood education policy, the second on ECE teacher in-service training and the third on ECE curriculum development at the teacher training institution. Similarly, Fiji has a sub-project on the development of their early childhood education curriculum framework. Both Vanuatu and the Cook Islands also have a sub-project in the area of ECCE—the Early Childhood Bookmaking in the Vernacular Project in Vanuatu and the Enhancing Creativity and Learning in Early Childhood Education Project in the Cook Islands.

Increasingly, ECCE is being recognised as an important area for government intervention in the region. Forum Ministers for Education have in the past endorsed various recommendations on ECCE, including strengthening national policies, clarifying government roles and responsibilities, addressing resource requirements and developing national plans of action. Despite this, development in ECCE has been erratic in Pacific island countries. More information on the status of ECCE provision in the fifteen Pacific countries covered in this volume can be found in Chapter 4.

Regional partnership: ECCE workshop, Solomon Islands, March 2007

An experiment in collaborative partnerships between development partners in the Pacific was carried out in the organisation and management of a regional ECCE workshop. ‘Supporting learning from 0-8, creating the future’ was the theme of the workshop held in Solomon Islands from 26-30 March 2007. It was co-hosted by seven agencies, including Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education (PRIDE), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA) and the Solomon Islands Government.

Attending the workshop were 42 participants, representing government policy makers and NGOs engaged in ECCE in all the Forum countries except Palau.





The workshop objectives included:

- reconfirming the importance of the care, development and learning of 0 – 8 year-olds
- getting government policy-makers and practitioners involved in the education of 0 – 8 year-olds to commit to developing a vision, a policy, curriculum guidelines/frameworks and appropriate programmes and initiatives for this age group in their own country
- strengthening national and regional networking amongst 0 – 8 practitioners
- sharing assessment techniques used for 0 – 8 years-olds.

The workshop covered the following four areas for 0 – 8 year-olds: importance and effectiveness of their education; commitment to develop vision, policy and curriculum; assessment; and culture and language. There were keynote presentations on both the global and local perspectives to ECCE and case studies from Fiji, the Northern Pacific and Papua New Guinea. There were also group sessions and panel discussions to tease out the main issues around ECCE and to discuss the way forward in national contexts.

The following are some of the struggles in ECCE that were identified at the workshop.

- Government support can be problematic since ECCE is not generally seen as part of basic education and many governments place an emphasis on primary education, with very little support, if any for ECCE.
- The links between the education and health sectors are weak and need strengthening.
- The most vulnerable age group in ECCE is 0 – 3 years, yet programmes and strategies for this age group are neglected. Who is responsible for the care and development aspects of the 0 – 3 year-olds before they attend preschool centres? There is an understanding that parents are but who provides education and training for those parents who need it? How do parents become educated on the physical, emotional and development needs of their children? Should governments not be concerned with the care of their national treasures—the children who will become the leaders of the future? There is the recognition that parent-community-government partnerships are vital, as are government partnerships with NGOs, and with religious and community organisations.





- An important question that some ECCE providers struggle with is what and whose values should their programmes be grounded in and what language should be valued?
- The importance of play in preschool years is not fully appreciated by some teachers as they place a premium on preparing students for class one by, for example, teaching them English or arithmetic. There is a struggle here between formal instruction and learning through play in ECCE.

The workshop participants recognized that interventions for ECCE ought to begin at birth and would continue into preschool, kindergarten and the transition to classes 1 and 2. They acknowledged that all agencies dealing with the health, care, development and education of young children from birth to 8 years of age ought to work collaboratively to ensure that children are well prepared to enter the formal school system. Moreover, they acknowledged the importance of grounding ECCE in the children's own languages and cultures.

The participants noted that many Pacific countries were yet to develop their ECCE policy and did not have an adequate data management system to capture relevant ECCE data. The workshop also noted that national governments have been hesitant to commit to ECCE because of high budgetary implications.

Highlights of the workshop included field visits to three ECCE centres, the insights provided daily by critical friend and workshop evaluator, Ufemia Camaitoga, and the formulation of an outcomes document.

Outcomes of the workshop

There was a sense of excitement and accomplishment during the latter part of the workshop, when the participants realised that they had the agency to place a recommendation on the way forward for ECCE to a high policy forum—that of the Forum Education Ministers' Meeting that was scheduled for the latter part of the year.





The following recommendations from this regional ECCE workshop were presented to and endorsed by the Ministers of Education when they met in New Zealand in November 2007:

- a) that each Government work with stakeholders to develop its national policy for early childhood care and education with age parameters to be set nationally;
 - b) that a national advisory body is established to advise government on early childhood matters;
 - c) that a regional council is established to coordinate professional and community issues relating to early childhood in the Pacific;
 - d) that early childhood curriculum, teaching pedagogies, assessment strategies, resources and teacher education are grounded in local cultures and languages; and
 - e) that data for 0-8 year olds in both licensed and unlicensed centres are included in the education management information system.
- (PIFS, 2007: 3)

The onus now rests with workshop participants, ECCE providers and advocates to continue to work with their government and other stakeholders to build a solid foundation in ECCE.

Book outline

Chapter 1 is the opening address by the Solomon Islands Minister for Education, the Honourable Dr Derek Sikua. Dr Sikua spoke with passion and conviction and participants quickly realised that they had an ECCE champion in the Minister. I am sure I speak for the workshop participants and regional partners when I offer our heartfelt congratulations to Dr Sikua on his recent appointment to the position of Prime Minister of Solomon Islands.

The rest of the chapters were prepared by the resource people and participants at the ECCE regional workshop. Chapter 3 by Adi Davila Toganivalu, regarded as the grandmother of ECCE in the Pacific, is significant in several ways. First, it documents the genesis and progress of ECCE in the Pacific region over the last three decades. This, in itself, is an important achievement, given the paucity





of information and data on ECCE. Second, it captures the struggles that ECCE has had since its inception, not only in the movement itself but also, and just as importantly, in the mindsets of teachers who teach an imported programme of western origin in the context of traditional cultures and values in a changing world. Toganivalu also discusses recent international initiatives that have elevated the position of ECCE globally and which, in turn, have impacted on ECCE development and achievements regionally and nationally.

In validating the critical place of indigenous knowledge, language and culture in ECCE programmes, Toganivalu challenges Pacific early childhood practitioners to 'be bold in creating pre-schools or early childhood education centres that characterise who we are as a people—not just poor replicas of models copied from other countries or places'. She adds:

PIC centres for ECCE ought to be places where children are understood, and treated with respect and dignity; where Pacific languages, stories, music, dance, art and crafts are promoted; and where beliefs, values, customs and traditions are evident and respected. When people come to these centres they must see and feel that they are in a **Pacific** centre for ECCE. (See Chapter 3.)

In Chapter 4, Frances Pene provides a summary of the current status of ECCE in Pacific countries, drawing from information provided by participants from the fourteen participating countries. The section for each country ends with an articulation of what needs to be done in order to improve ECCE in that country.

Maki Hayashikawa, in Chapter 5, provides a global and regional overview of ECCE developments, with a specific focus on the Asia/Pacific region. Her paper draws heavily on the Global Monitoring Report 2007. She emphasises the point that, despite ECCE being the first goal of Education for All (EFA) and the multiple benefits of ECCE, it has not been the first priority for most governments. This policy neglect is particularly true for Pacific Island countries. She also highlights the lack of evidence-based research and studies in ECCE in the Pacific. Notwithstanding these and other challenges and issues associated with





ECCE, Hayashikawa makes a compelling case for countries investing in ECCE and highlights its multiple benefits from the perspectives of child development, social and economic development, education achievements and human rights to ECCE. Two key messages come out clearly in this chapter. First, ECCE provides a strong foundation for life and for learning. Second, the multiple effects of ECCE are not limited to the early years but continue long after. Hayashikawa then provides some recommendations for consideration by Pacific countries to move ECCE forward.

Chapter 6 by Junko Miyahara provides six reasons to support early childhood development with a specific focus placed on the scientific rationale. The other five reasons include children's rights; promoting social equity; economic benefits; an entry point for social mobilisation; and achieving international development goals. Miyahara provides scientific evidence to demonstrate the significance of early stimulation of the brain, the critical importance of good nutrition and health and the quality of child-caregiver attention in order to confirm that 'the early years of life are the most crucial periods for healthy development and well-being'. (See Chapter 6.)

Frances Pene, in Chapter 7, reports on assessment of 0–8 year-olds, and evaluation and monitoring of ECCE, drawing from presentations made by Dr Richard Wah and Dr Visessio Pongi, as well as the outcome of the group discussion that participants had on current assessment strategies carried out in their countries. Pene sums up assessment strategies for the three age groups: 0–3 years; 3–6 years and 6–8 years.

Chapter 8 by Jennifer James provides a pictorial story of the development of ECCE resources, drawing on her recipe of 'lots of imagination, community participation, local materials and minimum expenditure'. This practical do-it-yourself chapter contains many useful tips for making toys, games, teaching aids, play equipment and other resources that ECCE providers and teachers can use.

A case study in how Fiji developed the early learning and development standards (ELDS) for ECCE is described in detail by Glen Palmer in Chapter 9. Palmer





begins her chapter by answering three questions: What are early learning and development standards? What should be the focus of ELDS for young children? What are some pros and cons for using ELDS? She then describes the Fiji experience which uses ‘an outcomes approach within a holistic early childhood framework’. Her diagram of the curriculum framework may be particularly useful for other countries interested in developing ELDS for ECCE.

In Chapter 10, a joint approach is taken by Desma Hughes, Ufemia Camaitoga and Jessie Fuamatu to describe what ECCE teacher preparation provision is available in three teacher training institutions: The University of the South Pacific, Lautoka Teachers’ College and Fulton College, all physically situated in Fiji.

The final chapter in this volume is written by Ufemia Camaitoga, the workshop critical friend and workshop evaluator. Camaitoga sums up some of the key issues facing ECCE in the Pacific region which collectively demonstrate its lack of priority in national government circles. And yet, she argues, ECCE ‘is everyone’s responsibility; we do not have a choice’. Political will and commitment are needed by governments, in partnership with NGOs, to pay more attention to improving ECCE provision and quality. Moreover, she argues for visionary and dynamic leadership in ECCE. Camaitoga uses two Ps and three Vs to encapsulate her notion of what this visionary and dynamic leadership would entail: passion, power, voice, visibility and value-added. She also makes the point that ECCE has gained greater visibility and voice through two tangible outcomes of the 2007 Honiara regional ECCE workshop in 2007: the workshop outcomes paper with a recommendation to be submitted to the Forum Ministers for Education meeting and the publication of this book. She concludes by providing nine strategies to move ECCE forward in the Pacific region.

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3

Early childhood care and education in the Pacific: reflections of our past, our present and our future

Davila Toganivalu

Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of some historical landmarks in the history of early childhood care and education (ECCE) in the Pacific region over the last thirty years. It goes on to highlight some of the relatively recent international initiatives that have pushed ECCE to prominence on the global agenda and have led to many achievements in the Pacific region. Finally, this chapter raises some questions in relation to these achievements and presents some of the challenges facing ECCE practitioners in the Pacific region today.

First regional ECCE meeting: Suva 1980

Pre-schools, or early childhood education programmes—the more widely used term nowadays to refer to a variety of early education programmes for the 0 – 8 year-olds—have been in existence in the Pacific Islands since the 1960s (although





Fiji recorded its first kindergartens as having started in the 1930s). Not much was known about these programmes until August 1980, when the first gathering of 30 pre-school/early childhood educators from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Pohnpei, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Western Samoa, New Zealand and Australia was held in Suva, Fiji.

The purpose of the workshop was to bring together people active in ECCE to share their stories and aspirations, focus their attention on ECCE in their own and neighbouring countries, and identify issues of common interest and concern, as well as common problems.

The organisers of the meeting were aware of the long and painful struggle, the frustration and the isolation that many of the educators from these small island states were facing, and funds were sought to support this initial meeting. The workshop was co-ordinated by the YWCA's South Pacific Area Office, and the University of the South Pacific's (USP's) Extension Services, Continuing Education and Institute of Education. Funding support came from the *Nederlands Comite Voor Kinderpostzegels*, a non-government agency in the Netherlands, and the Australian Council of Churches.

Why the 1980 workshop was important: cultural issues

The workshop was the first of its kind for Pacific Island people involved in pre-school education. It showed that Pacific early childhood educators were concerned about what was happening in pre-schools and were asking questions. The topics generated much enthusiasm and interest amongst the delegates, who spoke openly and passionately about their work, and at the same time learned much from one another. The discussions delved into issues such as the relevance of child developmental theories for Pacific Island people; the place of culture, values and traditions in pre-school education; how to deal with western as well as traditional practices; and the lack of studies and research on Pacific Island children, their families and situations and the challenges this lack posed for early childhood educators. The concerns raised are described in the sections that follow.





(a) Imported programmes in Pacific pre-schools

Participants remarked that most of their early childhood programmes were based on models mainly from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and noted the major influence that western child developmental theories were having on these pre-school programmes. Although the participants respected the knowledge and research on children derived from the developmental theories of Piaget, Eriksson, Montessori and others, little was known about how these theories related to the Pacific situation, to Pacific children's development, and whether the programmes based on them were appropriate for Pacific children or were in harmony with the cultural and traditional values of the people whose children were attending the centres. Furthermore, participants observed that Pacific pre-schools would need to have different programmes in view of the different lifestyles and social contexts that their children represented.

(b) Traditional values and change

The participants identified a range of traditional cultural values and practices: family values and communal hierarchical values; the status of chiefs versus commoners, with some people in the community having more rights than others; the extended family and decision-making, with males holding the dominant role; and male and female roles in general. Religion was viewed as very important in almost all countries. Shaming children to discourage anti-social behaviour was a popular way of discipline.

The participants also discussed how all these were affected by emerging changes. While family solidarity and interdependence were highlighted as important, and children who lived in villages were members of extended families and were used to being part of a large social group, at the same time individuality was also emerging as a common trend. Clan membership was valued, while multiculturalism was also identified as respected among communities. Respect for elders, chiefs and parents, as well as for culture and language, was seen as highly important for Pacific people. Cooperation, sharing and encouraging self-reliance, and equal opportunities and rights were noted in some instances. Pre-school teachers were adopting many of





the new child development theories in their centres and mentioned that treating all children as equal was important for them, given the hierarchical chiefly structure that some children represented.

The participants agreed that traditional and cultural values differed greatly amongst people. However, it was vital that teachers learned about their own traditional patterns of child rearing and cultural values first, in order to be able to develop the most appropriate programmes for the children in their schools. As participants grappled with child psychology and cultural issues they came up with questions such as: 'Are we putting enough emphasis on our own cultures and traditions, which emphasise sharing and group responsibility? Are we preparing our children for change by helping them to ask questions, speak in groups and work individually on a task? How can we deal with the tensions that arise between these two approaches?' (USP Printing Unit, 1980).

Why the 1980 workshop was important: ECCE data

The 1980 workshop was important for another reason; it was the first time that data about ECCE in the Pacific was gathered and documented. The participants shared information about the ECCE situation in their own country and built up a regional picture. It was found that, in 1980, over 12,000 children were recorded as being enrolled in about 500 currently operating pre-school centres, with one third operating in towns or urban areas. Most programmes catered for three to five-year-olds, except in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea where they catered for three to seven-year-olds. (Primary schools in these two countries started at seven or eight years of age.)

Since the Pacific pre-school education programmes had been heavily influenced by western values and standards, they varied from highly organised, structured timetables to casual free play situations. Sessions were mostly of half-day duration and were held in village centres, churches, homes, health clinics or specially built facilities. The type of care/education also varied; there were kindergartens, play centres, child-minding facilities, prep classes, day-care centres, Head Start (United States of American territories), pre-schools and schools of nine (Fiji).





Most governments were seen as not taking enough interest in pre-schools. However, where they were involved, they generally licensed centres and provided some form of supervision. In the Cook Islands and Nauru, kindergartens and preparatory classes were integrated into the education systems and, in Micronesia, Head Start programmes operated under a US federal grant. Non-government organisations (e.g. the YWCA), religious bodies and parent committees were the backbone of the Pacific pre-school movement.

The use of local vernacular or mother tongue languages was common throughout. Little emphasis was placed on learning English in most of Polynesia and Micronesia, although English was occasionally introduced through songs and finger plays. In Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu, emphasis was placed on using English because of the many local languages spoken and the high proportion of children from English speaking families. Pacific teachers were very aware of the need to enhance traditional values, develop children's language abilities, and stimulate mental development, as well as encourage the involvement of parents and community elders in the pre-school centres.

Problems identified at the 1980 workshop

The following common problems were identified at the 1980 workshop, most of them relating to lack of finance:

- low wages for the teachers, or they worked as volunteers
- high cost of equipment, especially if not available locally
- difficulty in collecting fees from parents
- burdensome fund-raising activities to meet costs
- limited training opportunities for teachers in the islands.

Recommendations from the 1980 workshop

The findings from the workshop were used to formulate seven recommendations. These became the basis for discussions with development partners and spearheaded many regional initiatives and achievements, which are described below.





It was recommended that:

- people who are active in pre-schools be brought together to share programmes, information and common problems
- the use of local, inexpensive materials be encouraged, and people involved in ECCE be trained in how to make teaching aids
- written materials for Pacific Island pre-school teachers be created and shared
- the writing of children's books, using the writers' own Pacific backgrounds and languages, be encouraged
- more learning about child development patterns in the South Pacific take place
- a Pacific Pre-school Teacher Training Course be established
- a regional Pre-school Council be established.

Achievements after the 1980 workshop

One of the first achievements after the 1980 workshop was the establishment of the Pacific Pre-school Council, which was tasked to follow up on the workshop recommendations and to actively support the member countries. The Council has met four times since its inception (1985 in Fiji, 1987 in Tonga, 1990 in Vanuatu and 1995 in Samoa). In each of the Council meetings members provided country updates as well as progress in areas of regional teacher training and their use of the ECCE resources they had developed. Since the UNICEF funding for the non-formal ECCE programme run by the Continuing Education section of USP ceased in 1997, Fiji has been the only country in the region to pay its registration fee to the Council. In 2000, the Council became an alliance member of the World Forum and since then has maintained its involvement and participation in World Forum initiatives.

Fulfilling another recommendation, the Pacific Pre-school Certificate Course at USP's Continuing Education was developed in 1982, followed in 1997 by the USP Diploma Course in ECE and in 2006 by the BEd in ECE. The emphasis in these endeavours was on creating Pacific courses, tailored to the Pacific context of ECCE.





A non-formal ECCE project (1992 – 1997), funded by UNICEF, with USP's Continuing Education Programme was developed to strengthen the national ECCE associations in the region in their organisational structure and advocacy through the production of materials, including a trainer's manual, a toy-making handbook, brochures and posters, plays and videos for advocacy and training, newsletters and supporting Pacific regional and in-country training workshops.

Other major achievements were the Basic Education Life Skills (BELS) Regional Project (1993 – 2001), the Pacific Islands Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) and the Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE) Project – April 2004. These were all funded by international organisations and need to be seen against the backdrop of what was happening globally.

Global initiatives: 1979 to the present

At the same time that the ECCE movement was gaining momentum in the Pacific, there were several global initiatives that influenced much of what was happening in this region. Some of the key global conventions and initiatives were:

- 1979: the International Year of the Child
- 1989: the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- 1990: the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) (including the adoption of the *World Declaration on Education for All* which endorsed a 'Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs')
- 2000 – 2015: the Dakar Framework for Action Education For All
- 2000 – 2015: the Millennium Development Goals.

Highlighting the importance of children globally and ensuring commitments by governments to their survival and care, development and education, their protection and participation added a new impetus in how countries reassessed their responsibilities and support towards their own children. The right of the child to basic education became an important goal for all Pacific Island countries (PICs) and governments made concerted efforts to achieve that objective. However, while Pacific governments became signatories to these conventions and initiatives, progress was slow. The 1990 – 2000 Pacific country reports on EFA (which





stresses the importance of the early years as a foundation for future learning and development) highlighted several major gaps and challenges in ECCE. These were the lack of accurate, disaggregated data and relevant information on ECCE in many of the countries; the lack of country/national action plans; and the need to address access to ECCE, especially for the vulnerable and disadvantaged. In other words, although the countries reported supporting ECCE programme activities, many did not have national strategic plans, policies, guidelines or indicators to follow, nor the commitment and resources to support national initiatives. This is where international organisations entered the arena and played a major role in advancing the development of ECCE and basic education in the region. The three major initiatives mentioned earlier are described below.

(a) The Basic Education Life Skills (BELS) Regional Project (1993 – 2001)

A multi-donor regional project for basic education, namely BELS, was set up to assist PICs strengthen their Education for All (EFA) commitments in areas such as literacy, assessment and community support. The BELS project was jointly sponsored by UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, AusAID and NZAID and was implemented by USP. During the BELS third phase (1998 – 2001), a component on ECCE was included within the Community Support area with a link to literacy education. This new focus on ECCE was in direct response to requests from the member countries. The BELS early childhood specialist worked with Pacific governments to develop national policies and curriculum guidelines for ECCE. The ECCE component aimed at enhancing children's learning and development in their early years by ensuring that quality programmes were provided by capable teachers and empowered communities.

(b) The Pacific Islands Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP)

In May 2001, under the directive of the Pacific Islands Forum leaders, the Ministers of Education of the Pacific Islands met for the first time in Auckland, New Zealand and deliberated on issues concerning the delivery of basic education to the people of the Pacific islands. The ministers from 14 Forum Island countries (FICs) adopted the goals, framework and processes of the Dakar 2000 EFA at this





meeting. They also endorsed a Pacific vision for education for Forum members: to achieve universal and equitable educational participation and achievement, and to ensure access and equity and improve quality outcomes.

The ministers noted that actions were taken at the country level for the development of strategic plans on all facets of education, beginning with ECE through to primary, secondary and technical, vocational education and training (TVET). In reviewing elements affecting the quality of education, the ministers further agreed that, 'while collaborating with providers of ECCE services, governments should address resource requirements for ECCE teacher training and assess how ECCE teachers can obtain appropriate status and conditions of employment'. They then formulated what became known as the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) and requested the Forum Secretariat to facilitate its implementation.

The Pacific FBEAP (2001) also decided to address the contentious issue of conditions of employment of ECCE teachers and their status through the collaborative efforts of governments with NGOs, church and community organisations in providing ECCE to pre-school-age children.

The 2002 review of ECCE and the Forum ministers' guidelines

In 2002, two consultants, Dr Diana Guild (of New Zealand and USA citizenship) and Mrs Vasu Tuivaga (a Fiji citizen), were tasked to undertake the first comprehensive review of ECCE and to provide a status report of ECCE in FICs to the Pacific Forum ministers of education for their December 2002 meeting. Guild and Tuivaga found that accurate information about ECCE policies, enrolment of children, teachers' qualifications and remuneration, curriculum, programme operations and development participation was difficult to obtain or unavailable. However, despite this major obstacle, information was collected from a variety of sources: regional programme documents; country reports; early childhood education/pre-school associations; international development partnership reports; and communications with those partners, including questionnaires sent to in-country ECCE personnel. Guild and Tuivaga provided this broad overview of ECCE to the FICs ministers of education for their deliberation.





Overview of status of ECCE in 2002

- The status of ECCE components varied throughout the FICs.
- Components of ECCE were addressed in some fashion by most governments.
- Policies ~ 60% of FICs had some sort of policy guidelines, ranging from very brief statements to detailed and comprehensive documents.
- Curriculum Development and Implementation ~ Most FICs had used the BELS ECCE Curriculum Guidelines to develop their own curriculum guidelines. Some national curricula were very brief and general, others were detailed and articulate. A few countries used the Head Start Programme or Te Whaariki, a New Zealand early childhood education curriculum document. Samoa and Vanuatu had vernacular curricula.
- Six FICs had a person designated in the Ministry of Education for ECCE.
- Half of the FICs had ECCE/pre-school associations.
- Children's enrolment ~ The percentage of the total age population in ECCE programmes varied greatly throughout the region. The typical age range was between 3 – 6 years, although some covered children aged 0 – 8 years.
- Teacher qualifications ~ Many teachers had little formal ECCE training. Education and/or requirements to be considered a qualified teacher varied throughout the region. Funding of teacher education and training also varied but it appeared that, in many FICs, governments took on a large portion of responsibility, with development partners and private citizens also contributing to the cost.
- Teacher remuneration ~ Although little information was available, teachers were generally poorly paid. The governments of six FICs took at least some responsibility for teacher remuneration, but typically remuneration was from a variety of sources. A few countries indicated that teachers regularly volunteered their services, or were remunerated in kind.
- Teacher:children ratios ~ The ratios varied widely, with teachers having responsibility for between ten to forty children. However, several countries' statistics indicated an optimum ratio of one teacher for fifteen children (1:15).
- Programme operations ~ Most had programmes that operated between three to five days a week, for half a day (3 – 4 hour) sessions. The responsibility for maintenance of the facility and educational resources and materials was divided among governments, development partners, management committees and communities.





- Facilities ~ There were some purpose-built facilities throughout, especially in urban areas. However, not all children and teachers had access to working toilets and/or safe drinking water.
- Development partners ~ A wide variety of activities was occurring. Educational materials and equipment, facilities, curriculum development, and teacher training had all been addressed to some extent in many countries. However, the types of assistance received might not have been in response to coherent plans of actions for ECCE development. The countries generally had accepted assistance in any area in which it was available, rather than focusing assistance from a variety of development partners into one specific area.
- FIC governments could play an important role in the implementation of high quality ECCE programmes in financially realistic ways. For them to take full responsibility for ECCE is not necessary, neither is it desirable; ECCE programmes can be implemented in stages or phases. However, governments must be very clear about the areas of responsibility that they will accept and allocate the remaining responsibilities to other more capable groups. The identification of priorities for coherent ECCE development and clarification of government roles and responsibilities for ECCE are two of the most important things that governments can do at this time.
- Costs for ECCE programmes could be shared. As FIC governments clarify their policies and their own roles and responsibilities for ECCE, a coherent plan of support can be addressed. Financial commitments can be determined, and the roles and responsibilities of parents and teachers, communities, and development partners can be identified.
- Implementation of comprehensive, high quality ECCE programmes is still in the future of FICs.

2002 Pacific Islands Forum Ministers for Education meeting

The December 2002 Pacific Islands Forum Ministers for Education meeting recognised and acknowledged that high quality ECCE programmes had multiple benefits for children, as well as their countries, in a variety of ways. They endorsed the fact that ECCE promoted the intelligence of young children, increased the efficiency of primary education, contributed to future productivity and income, reduced costs of health and other public services, reduced gender inequities and increased female participation in the labour force.





The ministers subsequently committed to undertake regular reviews of their country's ECCE policies using the following proposed guidelines.

- a) Clarifying government roles and responsibilities for ECCE programmes.
- b) Undertaking a leading role in the coordination of development partnership assistance in order to create sustainable support and ensure follow-through of development plans.
- c) Developing action plans on ECCE that identify the priorities and specific areas of development to include the following.
 - Appoint a national ECCE coordinator and area advisors to provide advisory services, monitor development of ECCE programmes, and liaise between communities, pre-school associations and governments.
 - Prioritise curriculum development and implementation in their national education development plans.
 - Undertake an analysis of teacher remuneration costs in order to inform governments' future discussions for the financial assistance of teachers' salaries.
 - Prioritise the clarification of roles and responsibilities of providing teacher education and training in ECCE policy guidelines.
 - Conduct an analysis of trained and untrained teacher needs in order to inform teacher education plans.
 - Develop a consistent, ongoing programme of professional education utilising national and/or regional tertiary institutions.
 - Initiate the collection of data in order to monitor ECCE programme operations and inform future plans for upgrading of ECCE services.
 - Develop policies on facilities, toilets, safe drinking water, and educational materials and resources for licensing and monitoring.

The FIC Education Ministers met five times between 2002 and 2006. In their review of the FBEAP in 2005, they found that ECCE and special education required further attention. ECCE stakeholders in FICs need to keep the ECCE momentum alive and progressing well at the country level, in view of the competing demands of the other educational areas of focus: primary and secondary education, TVET, and formal and non-formal education.





(c) Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education (PRIDE) Project – April 2004

The third major initiative was a regional project on basic education, namely PRIDE. This project was designed by the Pacific Ministers of Education to implement the FBEAP and to support the reform of education in all forms and at all levels: early childhood, primary, secondary, TVET, formal and non-formal education. The PRIDE Project, which was up and running by April 2004, is implemented by the Institute of Education at USP and is jointly funded by the European Union and NZAID.

Second Regional Meeting: June 2004

After the 1980 regional workshop, 24 years passed before another regional ECCE conference was held. This conference, held in June 2004 in Suva, was jointly sponsored by UNICEF and USP's Distance and Flexible Learning Support Centre. The meeting aimed at bringing Pacific ECCE people together to raise awareness of the critical importance of the first eight years of life with an emphasis on the care of young children from birth to three years of age. The first three years of life are seen as the most crucial period for brain development and directly affect the development of cognitive, language, social, motor and emotional skills of the child. It is also a time when young children face the greatest risks to their survival, health, and emotional and physical growth.

It became apparent during the conference that PICs were catering mainly for pre-school programmes for children from three to five or six years; there was very little evidence of activities for children below three years of age, except in the few countries that had day care, playgroup, or play centre programmes. Other topics covered included country updates, parents as teachers, case studies, capacity building of ECCE personnel and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The sessions were both enriching and challenging, as delegates learned about the importance of growth and development in the first three years of a child's life, and how innovative approaches could enhance the overall development of young children in the home, prior to coming to a centre-based early childhood





programme. Parents, families and other care-givers could benefit greatly if they are supported in their child-rearing and care-giving responsibilities to promote a positive environment for the sound early growth and development of infants and young children. Children need to be nurtured in a loving and caring environment, to be physically healthy, mentally alert, socially stimulated and intellectually able to learn and develop to their full potential.

Participants were made further aware that implementing any programmes for the 0 – 3 age group requires an integrated, multi-sectoral approach. Addressing the needs of very young children involves bringing in expertise from civil society, local government, donors, families and communities to be responsible for health, social welfare, rural development, finance and planning, and education. An outcome of the conference was action plans for 0 – 3 year-olds developed by the countries represented.

Third regional meeting on ECCE: March 2007

The third Pacific regional workshop was held in Honiara in March 2007, almost thirty years after the first in 1980, and three years after the second in 2004. It brought together representatives from government and non-government stakeholders to focus on the theme: *Supporting learning from 0 – 8: creating the future*. It also brought together many new key players in the region, as well as some who were initial players thirty years ago.

The objectives of the workshop were: reconfirming the importance of the 0 – 8 year age range; developing vision, policy, curriculum guidelines and appropriate learning environments and facilities for 0 – 8 year-olds; strengthening national and regional networking of stakeholders; and sharing assessment techniques used for 0 – 8 year-old children.

Given the agenda of this workshop in Honiara, it can be surmised that ECCE in the Pacific region has indeed come a long way, and it is currently grappling with many of the important issues and challenges that will determine the future directions that the individual countries will choose to take them forward.





Issues and challenges for Pacific Island countries

Since 1980, much progress has been made, as this review of the history of ECCE in the Pacific shows, and many PICs have developed innovative programmes for their children. Many challenges remain, however, which need to be addressed. These are discussed below.

The cultural context

Over the years there has been wide acknowledgement of the importance of the social and cultural worlds in which children live and learn. Children develop their sense of identity and learn their cultural skills from their families and those around them. As they grow and mature they further gain knowledge of human relationships and develop interpersonal skills while gradually learning about the rules and values of their culture and society. Among the rules they learn are how to show respect, how to interact with people they know well compared to those they have just met, how to organise time, how to dress, what and when to eat, how to respond to major life transitions or celebrations, and how to worship.

Early childhood programmes exist in contexts which are influenced by many factors. Among them are the parents' or family's preferences, community values, societal expectations, the demands of institutions at the next level of education, and broadly-defined values of a specific culture. When we talk about culture, we mean a way of life of a discrete group, which includes a body of accumulated knowledge, skills, beliefs and values. In the Pacific, we use the terms *faka-Tonga*, *fa'a Samoa*, *vaka Viti* and so on. When children at four or five years of age come to pre-school, they already know who they are and what culture they belong to. They already have cultural skills such as the use of a first language or mother tongue. Children who have a good command of the mother tongue will rapidly and easily acquire a second language as they need it, and children who hear their language validated at school will have greater confidence in their culture and in themselves as mother tongue speakers.

Therefore, in planning an appropriate learning environment which will promote children's learning, we need to listen to children to determine what they actually know and understand, rather than assume what they do not know.





Innovative learning environments

The city of Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy places great importance on the creation of learning environments for its early childhood schools. It affirms that ‘the environments we provide make a public statement about the importance we give to young children and their education, and the choices society makes in its provisions for children indicate the recognition and value society gives to children’ (Millikan *et al.* 2003: 66, 69). The Reggio Emilia project commenced in 1963, ‘with the awareness across Italy that children needed to be prepared for life in a democracy, that society needed to respond to the uniqueness in every child and there needed to be meaningful communication with both the child and the family’ (Millikan 2003: 2).

Early childhood educators who have visited this centre and have become familiar with its methodology and practices believe that we can all learn a lot from Reggio Emilia’s philosophy and work. The important point is how to create our own settings based on our culture, beliefs and local environment. Pacific early childhood practitioners must be bold in creating pre-schools or early childhood education centres that characterise who we are as a people—not just poor replicas of models copied from other countries or places. Our long history of ECCE development and rich experience should prepare us well to forge ahead and find the right mix of the old and new and to enable us to choose the way forward. Let us be imaginative by becoming architects and designers of children’s learning environments that will enhance their learning and development. PIC centres for ECCE ought to be places where children are understood, and treated with respect and dignity; where Pacific languages, stories, music, dance, art and crafts are promoted; and where beliefs, values, customs and traditions are evident and respected. When people come to these centres they must see and feel that they are in a **Pacific** centre for ECCE.

Reinforcing developmentally appropriate curriculum

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), a highly respected authority on ECCE in the USA, believes that a high quality ECCE programme provides a safe and nurturing environment that promotes the physical,





social, emotional and cognitive development of young children, while responding to the need of the families. Although the quality of an early childhood programme may be affected by many factors, a major determining factor of programme quality is the extent to which knowledge of child development is applied in programme practices and the degree to which the programme is developmentally appropriate. NAEYC (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) specifically highlights the three dimensions of the concept of ‘developmental appropriateness’ as being based on:

- what is known about child development and learning. This criterion refers specifically to the child’s age-related stages of development;
- what is known about the strengths, interests and needs of each individual, based on a belief in the uniqueness of the child;
- knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful and relevant for the participating children and their families.

Given the 30 years of progress and development of ECCE in the Pacific, a question that needs to be asked is: Where are we with regard to developmentally appropriate programmes?

Formal instruction versus play in ECCE

ECCE programmes have changed in response to social, economic and political demands. In addition, the number of programmes has increased in response to the growing demand for out of home care and education during the early years, and in response also to the need for extended hours of care for children of employed parents. Children are now enrolled in programmes at a younger age, many from infancy. However, the changes have not always taken into account the basic developmental needs of young children, which have remained constant. In recent years, a trend towards formal instruction in academic skills of literacy and numeracy has emerged in ECCE programmes, and the Pacific countries are not immune to this strong pressure, which emanates from primary school teachers and parents. This is not to say that pre-reading and pre-numeracy activities cannot take place; they should take place—in an informal way. However, this should not be extended to any kind of formal instruction. This push toward formal academic





instruction for younger children is based on misconceptions about early learning. **There is no evidence to support the idea that children learn any better in primary school if they have academic instruction in the early years.** Early childhood educators believe that children learn most effectively through a hands-on, play-oriented approach. Children are naturally curious and playful and they learn best when they:

- explore and play
- involve all of their senses
- manipulate real objects in the environment
- work or play with adults and other children
- make meaningful plans and decisions
- build upon what they already know.

Teaching resources

Children learn when there are objects and materials to manipulate and people and children to interact with. Yet many pre-schools still lack adequate supplies of suitable play materials, including teaching resources, books and toys. Some of these can be made easily with local materials. Although commercial toys are attractive and widely available nowadays, they are costly and need to be carefully selected, as some are easily broken. At the same time, indoor and outdoor equipment require careful choosing or making, as well as regular maintenance to ensure the safety of children. (See Chapter 8.)

Teacher training

The decision made by FICs Ministers of Education in 2001 to review the conditions of work and status of ECCE teachers in their various countries is highly commendable, for teachers are the backbone of ECCE. For too long, teachers in early childhood education have worked under extremely difficult circumstances with poor pay and low status. If teachers are to provide a high quality service, they require not only appropriate specialist training to prepare them adequately for this major task and responsibility, but also the pay they merit and the recognition they deserve.





It is vital that teachers and early educators fully understand what they are supposed to be doing and this is where training is crucial. All early childhood educators need a belief or philosophy of ECCE principles, which form the framework for all their work with children. In order for teachers to make sound decisions about how to teach young children, they must know something about how children grow, develop and learn and the interaction between these. Teachers must also be aware of individual differences among children, affirming the child's uniqueness, and they must also support a positive sense of identity in each child. Teachers must know about individual learning styles, interests and preferences, personality and temperament, skills and talents, challenges and difficulties. All these are aspects of quality teaching and they need to underpin any teacher training programme.

Making ECCE more visible

Despite ECCE's long existence in the Pacific, it remains weak and relatively invisible, and people's knowledge about it in ministries of education, in other sectors of government and in our Pacific communities is vague and limited. ECCE practitioners have to learn to speak about it with confidence and conviction. They have to be advocates who promote ECCE, using the work place, community and media, at all levels—national, provincial, district and community. They have to speak with one voice, work together as a cohesive whole, rather than as fragmented parts, guarding their own individual territory and shutting out those who may be able to contribute or add value to their work. Collaboration implies a willingness to listen, let go a little and learn from others, at the same time building bridges with partners and colleagues to strengthen partnerships and links which are necessary and highly desirable in working in ECCE.

Articulation of the three stages of early childhood

In 1999, UNICEF came up with some essential strategies that focus on the development of children during the first eight years of life. The early childhood period is divided into three stages: before birth to age three, from three to six years and from six to eight years. A brief revisit to these strategies will provide some food for thought for ECCE practitioners if they are struggling to find suitable approaches to apply to any of these three stages.





The quality of the critical early years in the child's life and the experiences to which the child is exposed from birth set the stage for lifelong health and learning. Children from 0 – 8 years old are the responsibility of ECCE practitioners, but within this age group there are differences.

The 0 – 3 age range is when the child's brain development is most intense. This age group is still an area which needs more attention from PICs. The major task is to help families and care-givers provide optimal care for their young children. The challenge is to blend basic child development knowledge with an understanding of culture and country-specific child-rearing practices that support the child's healthy and holistic development. Emphasis needs to be placed on interventions designed to reach children, and their care-givers, from before birth through the first three years of life. Children in this age range benefit most from integrated health, nutrition and developmental services.

The next stage, 3 – 6 years, is when socialisation and the foundation for learning are laid. Although this stage is familiar to Pacific ECCE workers because most programmes cater for children in this category, we can learn still more from what others have been doing. UNICEF (1999) proposes a strategy of informal, community-based programmes that support the capacity of families and communities to provide enriched learning environments for these children and enhance their overall development. It involves establishing parent and child organisations and centres, creating integrated educational activities and promoting integrated community child development programmes.

For the 6 – 8 year-olds, the transition from the early years to primary school is an important phase of their development. It is a transition to formal schooling and regular, independent interaction outside the immediate family. Children need to be ready for school and schools ready for children. Transition is most effective when viewed as an ongoing process that begins before school entry, continues to the point of entry and into the first two years of schooling. Transition programmes that will introduce children and their parents to some of the activities, skills and themes the children will experience in class one are needed in order to strengthen teachers' and parents' support of children.





The first year of school can be traumatic for many young children. Some of the changes children encounter as they move into a new learning environment include the change from:

- informal learning to formal learning
- an oral culture to a written culture
- relative freedom of movement to adherence to strict rules
- patterns of a minority culture to expectations of the dominant culture
- mother tongue to competence in a new language without prior instruction
- a family group to a larger group of peers.

Without adequate preparation, a child is likely to under-perform, ends up repeating grades, becomes uninterested in learning, develops a sense of failure and low self-esteem and ultimately drops out

Parent partnership awareness

There are many different ways in which parent participation in ECCE programmes can be achieved; the challenge is to select what is appropriate in the specific context. This is a very important partnership and needs to be seriously nurtured and respected to allow it to strengthen. Children are happy when their families are part of their ECCE environment and, overall, parents want the best for their children. One way to proceed is for teachers to find out what parents expect of their children's pre-school and what types of involvement parents can provide; they can be a great resource to the centre. Increasing the involvement of fathers will also be a positive move. Programmes can be designed in collaboration with parents, who will be an integral part of implementation in order to assure sustainability.

Leadership in ECCE

Governments, through their relevant ministries—a ministry of education in most cases—have several responsibilities: formulating ECCE policies within the context of national education plans; mobilising political and popular support; and promoting flexible, adaptable programmes for young children that are appropriate to their age. In PICs, there is a tendency to equate ECCE with formal programmes, i.e. pre-schools, instead of valuing and encouraging the non-formal family and





community-based, community-owned initiatives. Governments must ensure that a flexible range of support is available to families and communities that will strengthen their ability to support their children's overall development. Governments need to adopt a holistic policy and planning framework when expanding their national ECCE. The first step is to assess the present situation and then to look at ways to strengthen and supplement existing programmes. Moreover, **there needs to be a strong, central coordinating body to assist the government in overseeing all aspects of national ECCE issues and development.** These include: developing a curriculum framework or guidelines, targeting provision for the disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, encouraging flexible implementation, recognising sector realities, fostering approaches which build on strengths, working in genuine partnerships, making advocacy more effective, providing local evidence to support research, and monitoring and assessment of ECCE programmes.

PIC governments have done a fair amount for ECCE in their various countries, but there is still much to be done and they cannot do it alone. The governments need to take a leading role and work with both local and international stakeholders to develop national visions, goals and strategic plans to establish a framework for the holistic development of the child. This requires inputs from the various sectors of government, NGOs, donors, the private sector, local municipalities, teacher training institutions, teacher associations, parents and community groups.

Emerging issues and challenges

Although many of the old issues such as inadequate finance, lack of teacher training and lack of resources continue to pose major challenges for ECCE, emerging issues are impacting ECCE today, and educators need to be prepared to deal with them. Some examples are the HIV and AIDS epidemic, violence and abuse against children and women, substance and drug abuse, poverty, and the effects of television and technology. ECCE has a major role to play in championing children's issues and raising awareness on their behalf, as they and their families do not have a voice.





Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the development of ECCE in the Pacific region since 1980, highlights some of the major global conventions and initiatives that have had an impact on the current focus of attention, describes some of the major ECCE achievements in the Pacific, and raises what are deemed to be critical issues and challenges for Pacific Island countries to consider in pursuing their own way forward. Governments could play an important role in the implementation of high quality ECCE programmes in financially realistic ways. It is not necessary, nor is it desirable, for one player alone to shoulder the full responsibility for ECCE; programmes can be implemented by other players in phases or stages. However, governments must be very clear about the areas of responsibility that they will accept, and allocate remaining responsibilities to capable groups. The identification of priorities for coherent ECCE development and clarification of government roles and responsibilities for ECCE are two of the most important actions that government can undertake at this time. Costs for ECCE programmes could be shared. As governments clarify their policies and their own roles and responsibilities to ECCE, a coherent plan of support can be addressed. Financial commitments can be determined, and the roles and responsibilities of parents and teachers, communities and development partners can be identified. The critical role of communities and the great contribution Pacific communities have made need to be recognised, and they need to be supported and strengthened so that they can continue their sterling work.

It is only by addressing these critical issues that an equitable, affordable and high quality ECCE programmes can be achieved for the children of the Pacific.

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4

The current status of ECCE in Pacific Island countries

Frances Pene

At the regional ECCE workshop in Honiara, there were two participants from each of the fifteen Forum Pacific Island countries, one representing the government and the other representing the non-government organisations involved in ECCE in their country. These participants contributed information to a matrix which had the following sections: strategy/operational plans, finances, EC development issues for 0 – 3 year-olds, organisational issues, and action that needs to be undertaken by the government/NGOs. This information provides a picture of the current ECCE status quo in the Pacific region in 2007. It should be mentioned here that, in most of the countries, provision for 0 – 3 year-olds is the responsibility of the health authorities, but there is a general feeling among the workshop participants that the education and health authorities should work together for the holistic benefit of children in this age group.

Cook Islands

The Cook Islands has a set of Education Regulations, which states that all children who are 3½ years old are eligible to attend pre-school, and strategies are being





implemented to ensure that all do so. The Cook Islands Curriculum Framework (2002: 28)² includes ECE and states: 'The early childhood education curriculum provides guidance for designing and establishing learning environments that are non-threatening, closely linked to the home environment, caring and safe, involving participation of adults in a variety of supportive roles'. There is government funding for ECE, determined by the roll of each centre, most of which are attached to primary schools. The Ministry of Education coordinates monthly meetings for ECE teachers.

What needs to be done

While the government has already begun to implement some of its policies, a lot more work is needed to raise public awareness and disseminate information about ECCE, support ECCE teachers and encourage them to become qualified.

Fiji

In Fiji, ECCE centres are established by NGOs. However, there is an Action Plan for Implementation of the Recommendations of the 2000 *Report of the Fiji Islands Education Commission/Panel* and the Fiji Ministry of Education's *Education for All 2015 National Action Plan*, the first goal of which is to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. There is also the 2005 Suva Declaration, where Framework 1 targets the child. The Fiji Ministry of Education has formulated a Policy in Early Childhood Education and is currently working on Early Childhood Care, Development and Education Standards (ECCDES) for the 0 – 6 age range (see Chapter 9). The government supplies salary grants for ECE teachers. In the 2007 budget the Salary Assistance was F\$550,000.00, the Building Grant was \$100,000.00, the Equipment grant was \$32,000.00 and the ECE Grant was \$50,000.00. Other sources of finance are UNICEF, school management committees, NGOs, communities and donor countries.

Concerning provision for the 0 – 3 year-olds, some local government authorities provide playgrounds and parks, and Ministry of Health clinics are baby-friendly, with nursing and diaper changing facilities.

2. All the documents mentioned in this chapter can be accessed from: www.paddle.usp.ac.fj.





What needs to be done

The status of ECCE teachers needs to be regularised and improved. This can be done if the Fiji Government absorbs them into the civil service and pays them a salary according to their qualifications and experience, rather than continuing the current system of salary assistance grants. When it comes to the 0 – 3 age group, a lot more could be done if local authorities and the health and education ministries combined efforts to provide safe, clean and baby-friendly facilities in public places.

Kiribati

ECCE in Kiribati caters for 3 – 5 year-olds and is mostly run by island councils, the churches (the Bahai, the Kiribati Protestant Church, the Catholic Church and the SDA), and private individuals. The council and church schools are often conducted in the village *mwaneaba*, or meeting house, although some church-run schools in Tarawa have their own premises. The individuals who run schools are trained ECCE teachers and retired primary school teachers, but there is concern about some of these schools as they are run in private homes that do not offer a safe, healthy environment and many are not registered. All three types of pre-school levy fees of varying amounts which are used to pay the teachers. Like Tonga and Vanuatu, Kiribati has no government budget allocation for ECCE.

Government and pre-school operators are working together and teachers are expected to use the national curriculum after attending workshops on how to do so. These workshops have been held on most islands in the group. Most pre-schools with a small roll follow a multi-age organisation, where children work together but do different activities according to their interest and ability. If there are enough children of the same age, they are grouped according to their age for some activities.

Several years ago, the pre-schools formed KECEA, the Kiribati Early Childhood Education Association. KECEA has had a varied history, sometimes very active, other times less so. One of the things they achieved was to endorse a set of standards relating to fees, safe environments for ECCE centres, teachers' qualifications, teacher:child ratio and curriculum.





Provision for 0 – 3 year-olds

In Kiribati, workshops for island councillors, pre-school teachers, and community and church leaders were conducted in many villages by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MEYS) and the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, funded by AusAID. The aim was for interested stakeholders to learn how to provide appropriate care, health and a safe learning environment for the children in their community, and to raise awareness of pre-school, rather than primary school, being the first stage of education. An action plan on how to go about establishing play centres for this age group was formulated by representatives from different church denominations.

In addition, KECEA intends to include provision for 0 – 3 year-olds in their plan. They have encouraged urban and island councils to include play areas for young children in public parks and to set up play centres.

What needs to be done

After several years of little progress regarding the improvement of ECCE provision in Kiribati, plans are now taking shape to remedy this. Education Ministry personnel are currently reviewing and refining the ECCE policy, which was written in 2000, but they need assistance to finalise it. At the time of the March 2007 Honiara workshop, a draft policy had been written which includes: the age range (2 – 5), fees, teacher qualifications, curriculum, health and safety, teachers' responsibilities, resources, relationship with the community, medium of instruction (Kiribati), excursions, assessment and record keeping. Plans for the next few years have also been drafted and include expanding the number of centres; redesigning the one-year course for ECCE teaching at Kiribati Teachers' College (KTC), first begun in 1996 but discontinued after six years; regularising the registration of ECCE centres; and translating the curriculum into Kiribati (personal communication Bwenaata Baukin, MEYS).

There is also a need to revive KECEA and work with MEYS, as it is felt that together they can play a big part in ECCE development. Another need is a resource centre for ECCE providers.





Nauru

Nauru has an Educational Strategic Plan (2005 – 2006) which promises to '[r]eview existing successful Early Childhood curriculum through a process of backward mapping to ensure continuity with primary education'. The Plan is based on outcomes of students, schools and management team and has three major components: the learning programme, the school support services programme and the management and accountability programme. Finances come from the Republic of Nauru Government, NZAID and AusAID. Government initiatives include community based child care centres for 0 – 3 year-olds, managed by community groups, with funding and parent education and training programmes provided by the government. A national centre coordinator has been appointed to develop a training programme, formulate policies, collect data and monitor the quality of the ECCE programmes offered in the centres. In addition, the government has initiated parent awareness education workshops. These are conducted by teachers, who produced a series of pamphlets called Parent Kits, which touch on many issues of parenting and culture. The workshops are aimed at promoting the concept of community childcare centres and the training of volunteers to be parent teachers or supervisors. The centres are used as outreach centres by the Health department to screen children from birth and provide health care services, food and nutritional supplements, immunisation and breastfeeding training for mothers.

What needs to be done

Government needs to take an integrated approach to improving parental involvement in their children's development and learning, at home and at school. This should include NGOs, the media, and government departments dealing with women's affairs, youth affairs, and health. More childcare centres and support services are needed, as well as advice and finances from donor organisations.

Niue

With a population of a little over 2,000, Niue runs one pre-school, one primary school and one secondary school. According to the draft Niue EFA National Plan 2003 – 2010, all four-year-olds attend the ECE Centre, which is part of the





primary school, but it is acknowledged that there is room for a lot of improvement in teacher performance. Another problem identified in the Plan is poor sanitation facilities.

Provision for the 0 – 3 year-olds

Provision for this age group between 1993 and 1999 was a Mobile Education Unit run by the Government of Niue to serve village play groups. In 2000, the Niue Education Project (NEP), in partnership with Dunedin College of Education and funded by NZAID, began and is still running. According to the draft Niue EFA National Plan 2003 – 2010, the declining child population affects the establishment of play centres.

Papua New Guinea

The Papua New Guinea Policy on ECCD is a new policy endorsed by the PNG Government in 2007. It took two years to research, consult and collate, and has an implementation strategy for a term of five years. There is a budget allocation to cover the five years. The current allocation is K500,000. Sadly, the Child Care and Pre-school Association that was established in the 1980s is defunct, so there is no NGO involvement in ECE.

What needs to be done

It is important that the Childcare and Pre-school Association be revived, and that the assistance of UNESCO or UNICEF or the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education (PRIDE) be sought for this purpose. Secondly, a permanent technical and advisory mechanism for the Government Sectoral Committee as provided for in the 2007 policy needs to be set up.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)

The Marshall Islands uses a programme run by the NGO Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI). WUTMI's affiliated sponsors and partners include the Asia Foundation, the United Nations Development Programme, Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, several government ministries within the RMI Government, the Council of RMI NGOs and the New Zealand





Agency for International Development. WUTMI has 24 chapters in RMI and serves as the voice of women. Other objectives are to support and strengthen Marshallese families, and prepare the younger generation for their role in society. Among its several programmes is Jined im Jemed ilo Kobo: Early Childhood Parent Education (ECPE) 0 – 5 years old. *Jined ilo Kobo* is a principle upon which Marshallese cultural and social relationships are built. It means that the mother protects and sustains, moulds and shapes. The programme, however, includes fathers and aims to help fathers earn the title of *Jined ilo Kobo*. Patterned on the Parents as Teachers (PAT) programme, it is an early childhood family education and support programme based on research into brain development and its links to behaviour. Activities include home visits; practical advice; parents' group meetings and workshops; medical screening to detect potential problems in development; a radio programme on early childhood parenting skills, and a network of resources and services. Over the next five years, WUTMI hopes to secure more funding and expand the programme.

What needs to be done

Funds are needed so that the ECPE programme can be expanded to all the outer islands in the Republic.

Samoa

In Samoa, the most recent Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture's (MESC) Strategic Policies and Plan 2006 – 2015 states that: 'Government will continue to support the development of ECE. Parents, community and development partners are encouraged to continue their current role in the development of ECE'. The vision is: 'A quality early childhood education for all children between the ages of 3 – 5 in Samoa' (MESC Strategic Policies and Plan:18).

The Policy Statements for ECE are given below.

- The establishment of one ECE centre in a village will be encouraged.
- The Ministry will explore ways to fund ECE teachers' salaries.
- Teachers in ECE centres will be encouraged to enrol in ECE programmes offered by the NCECES, USP and the NUS.





- All ECE programmes should be guided by the approved National Curriculum.
- MESC will conduct in-service training for ECE in collaboration with NCECES.
- MESC and NCECES will collaborate in monitoring the quality of ECE centres. (MESC Strategic Policies and Plan:19)

The NGO, the National Council for early Childhood Education in Samoa (NCECES), was established in 1998. Their objectives are to:

- review the ECE Constitution
- provide training for pre-school teachers
- co-ordinate all activities on ECE in collaboration with MESC
- provide education for all children including those with special needs, through qualified teachers
- facilitate community involvement of early childhood education in the community
- increase service providers' knowledge through creating community awareness of services offered by NCECES
- actively promote principles of the Convention on Rights of Children.

The NCECES Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 covers provision of in-service and pre-service training, workshops on making resources, conducting ECE awareness programmes, classification of pre-schools according to the *Pre-School Standards*, and liaising with the Ministry on progress and future plans.

Within NCECES are several organisations, such as religious organisations, that run their own schools, and there are also village schools and private schools that operate independently. All pre-schools are responsible for hiring staff, for school resources, and for the fees paid by parents. A Minimum Standards Guideline has been formulated that all ECE centres must adhere to.

The Ministry worked with NCECES, has reviewed the national pre-school curriculum and plans to hold in-service training workshops for teachers. The curriculum has three sections. Section 1 focuses on the importance of child development; education in the early years; play; teachers, parents and the





community; health and safety issues; and special needs. Section 2 focuses on the child, the community, animals, machines and physical forces. Section 3 includes guidance for staff, safety and record keeping.

All registered ECCE centres are eligible to receive financial assistance from government grants, but as yet the government does not pay teachers' salaries, although it is considering this. Other funding comes from the Government of Canada and also from JICA, the EU, and the ADB. Links with the Samoa Umbrella for Non-government Organisations (SUNGO) and *Komiti Tumama* have enabled NCECES to access funds for training.

What needs to be done

Funding is urgently needed to develop learning resources, to run ECCE workshops for professional development, and to improve pre-school facilities. Currently, 40% of pre-schools do not have their own premises, operating in school halls, women's committee *fale* and private homes, and the NCECES head office and model school are in need of an upgrade. In addition, it is hoped that the government will find a way to pay teachers' salaries.

Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands Ministry of Education is about to finalise the research and formulation of their new ECCE policy, develop standards and regulations and conduct a baseline survey of all ECCE centres. Funding is sourced from the Solomon Island Government Recurrent Budget SI\$350,000, UNICEF, NZAID (to finalise the ECCE Policy), PRIDE (Standard and Regulations for Registration and Accreditation), and the EU through its provincial support. Financial support is also provided for sponsorship of ECCE training at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education and for teachers' salaries.

Tokelau

Tokelau has a Strategic Plan 2005 – 2006 which includes the strategy: '[to] develop standardised curriculum statements for each learning area from ECE to Year 11 adhering to the policies as outlined in the National Curriculum Policy Framework'.





ECCE is covered under the Tokelau National Curriculum Policy Framework, and is financed by the governments of Tokelau and New Zealand.

Tonga

It was royalty that initiated ECCE in Tonga; the first centre was established in 1965 following a request by King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, and the first Tonga Pre-school Association was established following a request from Queen Halaevalu Mata'aho in 1976. It is still going strong.

The Tonga Education Policy Framework (final draft) 2004–2019 (p 34), undertakes to appoint an ECCE officer (or officers); conduct a survey of pre-school provision in Tonga; register all pre-school centres; review the ECCE curriculum and develop culturally appropriate learning materials; develop and implement a training programme for early childhood teachers; set up pilot projects for community-based ECCE centres; and develop a policy for provision of subsidies for ECCE education. Subsequently, in 2006, the Tonga Early Childhood Advisory Committee was established. It was formed to consult with all early childhood providers, government stakeholders, church leaders and the MOE Management Committee and develop the ECCE Strategic Plan. The survey was completed in the same year and the Strategic Plan is based on this survey.

Also in 2006, the first ECCE officer was appointed and tasked with the job of working closely with the MOE, NGOs, the Tonga Institute of Education and all other ECCE stakeholders. There are currently six main NGO providers of ECE, who work with the MOE in planning and implementing programmes for all the centres. They each run their own programmes, but in 2007 they combined to support the development of the ECCE Policy Framework, the in-service training and the staff professional team.

Unlike most other PICs, the Tongan government has no budgetary allocation for ECCE. PRIDE funded the ECCE policy development and the in-service training for all the ECCE teachers. Salaries are paid by management committees, churches and communities.





Tonga raises awareness through the Parents as First Teachers programme (PAFT). This programme targets parents of 0 – 5 year-olds and is implemented through TV, radio and print.

What needs to be done

There is a need to develop ongoing pre- and in-service training programmes to encourage teachers to qualify and bring retired primary school teachers into the system. Development of good quality resources is another area that needs attention. A lot of work needs to be done to increase community participation in ECCE, and funds are needed to provide strong financial support and improve sustainability. Other needs are to improve the organisational structures and management of ECCE, and make the transition into primary school smooth by developing a transition programme. The Education Ministry's Early Childhood Sector needs a data system, and an ECE curriculum should be developed. Formal support by the government would help to achieve some or all of these.

Tuvalu

The (first draft) of *Tuvalu Te Kakeega II 2005-2015 National Strategies for Sustainable Development* (p 58) states:

Historically, the Government has not been involved with preschools, but is now considering a more supportive and regulatory role. The Government now provides annual grants for salaries of up to three qualified teachers in each registered preschool, support for preschool infrastructure, and materials have been provided through various donor programmes.

There is a government recurrent budgetary allocation for pre-school teachers' salaries of \$45,924 and a pre-school support allocation of \$20,000. In a strategy operational plan 2006 – 2010, designed to set out a phased programme of priority education policy and strategy reform, priority areas for ECCE are: teacher training; improving the existing permanent ECCE centres, all of which are run by their own management committees, at a rate of two centres annually; and developing ECCE curriculum guidelines. Activities which have already been implemented are





the drafting of an ECCE policy, funding two students to study full-time for the ECCE Diploma at USP's Tuvalu Centre, and improving two centres (the Vaimele Centre on Vaitupu Island and the Funafuti Centre). Currently, the National ECCE Council is working with the ECCE Teachers' Association to finalise the ECCE policy.

The ECCE Teachers' Association is very active, meeting monthly at different centres on Funafuti to do their own fund-raising and make teaching resources for the centres at their own expense.

What needs to be done

The upgrading of the existing centres needs to be continued according to plan, and there needs to be more collaboration among NGOs, government, the National ECE Council and other stakeholders so that activities are not duplicated.

Vanuatu

Vanuatu has an Education Master Plan 2000 – 2010, which states:

We intend to introduce vernacular-language education in the early years of the basic-education cycle ... We intend, over a period of ten years or more, to establish community-built and -maintained schools in virtually every village and hamlet, based on Vanuatu's hundreds of existing kindergartens wherever possible, in which a preparatory year and Grades 1 and 2 will be offered in the local vernacular language. ... This measure will enable the smaller children (ages 5-7) to continue to live in their homes and be taught by a teacher living in the village, known to everyone, and speaking the vernacular language. Teachers will be mature individuals who are respected in the community (e.g., retired teachers, community leaders) and who have completed at least ten years of education (pp 6,7).

Their Corporate Plan 2004 – 2006 (p 7) states: 'The Government of Vanuatu policy is to provide national access to basic education up to year 8, working towards ten years of education, including two years of Pre School, over the next decade.'





The Government Strategic Plan, launched in 2006 after the National Educational Summit and in line with the concept of the Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy, includes the following objectives:

- to achieve universal primary school completion
- to strengthen numeracy, literacy and life skills for all children 0 – 8 yrs
- to provide relevant and accessible curriculum materials and assessment systems
- to provide qualified, productive and well-supported teachers for every school
- to strengthen the professional competence of teachers.

There is no budgetary allocation for ECE. In recent years financing has come from UNICEF, the Norman-Kirk Memorial Fund and UNESCO.

Vanuatu has an NGO, the Pri Skul Asosiesen Blong Vanuatu, which plans to (a) have an early childhood centre at Emalus Campus USP by 2008/9, so that students taking ECE courses can use it for their practical training, (b) improve awareness of ECE from 0 – 3 years among teenage mothers, families and the wider community, and (c) encourage the use of the vernacular in centres and the wider community.

Provision for 0 – 3 year-olds

The Pri Skul Asosiesen Blong Vanuatu provides support and training to teenage mothers and caregivers, and raises awareness about ECCE.

Conclusion

These brief ‘snapshots’ of ongoing efforts to improve the provision of ECCE and the participants’ views about what still needs to be done show that efforts are being made to improve provision of ECCE, but that in every country there is still more to be done. More awareness-raising, more financial assistance from governments, better integration of local authorities and NGOs, better training of ECCE teachers, more community participation, and improved data collection will improve the situation. It is encouraging to see what has been achieved, and this workshop has informed, inspired and motivated participants to continue in their efforts.





5

Global and regional perspective: making a compelling case for early childhood care and education³

Maki Hayashikawa

The purpose of this chapter is to present a global and regional overview of the status and trends in early childhood care and education (ECCE). It summarises the main findings and discussions from the *Global Monitoring Report 2007* (GMR, 2007), pulls out some key issues in ECCE at global and regional levels, and highlights some critical areas that call for urgent action. The chapter is divided into four parts. The first part consists of a brief overview of the global progress towards achieving the *Education for All* (EFA) goals, as assessed in the current GMR, in order to have a better understanding of the broader context in which ECCE is being discussed, promoted and assessed around the world. The second part examines the global and regional status and trends in ECCE as reported in

3. This chapter is based on the PowerPoint presentation delivered at the Pacific Regional Workshop on 26 March 2007. The presentation built and expanded on the general presentation prepared by UNESCO Bangkok for the East Asia regional launching of the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007* in November 2007 in Bangkok, Thailand.





the GMR 2007. In the third part of this chapter, some key issues and challenges regarding ECCE are discussed, with more specific reference to the Asia-Pacific region context, and in the fourth and last part, some critical actions are suggested for consideration by countries in this region to realise EFA Goal 1 and place ECCE high on the national priority agenda.

Introduction

Expanding and improving ECCE is the first goal of the Dakar Framework of Action for Education for All adopted in 2000, with countries pledging their commitment to achieve the target by 2015. Since then, some important steps have been taken by several countries in the Asia-Pacific region towards meeting this goal. However, progress between and within countries in the region has been uneven and the situation continues to show vast diversity and disparities.

ECCE is an area that still lacks much evidence-based research and studies, especially in the developing countries, including the countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Even when studies are available, the scope and coverage are too limited to collectively provide a comprehensive picture on development in ECCE, globally and regionally.

The *Global Monitoring Report 2007*, the fifth in the series, focuses on this first EFA goal, with special attention to equity and inclusion in ECCE. In the absence of comprehensive studies and evidence-based research, this issue of the GMR probably gives us the best overall account of the status and trends in ECCE in the world and by regions today. All statistical data referred to in this chapter come from the *Global Monitoring Report 2007*, accessible on the Internet.

Overview on global progress in EFA

EFA goals and MDGs

In looking at global progress in EFA, it is worth revisiting the six EFA goals and the four Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that are typically associated with them in order to keep the focus of the issue and understand better what we are trying to achieve.





Table 1 EFA and MDGs goals

EFA Goals (abridged)	Corresponding MDGs
1. Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education.	1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary education by 2015.	2. Achieve universal primary education.
3. Promote learning and life skills programmes for youth and adults.	3. Promote gender equality and empower women.
4. Increase adult literacy by 50%.	4. Reduce child mortality.
5. Eliminate gender disparities by 2005 and achieve gender equality in education by 2015.	
6. Improve the quality of education.	

Placing the EFA goals and the MDGs side by side shows an important difference between the two sets of goals: the MDGs which make reference to education are more limited in scope and coverage than the EFA goals. For example, with regard to early childhood concerns, the corresponding goal of MDG is Goal 4: ‘Reduce child mortality’. Nowhere do the MDGs address the educational concerns of the child’s early years; the MDG addressing early childhood only partially covers what should be an area that is in fact a more holistic concern. Noticeable also is the fact that there is no goal on literacy in the MDGs.

This difference between the two sets of goals that guide our national development policies and strategies, including education, needs to be recognised and understood, as today there is a tendency of national governments to increasingly give more attention to the MDGs, even when making reference to their education sector goals. If progress is to be made in areas such as ECCE, gender parity or literacy, the commitments to achieving education for all by 2015 will need to be respected by countries, and all those engaged in basic education to promote EFA will have to ensure that the EFA goals are not lost sight of but are kept high up on the political agenda.





Progress with a mixed picture – Universal primary education and secondary education

The overall progress in EFA around the world is succinctly captured by the EFA Index (EDI), which was first introduced in the *Global Monitoring Report* of 2003/4. The EDI is a summary measure of a country's situation vis-à-vis four EFA goals, namely, universal primary education (UPE) (Goal 2), adult literacy (Goal 4), gender parity (Goal 5) and quality of education (Goal 6). ECCE (Goal 1) and the learning needs of youth and adults (Goal 3) are not included as measures for EDI, as data collected for these two goals are not standardised sufficiently. Each of the four goals (2, 4, 5 and 6) is represented by a proxy indicator ⁴ and the EDI is a simple average of the four indicators, varying between 0 and 1, with 1 representing EFA achievement.⁵

The *GMR 2007* reports the situation of 125 countries with data for all four indicators. (See Table 2.) Of the 125 countries, 47 countries are reported to have achieved or are very close to achieving, the four common and measurable EFA targets, as shown in the table below.

For the Pacific region, data have been available only for Fiji to measure the EDI, which, with an EDI of 0.966, belongs to one of the 47 countries that have achieved the EFA targets.

With regard to progress in access to primary education (Goal 2), improvements were seen in almost all countries which had a net enrolment ratio (NER) of below 85% in 1999. For the Pacific region, the NER was comparatively high with 90% (2004) in all countries except for Solomon Islands which reported an NER of 80%. In Fiji and Samoa, the NERs were reported as having declined during the period 1999-2004.

4. The four EFA proxy indicators are: the total primary net enrolment ratio (for UPE), the literacy rate for persons aged 15 and over (for adult literacy), the gender-specific EFA index (for gender parity and equality), and the survival rate to grade 5 (for quality of education).

5. *GMR 2007*, pages 64-65.





Table 2 EDI for 125 countries in nine regions

Regions	Far from EFA (EDI below 0.80)	Intermediate position (EDI between 0.80 and 0.94)	EFA achieved or close (EDI between 0.95 and 1.00)
Sub Saharan Africa	19	8	1
Arab States	4	11	1
Central Asia	0	2	4
East Asia/Pacific	2	6	3
South and West Asia	3	1	0
N.America/West Europe	0	2	17
Latin America/Caribbean	0	18	6
Central Europe/East Europe	0	2	15
Total	28	50	47

Source: *GMR 2007*

Despite the progress being made in the overall participation of children in primary school, the *GMR* reports that there are still an estimated 77 million children who are not in school—the so-called ‘out-of-school’ children.⁶ Although this is a reduction by 21 million from the 1999 figure, the high number implies that there are too many children who are unreached.

India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Ethiopia combined have the largest share of out-of-school children worldwide, with a total of 22.8 million out-of-school children. At the same time, it is important to note that the significant reduction in India between 2002 and 2004 actually contributed to the overall drop in the global figure. East Asia was the only region in the world where the number of out-of-primary school children increased between 1999 and 2004 from 6.4 million in 1999 to 9.3 million

6. In the *GMR 2007*, ‘out-of-school children’ is defined as those children who are not enrolled in either primary or secondary school. This is an expansion on the coverage of statistics, as the previous GMRs looked only at ‘out-of-primary-school children’ with corresponding figures.





in 2004. The Pacific region still had approximately 373,000 out-of-primary-school children in 2004, which represents a reduction of 72,000 from the figure in 1999.

The global estimate on out-of-school children understates the problem. Household survey data often show that, even when children are enrolled in school, many of them do not attend regularly, making them de facto out-of-school children who are likely to be missed out from the official data.

Secondary education is also an area that has been rapidly developing during the reported period 1999 and 2004. In the Pacific countries, the pressure on secondary education is greater than in countries in the East Asia and South and West Asia regions. The average gross enrolment ratio (GER) in the Pacific was 104% for 2004, which is substantially higher than the world average of 65% and 59% for developing countries. However, if we look at the individual country level, the GERs vary significantly, ranging from Australia with 149% to Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands that report less than 30%. Furthermore, the overall secondary GER often hides the disparities between the two stages of secondary education, namely lower and upper.

Literacy—an elusive goal

Compared to the progress being achieved in primary education, little progress has been made in achieving adult literacy. The *GMR 2007* concludes that literacy remains an ‘elusive goal’. A total of 778 million adults aged 15 and above are illiterate, with female adults accounting for two-thirds of the total. This translates to one in five adults and one in four for adult women who lack the basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy.

The vast majority of illiterates are found in South and West Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia, with four countries—China, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan—being home to more than half of the total adult illiterates in the world. In the Pacific region, the average literacy rate has been high at 93% but, as very few countries report data on adult literacy, the reliability of these data is uncertain. For those Pacific countries submitting data, namely, Papua New Guinea (57%) and Vanuatu (74%), adult literacy remains a challenge.





Gender parity—a missed target

Gender parity is the first target of EFA Goal 5—a target with the earliest deadline of 2005, which the world did not meet. Since then, acceleration in national efforts has been witnessed and progress around the world is reported in the current *GMR 2007*. However, the achievement of the gender parity target is not a reality even now. Aggregated regional data and even national data continue to hide gender disparities (e.g. comparatively few female teachers at secondary and tertiary levels) that persist in the teaching/learning process in classrooms, in textbooks, and in academic achievements and learning outcomes, as well as in the higher levels of the teaching profession and administration.

For the East Asia and the Pacific countries, the gender parity indices (GPIs) show that gender parity has been achieved *on average*. However, gender disparities do still remain, even at primary level, in a number of countries where the lowest enrolment rates are also found. Furthermore, the differences between the sexes become greater at higher levels of education, with a rather mixed picture at country level. In East Asia, the GPI for tertiary education on average was 0.88 in 2004, indicating that more males than females were enrolled in the region as a whole. However, in Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, gender disparities favoured females at tertiary level. In the Pacific countries, some gender disparities are still found in favour of boys, but the contrary is found in the Pacific at secondary and tertiary levels, as the GPI for the Pacific region at the tertiary level was 1.27, indicating that many more females than males were enrolled in tertiary education in all countries except Vanuatu.

Gender equality, which is the ultimate target of EFA Goal 5, is a still more difficult target for countries to meet, not only because it implies the need to challenge persisting gender stereotypes in curriculum and learning materials, but also because it necessarily requires an assessment of elements that are difficult to quantify and measure objectively, such as teachers' attitudes and expectations, which may differ with respect to girls and boys.





Looking at the exclusive dimension of EFA

The trends in the statistics reported in the *GMR 2007* overall clearly suggest that countries in all regions are making steady progress, with many countries coming increasingly close to achieving enrolment of all children. While this could be something that countries may wish to commend themselves for, they need to realise that trying to reach the remaining 20% or 10% is many times more difficult than what they have achieved so far. In order to strategise efforts in the right direction, national governments will need to identify those who are left out of school or remain outside the education system as a whole, and design policies and measures that specifically target them. Only by identifying those who are out-of-school and unreached by the system and understanding better who they are can governments prepare effective policies and measures to reduce the number of out-of-school children and make education for all a reality. In other words, they need to turn around their perspectives and understand the 'exclusive' dimensions in EFA. The *GMR 2007* attempts to highlight this point and examines the key features of those children who remain out-of-school, revealing a clear trend, as shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1(a) shows that a girl, living in a rural area, from a poor family with a mother who has no education is likely to have the smallest chance of being enrolled in school, whereas a child, girl or boy, from a rich urban family who has a mother with education would rarely be left out. These multiple disadvantages that characterise out-of-school children prevent them from ever reaching the classroom or, even if they do, prevent them from completing the primary cycle, as described in Figure 1(b). This has many implications for the important role that ECCE could have on improving the situation.

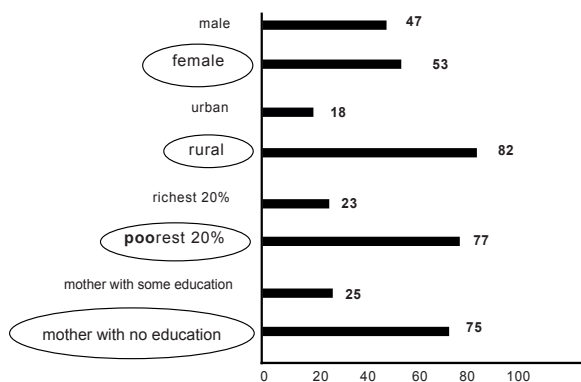
Another way to help visualise the exclusion dimension of primary school enrolment in the regional countries is to look at the situation of those who are not enrolled, based on the net enrolment rate (NER). By calculating the difference between the full enrolment rate of 100% and the current enrolment status, we can get net non-enrolled rates (NNER), as illustrated in Figure 2. This is essentially looking at the situation of those who are not enrolled, and represents the percentage of those children who will require special attention with specifically targeted policies and measures in order to be reached by the deadline of 2015.



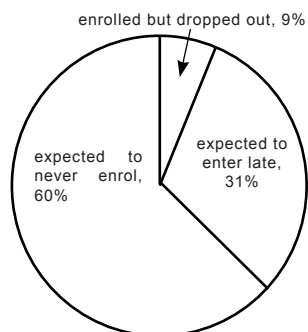


Figure 1 Looking from an exclusive dimension: who are the out-of-school children?

1(a) Distribution of out-of-school children, %, 2001

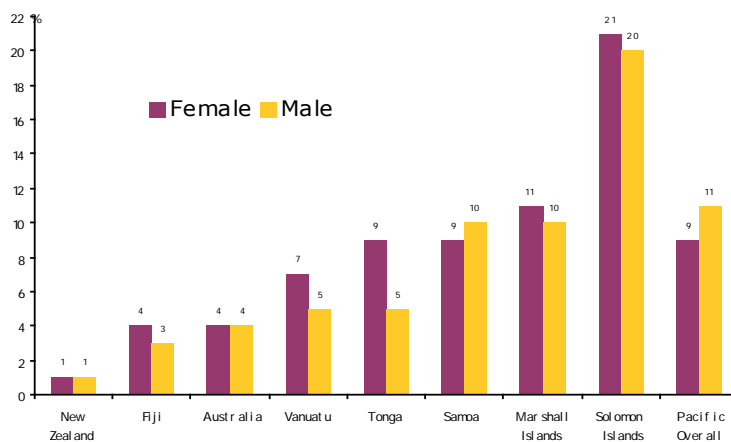


1(b) Implied importance of the impact of ECCE



Source: *GMR 2007*

Figure 2 Net non-enrolled rates in primary education (%) in the Pacific, 2004



Source: *GMR 2007*





Expansion continues at the expense of quality

Expansion of schooling has often occurred at the expense of quality around the world and this continues to be the case, particularly in East Asia, where many children may be enrolling in school today but fail to complete the cycle or reveal poor achievements in literacy and numeracy skills, with high incidence of grade repetition.

The *GMR* reports that, on the whole, the median of survival rates based on data available was below 80% for developing countries. Even in Latin America and the Caribbean, survival rates were reported to be less than 83% in the majority of the countries, despite the high level of access and school completion demonstrated. Less than two-thirds of students reach the last grade in the majority of the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and, in South and West Asia, school retention remains low in several of the countries with available data. It was only the Arab States—except Mauritania (69%), Morocco (76%) and Yemen (67%)—that had survival rates close to or above 90%.

The data on survival rates are not only an indication of the internal inefficiency of the education systems in many of the developing countries, but also provide evidence that students are not mastering the curriculum and acquiring and learning the knowledge and skills essential for their life beyond school.

Teachers are crucial to quality, yet...

EFA cannot be achieved if we do not have sufficient numbers of teachers who are qualified, well-trained and motivated. Without good quality teachers, we cannot ensure good quality education for all. Yet the *GMR 2007* reports that there had been only a slight improvement in both pupil:teacher ratios (PTR) and the percentage of trained teachers during the reporting period. There continues to be a serious shortage of teachers in rural areas, in the most remote areas and for the most disadvantaged population.

The shortage of female teachers reported by many countries is a major concern as their presence is known to be crucial in promoting increased enrolment and





completion in the education of girls. This is a particular concern for countries in the two regions of Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, where the percentage of female teachers in primary education in 2004 accounted only for 45% and 44% of the total number of respectively. Numerous studies now show that an increase in the number of female teachers in these regions can have a major impact on girls' participation, retention and achievement, so urgent measures are called for. Government efforts are needed to recruit and train more female teachers and deploy them through appropriate personnel policies that are gender and culture-sensitive.

In the Pacific, in primary education, women accounted for 60% (2004) of total primary school teachers, but some countries had less than 40%, while in Niue all the primary education teachers were female (100%). The region continues to show a rather mixed situation.

Global and regional status and trends in early childhood care and education

The *GMR 2007* focuses on ECCE and attempts to make a compelling case, based on available (official) data, research and studies. It does this by presenting various arguments for investing in ECCE and highlighting its multiple benefits from the perspectives of child development, social and economic development, educational achievements, as well as human rights to ECCE. With these arguments, the *GMR* brings to us two key messages: (i) ECCE is a strong foundation for life and for learning, and (ii) ECCE has multiple benefits that are not limited to the early years but continue long after.

Why ECCE now?

But why ECCE now? As a way of answering this question, the *GMR 2007* first reminds us that, despite the progress reported on the indicators for women and children, as well as by the EFA indicators, young children today are still living under threat.

- A child born in the developing world today has a 40% chance of living in extreme poverty.





- Each year, 10.5 million under-5 children die, most of them from preventable diseases.
- High under-5 mortality rates persist in Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia.
- In developing countries, 31% of children are moderately or severely stunted.
- Each day 1,800 children are infected with HIV.
- More and more children are found to be living in situations of emergency, conflict and post-conflict, making them highly vulnerable.

(PowerPoint presentation, UNESCO Bangkok)

Many of the risks could be prevented if adequate measures and actions were taken by governments in a timely manner. If no action is taken now, a huge potential and golden opportunity for reducing poverty and achieving the MDG health and education goals as well as the EFA goals will be lost.

ECCE is a human right

Care and education of the young child is an international obligation, not just a family affair or the concern of social workers or pre-school educators. This international obligation is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is today the most widely ratified human rights treaty that commits countries to guarantee the survival, protection and care of children. Governments signing to this Convention are the first and foremost duty bearers with the responsibility to ensure the provision of adequate and quality early childhood care and education for their young children, and especially for those disadvantaged and vulnerable children,⁷ who are essentially the holders of the right to receive such care and education and to benefit from quality ECCE services.

7. In line with the *GMR 2007*, 'disadvantaged and vulnerable children' referred to in this chapter includes children with physical, emotional and learning disabilities; children in emergencies; working children in exploitative conditions; malnourished and undernourished children; street children, orphans, children in institutions; children affected by HIV/AIDS; children in linguistic, ethnic, cultural minorities and indigenous children; migrant and nomad children; and unregistered children. However, countries may define these groups of children in different ways, and may not necessarily cover all of these categories, or may include more.





ECCE is certainly important in itself; as studies have shown, the early years are critical in the formation of intelligence, personality and social behaviours. They are also the most vulnerable time, and the effects of early neglect can be cumulative. The *GMR 2007* highlights the close relationship between nutrition and education, and argues that combined interventions can have a strong impact on improving the chances of participation, retention and learning achievements of a child in later education. This clearly implies that achieving EFA Goal 1 on ECCE is a necessary condition for achieving the rest of the EFA goals, having the most direct impact on the goal of achieving universal primary education.

Taking a holistic approach to ECCE

Thus, the *GMR 2007* adopts a holistic definition of ECCE, whereby ECCE is understood as covering care, health and nutrition; education to support children's survival, growth and learning; and cognitive, social, physical and emotional development. Taking this comprehensive, holistic approach draws attention to the facts that learning begins at birth and the early years continue into the initial years of primary education (hence covering the age group of 0-8 years old).

This holistic definition of ECCE also implies that ECCE is not just a right recognised in the Convention on the Rights of the Child but is also an instrument for guaranteeing other rights of children, including the right to education; the right to protection and security; cultural, political and economic rights; and the right to be free from social and economic exclusion and inequality.

From an economic point of view, many studies—mostly carried out in developed countries—have shown that investment in ECCE programmes offers a payoff in terms of human capital. The *GMR 2007* cites one of the most famous studies in this respect, the High/Scope Perry study⁸ that was carried out in the 1960s in the United States. The study was undertaken in order to illustrate that investment in ECCE has positive economic returns and, consequently, may reduce social inequality and compensate for the vulnerability and disadvantage resulting from

8. 'High/Scope Perry Preschool programme 1962-1967': A longitudinal study that followed participants and a control group from the age of 3 and 4 through to age 40 to assess the returns to investment in ECCE. *GMR 2007*, p.112, Box. 5.3 for further details.





poverty, as well as for discrimination stemming from gender, race, ethnicity, caste or religion. These studies have been convincing enough to lead a Nobel economics prizewinner, James Heckman, to observe that:

[I]t is a rare public policy initiative that promotes fairness and social justice and at the same time promotes productivity in the economy and in society at large. Investing in disadvantaged young children is such a policy (Heckman, 2006, cited in *GMR 2007*: 114).

Progress in EFA Goal 1: ECCE

Today, there are 738 million children (approximately 11% of the total world population) that belong to the 0 – 5 age group, and this number is expected to reach 776 million by 2020.

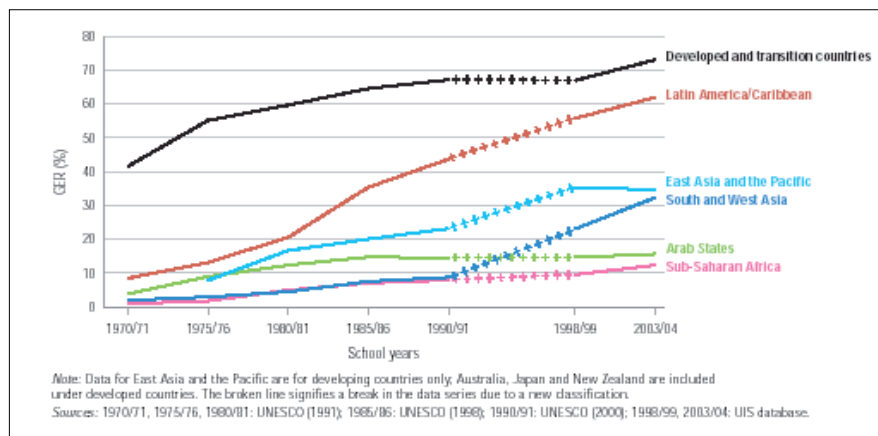
Data from 2004 show that around 124 million children were enrolled in some sort of pre-primary education programmes, either formal or non-formal. This is a 10.7% increase over the 1999 figure. In the developed countries, the gross enrolment rate (GER) for pre-primary education in 2004 was 77%, while the figure was significantly less in developing countries with only 32% GER. Here there were huge regional differences: with the highest GER of 101% in Latin America and the Caribbean and the lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa, with 12.4%. Pre-primary education has seen noticeable expansion in East Asia and the Pacific between 1980 and 1990 and in South and West Asia in the 1990s and 2000s. There was a slight decline in East Asia, mainly due to trends in China. The Central Asian countries, where enrolments in pre-primary education declined in the early 1990s, have not yet recovered.

Figure 3 shows the global trend by region in pre-primary enrolment, a clear trend of steady increase in all regions, showing that, worldwide, the number of children in pre-primary education has tripled since 1970. However, regional differences remain. Participation is still very low in Sub-Saharan Africa, South/West Asia, and the Arab States.





Figure 3 Regional trends in pre-primary gross enrolment ratios (GER)



In the Pacific, while the regional average GER for pre-primary education (for children aged three and over) was 72%—a 14% increase from that in 1999 (at 58%)—the GERs by individual country show huge variations, ranging from countries reporting near full enrolment, such as Australia, Cook Islands, New Zealand, Niue and Tuvalu, to countries where pre-primary education figures remain considerably low, such as Fiji at 16%, Timor-Leste at 11% and Tonga at 23% (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 Gross enrolment ratios (GER) in pre-primary education (%) in the Pacific (1999, 2004)

Country	1999	2004	Country	1999	2004
Timor-Leste		11	Palau	63	64
Fiji	17	16	Kiribati		68
Tonga	30	23	Nauru		71
Solomon Islands	35	41	Cook Islands	86	91
Samoa	51	49	New Zealand	88	92
RMI		50	Niue	154	97
Vanuatu	49	52	Tuvalu		99
PNG	35	59	Australia		102

Source: *GMR 2007*





When it comes to gender parity in ECCE, the gap between the sexes is small in most countries. However, gender parity in ECCE needs to be treated carefully and the statistics should not be interpreted casually; they provide no reason for celebration.

The gender gap is small because pre-primary ratios are relatively low to start with and most children enrolled are from wealthier households, where the gender factor does not always strongly influence the chances of a child enrolling in pre-primary education.

Achieving gender parity is certainly a positive sign, but it carries the risk of reducing the urgency and level of attention on achieving gender equality. The general tendency of governments in many countries, particularly in East Asia and the Pacific, is to claim that they have no more gender issues in education once gender parity is achieved. Governments are often ignorant of the fact that gender parity in terms of gross enrolment in pre-primary education tells us only that there are equal numbers of girls and boys enrolled in the programme, and nothing more. It does not tell us how many children are not enrolled, nor does it reveal the gender stereotypes in the curriculum, or in teachers' attitudes and expectations regarding the way girls and boys learn, develop and interact, which may influence the way in which children learn to perceive gender roles in their society.

The *GMR 2007* also illustrates how countries are trying to expand and improve the quality of their ECCE provisions in order to meet the first EFA goal. For example, as more studies are made on the importance of mother tongue education and its positive impact on performance in the early primary grades, several countries in the Asia Pacific region, such as Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea and Vietnam, have developed effective bilingual early childhood programmes. Slightly over half of the world's countries, and in the Asia Pacific region, 26 of the 35 countries with data, now have at least one formal ECCE programme for children under three years old. This development is accompanied by improvements in the social welfare of working mothers, as about 80% of developing countries today have some form of legally established maternity leave, though implementation may vary. In the Pacific region, however, only two countries (Australia and New





Zealand) are reported to have a statutory duration of maternity leave, despite the fact that in many of these countries more than half of the labour force is female, but there is hardly any provision for the under-3s. In East Asia, eight countries have 8 to 20 weeks legal maternity leave.

Still limited access

On the whole, despite progress documented in some parts of the world, access to ECCE is still very limited and factors affecting access are found to be multiple and complex. Many of these factors are the same as those found for the non-enrolment of children in schools, i.e. the lack of mother's education; place of residence, with rural areas being at particular disadvantage; the absence of early childhood programmes/centres near the child's home; and lack of birth certificates, which often results in marginalisation and discrimination of children in society. At the root of these factors lies poverty; statistics show a clear trend of higher attendance for children from richer households, compared to those from poorer households.

This is the dilemma, and a challenge that the sector continues to face, as it is the disadvantaged and vulnerable children who stand to benefit most from early childhood programmes.

ECCE, a diverse field

ECCE is found to be a diverse field, perhaps due to the very nature of its activities. It involves both public and private providers and can be formal, non-formal, and even informal. The status of policy development on ECCE varies widely across countries; some have no policy at all on early childhood, others have only a loose policy framework, and yet others have a highly comprehensive and sophisticated policy promoting holistic ECCE.

The levels of public and private provision of early childhood programmes can be seen in Table 3, based on 2004 data for 154 countries. In the Pacific, the role of the private sector in providing pre-primary education varied widely. For example, in Fiji all pre-primary education was run by private institutions, while in the Cook Islands, the Marshall Islands, Nauru and Tonga, the public sector predominated in the provision of pre-primary education, accounting for 80% or more of the total enrolment.





Table 3 Private pre-primary enrolment as a percentage of total enrolment, 2004

Region	Number of countries according to % of private pre-enrolment as of total enrolment		
	Low (0% to 32%)	Medium (33% to 66%)	High (67% to 100%)
Sub-Saharan Africa	8	7	12
Arab States	3	4	13
Central Asia	8		
East Asia and the Pacific	7	6	5
South and West Asia	1	2	1
Latin America/Caribbean	19	8	12
North America/West Europe	11	8	1
Central and Eastern Europe	18		
Total	75	35	44

Source: *GMR 2007*

Issues and challenges in ECCE—a focus on the Asia / Pacific region

It is evident that there are still many issues and challenges that need to be addressed in early childhood care and education, both at the policy level and the implementation level. The environment in which ECCE must be provided is already a major challenge in itself.

- Millions of children still live with no access to basic immunisation, clean water, adequate food and early stimulation that are needed for survival, growth and development, and ECCE coverage remains considerably lower for developing countries, with striking differences among and within the regions of Asia and the Pacific. There are large disparities in access to ECCE between the rich and the poor and between urban and rural communities.
- There is a serious lack of awareness among policy-makers that those who benefit the most from ECCE are young children who live in situations of extreme poverty, social exclusion, rural or remote areas, with mothers without education.





- ECCE data collection is generally inadequate; as a result it has been difficult to monitor progress fully in developing countries, especially as providers, forms and delivery modes are so diverse.
- With UPE high on the agenda for many donors, ECCE is not given priority among most donor agencies; allocations for pre-primary education are often less than 10% of the allocation for primary education. Given the limited resources available, ECCE is not a priority for many countries.

These are only some of the many challenges that ECCE faces today. The overall implication is that ECCE is not yet given the attention it deserves, despite the multiple benefits at all levels and aspects of educational, social and economic development.

The policy neglect

ECCE is the first goal of EFA, but it has not been the first priority for most governments. The fundamental cause of this situation is the policy neglect in ECCE, worldwide, but particularly in the Asia/Pacific region. This policy neglect can be attributed to a number of reasons, some of which are given below.

- The ECCE sector tends to respond more slowly to social and economic trends; the role of the family versus the role of the state is still very much under debate.
- Despite the diversity of the sector, few countries have a national framework or mechanism to coordinate ECCE programmes, so ECCE tends to function with fragmented plans and strategies, especially with regard to the educational and non-educational aspects of ECCE.
- Child development research results are not well known, and there is a lack of rigorous studies in developing countries.
- Government priority remains with primary education and is shifting towards secondary education in many countries in East Asia and the Pacific. International aid focuses on these education levels accordingly.

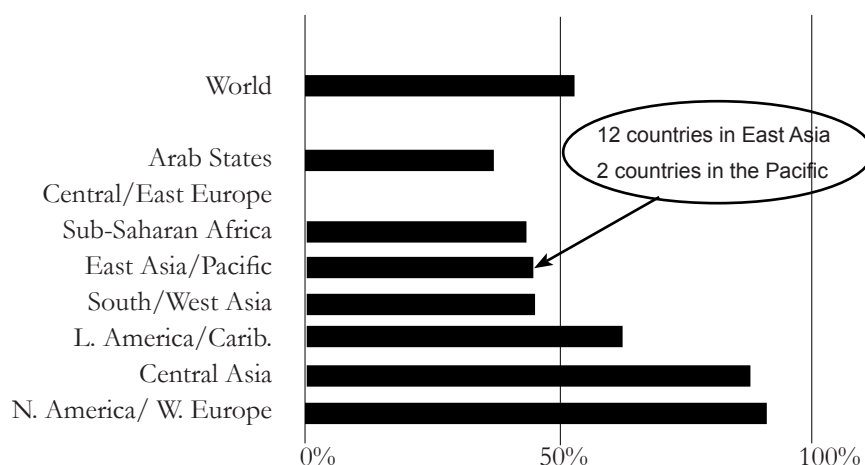




Programmes for 0 – 3 years: the neglected area

As emphasised earlier, a holistic approach to ECCE acknowledges that learning begins at birth and continues into the initial years of primary education, covering the 0 – 8 years age-group. In most countries, this wide age range is divided into three development stages of a child, namely 0 – 3 years, 3 – 6 years and 6 – 8 years, with the recognition and expectation that some form of corresponding programme and provision for each stage will be developed. However, as the *GMR 2007* reveals, many countries in the Asia/Pacific region are found to have no or very few formal programmes and provisions targeting the 0 – 3 year-olds, the youngest and most vulnerable age group in early childhood. Earlier, this chapter referred to the fact that slightly over half the world's countries today have some form of formal provisions for the under-3s as a positive development in ECCE. If we turn this argument around, it also means that nearly half of the world's countries still do not have not any formal ECCE programmes for the under-3s, as Figure 5 shows.

Figure 5 Percentage of countries with formal ECCE programmes for the under-3s



Source: *GMR 2007*





With a closer look at the Asia/Pacific countries, of the 35 countries with information on this, 26 countries reported having at least one formal programme targeting children under the age of three, while nine countries reported having none so far. Of the 18 Pacific Island countries, data are very limited and only two countries, Australia and New Zealand, reported having some formal programmes for the under-3s.

Table 4 Official programmes targeting children under three years old

Region	Countries with provision for the under-3s	Countries without provision for the under-3s
South and West Asia	India, Iran, Maldives, Pakistan (4)	Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal (3)
East Asia	Cambodia, China, DPRK, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam (12)	Macao, China (1)
Pacific	Australia, New Zealand (2)	Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands (4)
Central Asia	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan (8)	Tajikistan (1)

Source: *GMR 2007*

Gender issues in ECCE

The gender issue in ECCE is a concern that continues to be neglected and understated, even in the *GMR 2007* (although this is partly due to the lack of information and data needed to make a stronger case). The fact that the gender gap is small in ECCE actually creates more concern than celebration, as pointed out earlier. When a country achieves gender parity, that government is led to believe that there are no more gender issues in education—or in this case in ECCE.

If we look beyond the parity concern, it is easily observed that ECCE programmes are also often not gender-sensitive and responsive, and that gender stereotypes in the curriculum, learning materials and teachers' attitudes and expectations continue to characterise many ECCE practices.





Gender issues in ECCE are also deeply embedded in the teaching profession, as ECCE tends to be a highly feminised profession. In most countries in the world, particularly in the Asia/Pacific region, more than 90% of the ECCE workforce is female. The feminisation of the ECCE teaching force occurs as it is a sector that is closely linked to the gender stereotyped societal value where caring for young children is traditionally associated with women as mothers; hence a general belief that female teachers are better than men in ECCE. This encourages the persistence of gender stereotypes in ECCE and gender-socialisation. Furthermore, the feminisation of a profession is often found to be linked to lower social status and remuneration of the workers engaged in the profession. This is true for ECCE workers.

The quality concern

There are a number of quality issues that need to be highlighted. One relates to teacher quality. In most developed countries in the west, two years of pre-primary education are widely offered and in some cases are either free or subsidised by the government. Children are taught by highly trained professionals, assisted by childcare workers and part-time volunteers. However, where countries have implemented policies to expand and upgrade the ECCE workforce, progress has been uneven. In developing countries, ECCE staff are poorly trained and poorly paid. Another issue concerns regulatory practices. There is a lack of regulation and minimum acceptable standards applied to providers of ECCE to ensure quality of services and provisions. Relating quality to equity, ECCE programmes in urban areas tend to have more trained teachers with better facilities and care. They are mostly private and cater for those rich families who can afford the fees.

The Way Forward

The compelling case for ECCE has been made globally and regionally with the *GMR 2007*. ECCE is the first goal of EFA and is also recognised as a requisite for achieving the other EFA goals, as children who have access to ECCE are more likely to enrol and stay in school, learn what is taught effectively and perform well. However, ECCE is a sector that still faces some resistance from the education sector and also, despite being the first goal of EFA, governments have a tendency





not to regard ECCE as part of basic education. With the challenges and issues identified earlier, it is high time the international community took action. The last part of this chapter suggests some critical actions that could be considered by countries.

a) *Fostering strong ECCE policies*

The first step in the right direction to expand and improve the quality of ECCE programmes and provisions is to foster strong and comprehensive ECCE policies that will capture the holistic and broad scope of ECCE, especially if a country is yet to have a policy on ECCE. A comprehensive ECCE policy will necessarily call for effective coordination of all stakeholders in ECCE and clearly define what early childhood means in a given country/local context. An effective and viable policy needs to state clearly the vision and missions for ECCE from a human rights perspective, and spell out a set of objectives that a government would be committed to achieve, such as:

- to provide healthcare, immunisation, feeding and nutrition
- to support parents through information-sharing and parenting education
- to create a safe environment so that young children can play and socialise with their peers
- to compensate for disadvantage and foster the resilience of vulnerable children
- to promote school readiness and prepare children for primary school
- to provide custodial care for children of working parents and for other family members
- to strengthen communities and social cohesion.

Developing the policy will also require the right political environment. Such an environment could have:

- strong political commitment and endorsement for ECCE at the top level
- multiple players in national early childhood policy grouping
- a lead agency to coordinate early childhood policies
- ECCE considered as an integral part of national development documents, such as periodic development plans and poverty reduction strategy papers.





An ECCE policy could address the following issues as policy elements:

- staffing, training and standards for all providers
- explicit provision for disadvantaged and vulnerable children
- partnerships: NGOs, the private sector and international agencies
- financing: higher spending, targeting and more aid.

Any government policy for ECCE must recognise that providing good quality ECCE is a human right of all children.

b) Finding a funding balance

In view of the limited resources available to ECCE, there is a need to find a reasonable balance, so that the limited resources can be allocated to the children in most need. ECCE is necessarily an enterprise where funding comes from both the public and private sectors. With the reality that less than 10 % of public education spending goes to pre-primary education, and given the fact that even in OECD countries, parents' share can run up to 60 %, universal coverage of ECCE can only be realised if it is complemented by extra support to disadvantaged children.

Given the shortage of financial resources, governments need to introduce more targeted and prioritised strategies for funding and to expand ECCE provision by phases, as relevant and needed. Such a targeted approach to ECCE provision could be based on income or geographical location (e.g. remote areas, urban slums), or directed to specific groups, such as the disabled, ethnic minorities, girls, or those in emergency situations.

Whatever funding strategy may be adopted, the important consideration is to ensure equity of access and in the types and forms of programmes and provisions for all children and their families.

c) The quality concern

There is a need to recruit ECCE staff, retain them, and ensure better training and support for them. Some countries have started to introduce more flexible entry routes to higher education and teacher training but more measures need to be in place.





Whether the programmes are provided by the public sector or by the private sector, the government has the responsibility to develop a minimum acceptable standard applicable to all programmes, and to introduce quality regulations to all providers. Some countries in East Asia have started efforts to develop national quality standards for ECCE programmes and to assess the quality of programmes using a standardised instrument. In others, including the Pacific countries, even if quality regulations are in place, the lack of resources prevents sufficient inspection and monitoring of their enforcement.

d) Moving towards gender equality in ECCE

Gender equality must start young; early childhood is a period when perceptions of what is masculine and what is feminine take hold. Gender stereotyping can be addressed through pedagogy, teaching and play if curricula and learning materials are gender responsive and free of gender bias. Gender responsive ECCE can include, for example, a more gender balanced recruitment of teachers/care-givers. This can offer gender balanced role models for both girls and boys, challenging the assumption that the care of young children is the sole responsibility of women; men/fathers play an equally important role in bringing up children. Having more male workers and teachers in this field may also encourage more fathers to be involved in their children's upbringing.

The availability of more gender responsive toys and having girls and boys play together is another example. If both girls and boys play with kitchenware toys, this will demonstrate to boys and girls that household work is the equal responsibility of both men and women. Such games will provide equal stimulation for both boys and girls, and will encourage the imagination and creativity without imposing any gender bias. Making ECCE programmes more gender responsive can have the additional benefit of relieving older sisters from caring for their younger siblings, a common barrier to girls' schooling.

Gender stereotyping begins with the ECCE teachers themselves. Therefore, it is imperative to introduce gender training in all pre-service and in-service training of ECCE workers.





Gender-sensitive and responsive ECCE can thus lay a strong foundation for gender equality in later education and promote gender equality beyond education.

e) Inclusive ECCE is a must

EFA must, by definition, be inclusive and, as part of EFA, so must ECCE. The *GMR*, giving special attention to equity and inclusion in ECCE, repeatedly emphasises that policies and programmes to overcome exclusion in formal school settings through an inclusive approach are indispensable. The Report also implies that the impact of multiple benefits of ECCE can promote a broader concept of inclusive education from primary school onwards.

An inclusive approach to ECCE can help offset disadvantage and overcome exclusion. Inclusive ECCE means that programmes are planned to fit the children—not the other way around. They need to be child-seeking and child-friendly as well, while teacher-friendliness should not be overlooked. ECCE programmes need to take into account the mother tongue of the child, make available specific and targeted support for children needing extra assistance, ensure a child-friendly environment in the ECCE programmes, with learning and play materials that are appropriate for the child's physical and cognitive development.

f) Increased attention to the under-3s

As already mentioned, the issue of 0 – 3 year-olds is one of the key challenges in ECCE, particularly for the Pacific region. While there has been great progress in pre-primary education, access to ECCE programmes for younger children is limited in many countries in the region, which poses a challenge in meeting their basic health, nutrition, development and learning needs. There should be stronger emphasis on taking a holistic approach to ECCE in the region through effective partnerships among the different stakeholders, reminding ourselves that learning does indeed begin at birth.

g) Smoothing transition: family→ECCE→primary school

ECCE lays the foundation for successful transition to and completion of primary school. Child health and nutrition are closely linked to learning opportunities in early childhood and promotes later achievements in school and lifelong learning.





If ECCE prepares children for school, then schools also need to be ready to welcome children and facilitate the transition into primary education, and for this some suggestions are given below.

- Integrate ECCE more closely with primary school.
- Assure continuity in the curriculum.
- Recognise the role of parents and community and engage parents in school activities.
- Use the mother tongue in ECCE and continue in the early grades of primary school.
- Introduce measures to assure professional continuity between pre-primary and primary levels, through such things as joint training and equal professional status.

h) Ensuring coordination

Lastly, whatever the field may be called, the main concern should be to ensure that we are all talking about the same thing: a holistic approach to quality provision of care and education for the 0 – 8 age group. The development of a common language, name or terminology can be facilitated by having a shared vision, one that can guide us in meeting the significant challenges that ECCE faces.

And... ACTION NOW!

What is needed now is action—a compelling case for ECCE has clearly been made. The *GMR* concludes with a list of nine recommendations that warrant urgent policy attention and with which this chapter will also conclude.

1. Act on all goals: early childhood, literacy and primary school.
2. Act with urgency.
3. Emphasise equity and inclusion.
4. Increase public spending and focus it better.
5. Increase aid to basic education and allocate it where most needed.
6. Move ECCE up national and international agendas.
7. Increase public financing for ECCE and target it better.
8. Upgrade the ECCE workforce.
9. Improve the monitoring of ECCE.





6

Six reasons to support early childhood care and education

Junko Miyahara

There are six compelling reasons to support and invest in early childhood development and this chapter discusses them in the context of child rights, scientific rationale, social/gender equity, economic benefits, social mobilisation and a way to achieve international developmental goals, with a specific focus placed on the scientific rationale.

Ensuring children's rights from the start of life

Early childhood is a critical period for realising children's rights. Ensuring the right of every child throughout the early childhood years (from birth to the transition to primary school)⁹ is an obligation of all carers, including parents and primary caregivers, communities and various service providers, governments and civil society as a whole.

9. The CRC's General Comment No 7 (2005) defines early childhood years from birth and throughout infancy, including pre-school years as well as during the transition to school.





While there are several human rights instruments specific to children's rights, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) is the most widely ratified human rights treaty specifying rights of children in the world. It rests on four general principles and rights in early childhood:

- the right to life, survival and development to 'the maximum extent possible' (Article 6)
- the right to protection from discrimination (Article 2)
- the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration (Article 3)
- the right to express views and those views to be given 'due weight' (Article 12).

Recognising parental responsibilities for the child 'to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance' (Article 5), the *CRC* also notes that signatories should '...render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children' (Article 18).

Other articles relevant for young children include: health and social services (Article 24), standard of living (Article 27), education (Article 28), aims of education (Article 29), and leisure, recreation and cultural activities (Article 31). Several other articles¹⁰ specifically recognise the rights of children in need of special protection.

Children's rights are also guaranteed in the *Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All (EFA)*, the 1990 World Summit for Children and the 1994 *UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. There are also complementary rights guaranteed in the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*.

10. Abuse and neglect (Article 19), children without families (20, 21), refugees (22), children with disabilities (23), harmful work (32), substance abuse (33), sexual abuse and exploitation (34), sale, trafficking and abduction of children (35), deviant behaviour and lawbreaking (40). See General Comment No7. (*CRC, 2005*) for further explanation of these articles in relation to young children.





Scientific rationale

Vast amounts of research from the fields of physiology, nutrition, health, sociology, psychology, and education continue to confirm the evidence that the early years of life are the most crucial periods for healthy development and well-being. Children are born with physical, social and psychological capacities that allow them to communicate, learn, and develop. If these capacities are not recognised and supported during the early childhood years, they will wither rather than flourish. Research (e.g. Shore, 1997) suggests that most of the development of intelligence in children occurs before the age of seven, with the first three years being particularly important, as this is when development occurs more rapidly than at any other stage in life.

Development is multi-determined and varies as a function of the child's nutritional and biomedical status, genetic inheritance, and social and cultural context. From the moment of conception, important developments occur that affect the brain, the physical body and the chemistry of the child.

Brain development

The early childhood years are particularly critical in terms of brain maturation, determining how the brain (and the child) will further develop and function throughout life.

At birth, a child's brain is small, but it contains about 100 billion neurons (or nerve cells)—all the cells it will ever have. However, at this stage, most of these neurons are not connected to each other and cannot function on their own. After birth, no new neurons are formed in most regions of the brain. Instead, the brain produces trillions of synapses that connect each neuron and form neural pathways, which allows all of the various areas of the brain to communicate and function together in a coordinated way. During the first two to three years of life, the number of synapses increases twenty-fold. The formation of new synapses occurs throughout life (the brain producing more synapses than it will ever use), but is at its peak during the first three years.

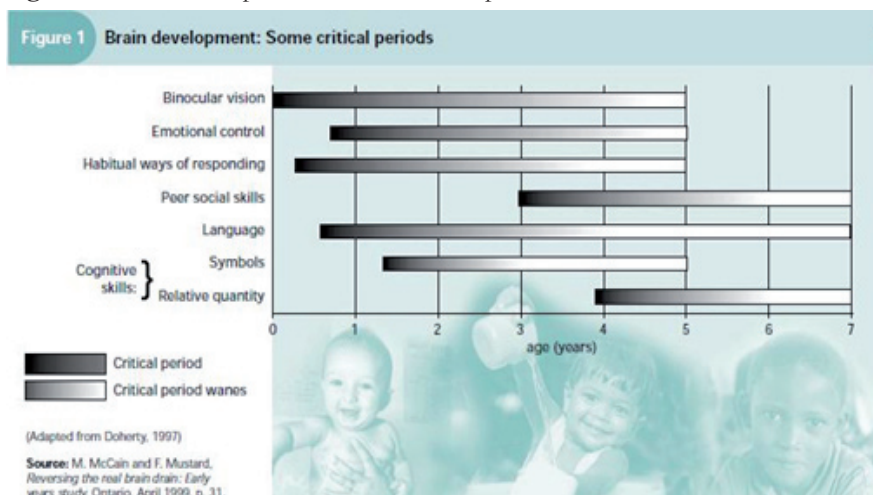




While new synapses are constantly being formed, others that are not used start to be eliminated or pruned away around the time of one's first birthday. By keeping only the connections that are frequently used, pruning actually increases efficiency of brain work. (It is also true that 'over-pruning' can occur when a child is deprived of normally expected experiences in these years.) The pruning of synapses continues throughout the childhood years as the different areas of the brain develop.

As shown in Figure 1, critical periods are stages of development for particular parts or functions of the brain, when the brain is most open to new experiences. Early childhood, therefore, is a period of time when a child's experiences have a great effect on the child's development and learning. How people around the child provide all-round care and developmentally appropriate stimulation in a safe and nurturing environment really matters.

Figure 1 Some critical periods of brain development



Source: *The State of the World's Children*, UNICEF 2001, page 17

Providing opportunities for complex perceptual and motor experiences at an early age favourably affects various learning abilities in later life and can even compensate,





at least partly, for deficits associated with early malnutrition (The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, 1996). By age six, most of these connections are made (or not, as the case may be). This means that if these sensitive periods pass by without the brain receiving the stimulation for which it is primed, opportunities for various kinds of learning may be substantially reduced.

The brain's malleability also means that there are times when negative experiences or the absence of good or appropriate stimulation are more likely to have serious and sustained effects. For example, when children do not get the care they need during developmental prime times, or if they experience starvation, abuse or neglect, their brain development may be compromised and such negative experiences may leave a lasting imprint on young minds, thereby contributing to the compromised child's developmental outcome.

The recent series on 'Child development in developing countries'¹¹ published in The Lancet (Grantham-McGregor, Cheung, Cueto, Glewwe, Richter & Strupp, 2007) states that young children (especially those in developing countries) are faced with multiple risk factors, which have a detrimental effect on all domains of development: cognitive, language, motor and social-emotional. The risk factors include poverty, malnutrition and poor health, and unstimulating home environments. The review estimates that more than 200 million children under five years of age fail to reach their potential due to such causes.

Poverty

Poverty puts young children and their families at a disadvantage in all aspects relating to the quality of life. Relating to the risk factors for poor child development, poverty is usually associated with inadequate food, poor sanitation and poor hygiene, all of which lead to increased infections and stunting (small height-for-age, which is caused by chronic undernutrition) in children. Poverty

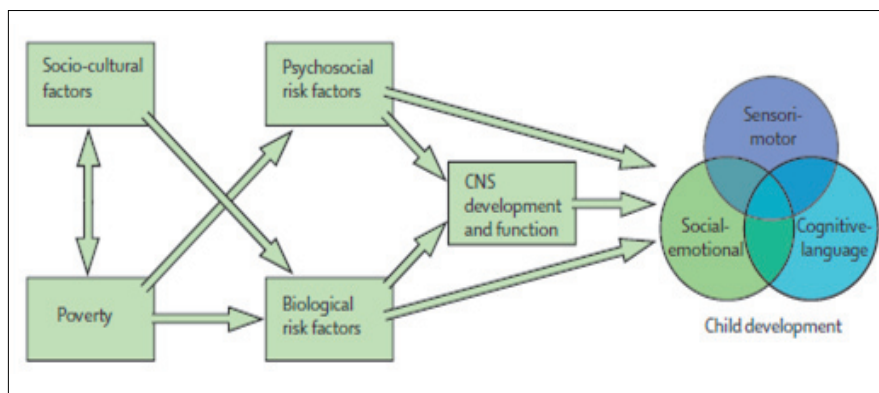
11. The Lancet 2007 'Child development in developing countries' series consists of three reviews, (1) Developmental potential in the first 5 years for children in developing countries, (2) Child development: risk factors for adverse outcomes in developing countries, and (3) Strategies to avoid the loss of developmental potential in more than 200 million children in the developing world.





is also associated with poor maternal education, increased maternal stress and depression, and inadequate stimulation in the home. As poor families are often faced with multiple risk factors simultaneously, the developmental deficits of young children will increase with the number of such risk factors. Poor development leads to poor school achievement, which is further exacerbated by inadequate schools and poor family support (due to economic stress and little knowledge and appreciation of the benefits of education). Such being the case, the vicious cycle of poverty continues. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2 Pathways from poverty to poor child development



Source: Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007

Biological factors: nutrition and health

Intra-uterine growth restriction (Maternal nutrition and health)

Intra-uterine growth restriction indicates constraints in foetal nutrition during a crucial period for brain development, particularly in developing countries, due to poor maternal nutrition and infections (Walker, Wachs, Gardner, Lozoff, Wasserman, Pollitt & Carter, 2007). Babies born to ‘at risk’ mothers (e.g. small, young, underweight and anaemic) in a state of poor nutrition run a greater risk of having a low birth weight. Many studies indicate the association between low birth weight and developmental deficits, especially in the cognitive domain, up to three years of age, and a few studies (in developed countries) report that the effects remain into adolescence (Breslau, Paneth &





Lucia, 2004) and adulthood (Strauss, 2000). Special care for pregnant mothers is vital—adequate food (quantity and quality), prevention from illness and infectious diseases, and a nurturing and stress-free environment. Such care for those ‘at risk’ mothers can break the intergenerational cycle of compromised growth and development.

Childhood under-nutrition

Stunting is caused by poor nutrition, often compounded by infectious diseases. Growth faltering begins soon after birth, 6 – 24 months being a critical period for babies who are normal at birth (and in-utero for babies born to ‘at risk’ mothers). It can continue to around 40 months, after which it levels off, but most stunted children remain stunted through to adolescence and adulthood.

Stunting is caused not only by inadequate food intake but also by infections, intestinal parasites (due to poor sanitation and hygiene), diarrhoea and illnesses that can interfere with the processes of digestion, absorption and transportation of nutrients to the cells.

Many studies have noted significant associations between early stunting and later cognitive ability, school performance and drop-out rates. Compared to non-growth-retarded children, stunting and being underweight are also associated with poor psycho-social development, including apathy, less positive affect (i.e. their emotional reactions tend to be less positive), lower levels of play, more insecure attachment during early childhood, and poorer attention and social relationships at school age (Grantham-McGregor *et al.*, 2007).

Micronutrient deficiency also contributes to a child’s compromised development. Iodine deficiency leads to congenital hypothyroidism and irreversible mental retardation, making it the most common preventable cause of mental retardation. Children’s anaemia—half of which is thought to be iron-deficiency anaemia—leads to poorer mental, motor and social-emotional development compared to children without anaemia.

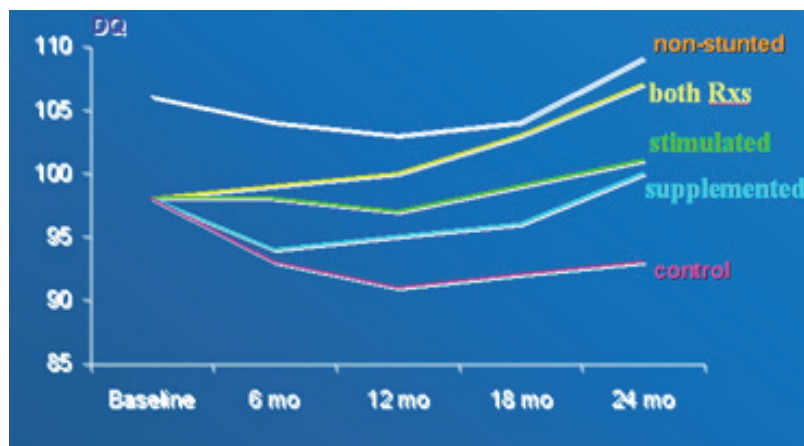




Synergistic effects by biological and psychosocial factors on child development outcomes

Scientists are accumulating a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which both biological and environmental factors act synergistically to exert a powerful influence on brain development and behavioural outcomes. There are many studies on the correlations between a child's nutrition and development outcomes in both developed and developing countries. A study from Jamaica (see Figure 3) has proven the synergistic benefits of early childhood development programmes on developmental outcomes, with supplementation and psychosocial stimulation for disadvantaged children's (stunted) promoting developmental outcomes (Grantham-McGregor *et al.* 1991).

Figure 3 Interventions with stunted children in Jamaica



Source: Grantham-McGregor *et al.*, 1991

Psychosocial factors: Quality of child-caregiver interaction

Development is affected not only by a child's nutritional and health status, but also by the kind of interaction a child develops with the people and objects in her/his environment. A secure, safe, nurturing environment encourages a child to play, explore, solve problems, talk, listen, develop skills, learn to trust, etc. All





these experiences build a strong psychosocial and biological basis for growing up as a healthy, curious, caring child. Good quality psychosocial care and education means that adults create a safe and nurturing environment, and facilitate learning by interacting with children sensitively and responsively, and by providing them with age-appropriate and stimulating materials. (It is important to note that learning materials do not need to be expensive toys.) The care-giver's emotional warmth, mood and emotional state (e.g. maternal depression, exposure to violence) are also key psychosocial factors (Walker *et. al.* 2007). These factors are discussed next.

Cognitive stimulation and learning opportunities

Studies from around the world, such as the Jamaican study, report significantly higher cognitive functioning in young children who are given supplemented cognitive stimulation or learning opportunities compared to non-stimulated groups of children. Beneficial effects reported also include non-cognitive outcomes such as better task orientation, social behaviour, self-confidence and positive affect. The Jamaican study reported the benefits of stimulation on child developmental outcomes during a two-year intervention period, but it has also proven the long-term positive effects. The follow-up to the Jamaican study found that the cohort with stimulation during the early childhood years had sustained benefits in emotional outcomes and attention after 16 years.¹²

Caregiver sensitivity and responsiveness

When a caregiver is aware of the child's needs and wants through her/his communicative signals and responds to these signals consistently and appropriately, the child develops a secure attachment with the caregiver. Such secure attachment relationships, once developed, can have a positive effect on right brain development, which processes socio-emotional functions, regulates bodily and affective states, and also controls and copes with stress-reactivity (Schor, 2001). High stress reactivity causes cognitive disruption and high levels of emotionality (e.g. hyperactive, anxious or impulsive behaviour), which interfere with intellectual

12. Note: outcome measures studied are: anxiety, depression, self esteem, and antisocial behaviour assessed by questionnaires administered by interviewers; attention deficit, hyperactivity, and oppositional behaviour assessed by interviews with parents. The group who received supplementation only did not show significant effects.





and social functioning (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000 cited in WHO, 2005). Children who experience extreme stress in their earliest years are at greater risk than peers without this stress of developing a variety of cognitive, behavioural and emotional difficulties. Conversely, children whose mothers interact with them in consistent, loving ways will be better nourished and less apt to be sick than children who are not so attended (Zeitlin, Ghessemi & Mansour, 1990).

Caregiver mood and emotional state (maternal depression)

Caregiver mood and emotional state influence caregiver behaviour. Caregivers who are in a cheerful mood can interact with children more positively—with sensitivity and responsiveness— while depressed caregivers are less involved, less sensitive and more negative when interacting with the children in their care. Research has consistently found that reduced levels of cognitive function and higher levels of behaviour problems are reported in young children of depressed mothers (WHO, 2004).

Exposure to violence

Although there are few studies from developing countries available to date on infants and pre-school children dealing with exposure to armed conflicts and/or community violence, existing research (of South Africa and Israel) show higher levels of post-traumatic stress disorder, aggression, attention problems, and depression among children exposed to violence (WHO, 2004). This negatively affects the children's cognitive and socio-emotional competence. The negative effect of exposure to violence is likely to be increased when family cohesion or the mental health of primary caregivers is disrupted. There is a crucial need for intervention studies with younger children and their caregivers who are exposed to violence.

Promoting social equity

By providing a 'fair start' to all children, it is possible to modify distressing socio-economic and gender-related inequities. The unhealthy conditions and stress associated with poverty are accompanied by inequalities in early development and learning. These inequalities help to maintain or magnify existing economic and social inequalities. In a vicious cycle, children from families with few resources often fall quickly and progressively behind their more advantaged peers in their mental





development and in their readiness for school and life, and that gap never closes. Among many other benefits, early childhood development programmes can help reduce gender inequality. They can compensate for the priority that is given to boys in access to basic health care and schooling in some societies. Efforts to break negative models of gender socialisation that marginalise and devalue girls and affirm boys, or the reverse, need to start with the earliest socialisation of the child, well before the age of six. Fortunately, access to early childhood programmes is relatively gender-equal in a majority of countries (UNESCO, 2006).

In addition, the rights of children cannot be realised if the health and well-being of women are not addressed. Women who are sickly, hungry, oppressed and discriminated against cannot have the ability, willingness and motivation to nurture their children adequately. Children cannot flourish when women's rights are not respected. Coordinating and integrating interventions on maternal health with efforts focused on child survival, growth and development can enhance the efficacy of each intervention. Removing barriers to the rights of women and girls, and achieving gender equality is a critical component of the integrated approach to early childhood care. Interventions are also designed to increase the role of fathers in the care and protection of children.

Nations are faced with the problem of how to define and approach equity under conditions of extreme poverty, when there is also a tendency to try to shift responsibility from government to the people, including the poor. Inaction is not the answer. By failing to intervene in an opportune way to foster early childhood learning and development where conditions are difficult, governments tacitly endorse and strengthen existing inequalities. Here the idea is not only to provide a minimum package of inputs so we can point to equality of opportunity, but also to provide additional inputs where needed to 'level the playing field' socially and economically.

Economic benefits

Early childhood development programmes improve health, nutrition and educational outcomes of young children and the positive impact can be drawn both in the short term and, to some extent, the long term at individual level.





Society at large also benefits economically from its investment in early childhood development programmes through increased economic productivity over the child's lifetime, increased employment options for caregivers to earn and learn, and by the later cost savings in remedial education and health care as well as rehabilitation services and welfare.

Perry (1996) discusses the relationship between expenditure on programmes after the early years with respect to learning, behaviour problems and health throughout the life cycle against expenditure during the critical years of brain development. The most important opportunities to influence brain development are during the prenatal and infancy periods of life, when public spending on health, education and welfare for infants and expectant mothers is very low. With increasing age, health and welfare spending tends to increase. Prevention is far less expensive than treatment, and is more efficient.

Heckman (2006) argues that investing in early childhood development is based on economic efficiency: 'It is a rare public policy initiative that promotes fairness and social justice and at the same time promotes productivity in the economy and in society at large. Investing in disadvantaged young children is such a policy.'

In terms of benefits:costs ratios of early childhood programmes, the High/Scope Perry project in the USA suggests that the returns on a pre-school investment (4 – 6 year-olds) can be as high as seven-fold at primary level, and 17 times at the age of 40 (Schweinhart *et al.*, 2005). While rigorous analysis in developing countries is still limited, existing studies indicate a potentially high rate of return on investment in early childhood (UNESCO, 2006). Meyers (1998) projected the impact of pre-primary childcare interventions for 4 – 5 year-olds by estimating the cost savings through reduced waste in primary schools due to repetitions and drop-outs at Grade 1. This study finds that the use of government and community resources for early childhood initiatives would have a tremendous impact in terms of savings by reducing the level of wastage in Class One of the primary system. Both Meyers and Schweinhart *et al.* further argue that if we made even earlier interventions for 0 – 3 year-olds, this would bring higher economic benefits over time. Such prognostications encourage renewed focus and greater public investment in prenatal, perinatal and infant care.





An entry point for social mobilisation

Early childhood programming can serve as an important entry point for community and social mobilisation, promoting participation, organisation and a better quality of life for older as well as younger members of the community. This is particularly true in times of emergency. The child is an organising factor in responding to emergencies. In keeping with the principles of the *CRC*, the humanistic value of the child assumes a central pervasive position in the conceptual framework for the survival, protection and development of the child in an emergency situation.

In almost any community, children provide a rallying point for social and political actions that can help to build consensus and organisation for the common good. Although children cannot vote, politicians, particularly at local levels, are coming to appreciate the fact that children can be a focal point in building consensus and solidarity in the communities they live in. In general, parents are concerned about a better future for their children and are often willing to collaborate and sacrifice to meet that end. This mobilising potential of early childhood programmes can help to reinforce participatory decentralisation and local democracy.

An investment in early childhood programmes can be an investment in the creation of a more educated citizenry. Indeed, the form and content of most pre-school education (active learning, group interaction, etc.) lend themselves to producing those traits considered essential to democracy—more than the form and content of most primary schooling as it is presently constituted. Whereas primary schooling continues to be oriented towards an unquestioning, essentially authoritarian relationship between teacher and child, a premise for most pre-school programmes is that a child learns best by doing, exploring, questioning and problem-solving, with teachers facilitating rather than dictating the process.

Achieving international development goals

An investment in the survival and thriving of young children is fundamental to the attainment of international development goals. A holistic approach is the key to meeting the ‘imperatives for children’ of UNICEF’s Global Movement for Children—ensuring a good start in life for every child, caring for every child,





investing in children etc.—and is an essential contribution to progress towards the World Fit for Children goals and the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To achieve the MDGs of reducing poverty and ensuring primary school completion for both girls and boys, governments and civil society should consider expanding high quality, cost-effective early childhood development programmes.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is the first of the six Education For All (EFA) goals. The ECCE goal itself—expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children—is what the international community and all governments need to achieve. Investment in ECCE should also be recognised as a requisite in achieving the other EFA goals as the initial part of lifelong learning.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to show that there is overwhelming evidence from scientific studies, as well as from accumulated data relating to social and environmental factors worldwide, to convince governments that supporting and investing in ECCE is essential. The healthier the child, the healthier the nation.

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7

ECCE: assessment, monitoring and evaluation

Frances Pene

This chapter first looks at assessment of children 0 – 8 years old and then discusses monitoring and evaluation of ECCE worldwide. The content of this chapter is taken from Dr Richard Wah's presentation at the ECCE regional workshop held in Honiara, Solomon Islands, the outcome of the group discussion participants had on the assessment carried out in their countries, and Dr Visessio Pongi's PowerPoint presentation at the workshop.

Assessment of children 0 – 8 years old

Dr Richard Wah (SPBEA) focussed his presentation about assessment of children 0 – 8 years old on three key questions.

Key questions:

1. What is assessed, and for what purpose?
2. What type of assessment is used?
3. What is done with the assessment?





Question 1: What is assessed?

The first question for teacher educators, education ministries and, more specifically, ECCE providers to ask is, “What do we assess?” The answer lies in the saying: *We measure what we treasure and what we treasure, we measure*. What do ECCE stakeholders treasure? They would agree that we treasure our children and our vision for what we want them to be. The key word here is ‘vision’. Every country needs to have a clearly articulated vision of what it wants its children to become. This vision of its children’s future is the foundation on which its ECCE programme is developed. The vision is reached after wide consultation with key stakeholders, including professionals, community leaders (both traditional and modern) and NGOs. It is thus ‘owned’ by the country.

The vision should articulate targets in terms of what each child of the given country is to aspire to regarding family, community, nation and the world; it should specify the values that are treasured by the country, such as respect for one’s own culture and the cultures of others, appreciation of the environment and, in some countries, the languages to master. As an example, this is the vision for Fiji, in draft form at the time of writing:

Our children need to be nurtured in a loving and caring and inclusive environment at all times so that they will develop into healthy, happy and responsible individuals who have reverence for God.

Children’s personalities are formed and moulded through the interaction of desirable and positive family values and culture. Parents, families, teachers and the wider community are influential partners in this educational journey as children develop and learn in a variety of ways and settings.

With careful guidance, children’s awareness and appreciation of others’ cultures and traditions will be further enhanced. It is envisaged that investment in early education by families, communities and the Government will contribute to the socio-cultural, economical and political developments for our nation, Fiji.





What we teach children must lead towards a realisation of the vision. The vision, therefore, defines what we teach. In order to find out to what extent the children are learning what they are being taught, we need to engage in some form of assessment. The term assessment has been defined in an information paper put out by the Early Childhood Reading Institute as:

... the process of collecting, synthesising, and interpreting information to aid classroom decision-making. It includes information gathered about pupils, instruction and classroom climate.

Testing is one form of assessment. It usually involves a series of direct requests to children to perform, within a set period of time, specific tasks designed and administered by adults, with predetermined correct answers. By contrast, alternative forms of assessment may be completed either by adults or children, are more open-ended, and often look at performance over an extended period of time. Examples include objective observations, portfolio analyses of individual and collaborative work, and teacher and parent ratings of children's behaviour.¹³

The basic purpose of an analysis of the assessment results is improvement, with achievement of the vision at the forefront of future action. For assessment to be useful, it must be reliable, valid and appropriate to the individual child being assessed.

Reliability is achieved if the same result is obtained when the assessment is repeated. This calls for systematic methods of assessment. Validity is achieved if the assessment really does assess what it is meant to assess. The appropriateness of assessment takes into account the fact that no two children are alike, and what is a 'poor' result for one child may be seen as a 'good' result for another when the two results are identical.

13. High/Scope Information Paper on Preschool Assessment by Dr Ann S. Epstein (Director, Early Childhood Division), Dr Lawrence J. Schweinhart (President) and Dr Andrea DeBruin-Parecki (Director) of the Early Childhood Reading Institute. <http://staging.highscope.org/Assessment/assess-stmt.pdf>





Assessment needs standards—classroom standards, national standards and regional standards—against which to measure. These standards must be validated by the community before they can be used. Currently in Fiji, a group of ECCE specialists is working on the early childhood care, development and education standards for children aged 0 – 6 years old. These standards cover several domains:

physical health and well-being	cognitive development
social and emotional development	aesthetics and the arts,
living and learning together	spiritual and moral development.
language and literacy	

For each domain, the development standards, the components and the indicators are set out. For example, in the cognitive domain, one standard is ‘Children should be able to demonstrate problem-solving skills in decision-making situations’. The component is ‘Child is able to sort and categorise objects based on specific attributes and according to increasingly complex categories (colour, shape and volume)’. At age 24 – 36 months, for example, the indicator (or milestone) is the ability to ‘match pictures, to identify basic shapes and sort out more than two objects of the same kind’.

After the experts develop the draft standards, the standards need to be validated by the various stakeholders mentioned above. Only after validation can the standards and vision be ‘owned’ by the country.

At the primary school level, standardised tests are used as points against which to compare our country, our school and our children. A number of Pacific Island countries (PICs) have their own standardised tests for literacy and numeracy, given at Years 4 and 6. These are being extended to include Year 2 (to check if the ECCE programme is producing the planned results) and Year 8.

Another important area for which standardised tests are being developed for Years 4 and 8 is life-skills. Development of these instruments has started in Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Fiji will start work in this area in the near future.





Assessment not only identifies the children who need special services, it also identifies the strengths and weaknesses in the programme, the methodology used to implement it, and the teachers themselves. This information can be used to make improvements in planning and to identify needs, where these are identified by the assessment, or ensure the ongoing development of an effective programme that meets the needs and interests of all children.

Question 2: What type of assessment is used?

Current assessment practices in the Pacific Island countries, 2007¹⁴

For 0 – 3 year-olds

In most countries, this age group is assessed by health authorities to varying degrees. In Nauru, Niue, Tonga and Tokelau, there is currently only home care with informal observational assessment by caregivers and health nurses, while in other countries assessment is carried out in clinics and hospitals and includes some or all of the following: general health, reflexes, immunisation, weight, milestones (e.g. first tooth) and morbidity. Record cards may be given to the family, along with information on breastfeeding and parenting. In some countries—e.g. Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)—parents are also assessed and a profile is built up.

For 3 – 6 year-olds

At this level many children attend an early childhood centre of some kind (playgroup, kindergarten, etc). Assessment is carried out by the teacher and includes observational data, teacher's diary, running records, attendance records, portfolios of the children's work, photographs, checklists for numeracy and language, interviews with parents and children, and project work. Observations can cover physical, social, cognitive, emotional, moral, spiritual, and cultural development.

14. The information in this section is a summary of the outcome of the group work done by the workshop participants.





In the northern Pacific (RMI, FSM, Palau), children are grouped thus: 0 – 4 year-olds, 5 year-olds (in ECCE) and 6 – 13 year-olds (in primary school). In the ECCE programme, the strengths and weaknesses of five-year-olds in eight subject areas (language arts, maths/cognitive, creative arts, physical development, self help, social/emotional, science, and approaches to learning and literacy) are identified using the Pohnpei Inventory Development.

For 6 – 8 year-olds

Children of this age are in primary school in most PICs. Formative and summative assessment in the form of periodic tests of literacy, numeracy and subject content is a common practice. Other forms of assessment at this level are ‘rich tasks’, self-assessment, observation, story-telling, interviews with parents, and tests of bilingual ability in some countries. Records are kept on report cards.

In some countries, the health authorities visit schools and carry out health checks from time to time (not always systematically). Health records may be kept in the school.

Question 3: What is done with the assessment?

The assessment data must first be interpreted and analysed before they can be used. This has to be done with care, as incorrect interpretation can have disastrous results. Once it is done, the results can be shared with stakeholders. The most important outcome of assessment is that it enables stakeholders to ascertain to what extent visions or goals or objectives are being fulfilled, and to identify what future action is needed. Teachers can assess their own classroom performance and make improvements where necessary. Community leaders and stakeholders can find out if they are giving enough support to the centre/school and the teachers. Parents can find out if their children are getting quality education and, if not, why not. Aid donors can assess how well the objectives of the programme are being achieved. Government departments can use statistics to plan for the future.





Summary

Assessment is not done just for the sake of it; it must have a specific purpose, the results must be disseminated among stakeholders and the uses to which the results are put need also to be specified and known by stakeholders. Then there can be effective collaboration and coordination among them (e.g. parents, health authorities, teachers) regarding future action.

Monitoring and evaluation of ECCE

The focus of Dr Visessio Pongsi's (UNESCO) presentation was on the question of how close countries are to achieving the EFA goals. With less than a decade to go before the 2015 target, what more can be done to ensure countries meet these goals?

The Assessment, Information Systems, Monitoring and Statistics (AIMS) Unit—the Office of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) Regional Advisor for Asia-Pacific—UNESCO Bangkok, UNICEF and the Regional Thematic Working Group (TWG) on EFA are working jointly to assist countries to conduct an assessment of progress and gaps towards the EFA goals and a mid-term review of education policies and reforms aimed at expanding the provision of education across various strata and groups in society. The assessment will give special focus on the unreached groups and how to make sure they are not left out of the education system. (<http://www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=mda>).

Guidelines were developed for countries in the region undertaking the EFA assessment. They include guiding questions (see Table 1) to provide a basis for deeper reflection on the issues surrounding Goal 1 and are a guide in influencing national debate in building up to the preparation of the national report. There is also a list of proposed indicators (see Table 2) to represent core issues related to ECCE, and encourage the use of disaggregated data to identify disparities.





Table 1 Guiding questions for EFA Goal 1: Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children

Goal statement	Guiding questions
Expand	What does “expanding” mean? To capture more children? To improve facilities? To provide different types of ECCE? What is the current ECCE definition in the country? How can ECCE in the country be expanded? Which actors are responsible for expanding ECCE? How can the “expansion” of ECCE be recorded and measured?
and improve	What does “improving” mean? How is this measured? What is the current ECCE definition in the country? How can ECCE in the country be improved? Who is responsible for improving ECCE? How is the improvement of ECCE recorded and measured?
comprehensive	What does “comprehensive” mean? For whom should ECCE be available? What types of ECCE are available?
early childhood care and education,	What is the definition of early childhood in the country? What does care entail? What is the definition of education for this age group?
especially for the most vulnerable,	How is “special” attention determined and monitored? Who are the most vulnerable? Do these children have access to ECCE? How can these children have access to ECCE? If these children are participating in ECCE, how is this recorded?
disadvantaged children.	Who are the disadvantaged children? Do these children have access to ECCE? How can these children have access to ECCE? If these children are participating in ECCE, how is this recorded?

Source: *Guidelines for the Asia and Pacific Education for All Mid-Decade Assessment: Identifying and Reaching the Unreached* (Working Draft) 16 Feb. 2007.





Table 2 Policy System Indicators

1.1	Policy/System indicators
1.1.1	Existence of national, multisectoral Early Childhood policy
1.1.2	National standards for monitoring developmental readiness in early childhood and learning programmes adopted
1.1.3	Presence of early screening programmes with referral system
1.1.4	Health links in ECCE established, with visits by health professionals, diagnostics or referral
1.1.5	Careers for ECCE care providers professionalized, including pre-service and in-service training, pay parity with primary schools, university and higher education degree programmes
1.1.6	National ECCE or education policy includes provision of ECCE for vulnerable and disadvantaged children

Source: *Guidelines for the Asia and Pacific Education for All Mid-Decade Assessment: Identifying and Reaching the Unreached* (Working Draft) 16 Feb. 2007.

Summary

Greater commitment at both political and government levels is needed, to include overarching and operational policies; prioritisation of ECCE to secure greater donor support; greater utilisation of research data in policy-related decisions, quality-related standards and programmes; a holistic approach involving all stakeholders; and clear curriculum guidelines.





8

Resources for ECCE

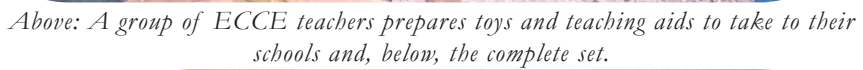
Jennifer James

This is my recipe for ECCE resources: lots of imagination, community participation, local materials and minimum expenditure. These ingredients are all illustrated in the photographs on the next few pages.

Some of the finished items (see the photograph opposite) have been painted. The paints, too, are homemade; local flowers and leaves are squeezed with water to produce these bright colours. For example, purple paint is made with red krepton leaves, yellow paint from the leaves of the morinda plant, and orange paint is made from grated curry ginger or marigold flowers.

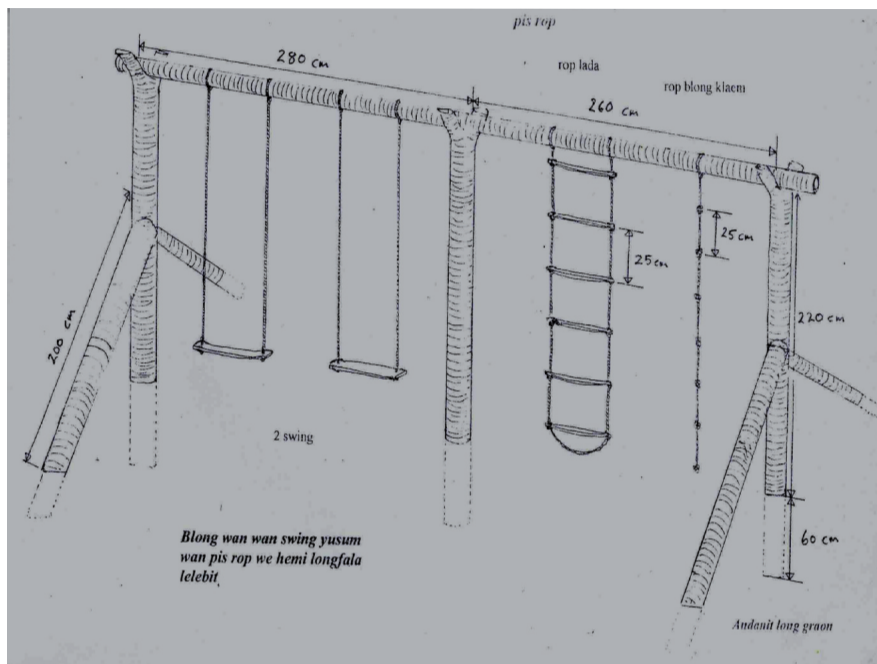
Bamboo cups can be cut to different sizes and painted in different colours. They can be used for cup-nesting, which illustrates sequencing from smallest to biggest. They can also have numbers painted on them so that number games can be played. For example, one cup can be hidden and the children can work out which one is missing.







Early childhood care and education in the Pacific





From drawing board to reality: a rope ladder and swings, monkey bars and a climbing frame. A roof over the top prolongs the life of these playground structures.



Early childhood care and education in the Pacific



*Resources for creative play are everywhere:
Children make pictures in the sand with shells
and they make shapes and figures with clay of
different colours and textures.*





Blackboards belong to the children, so make them the right height.

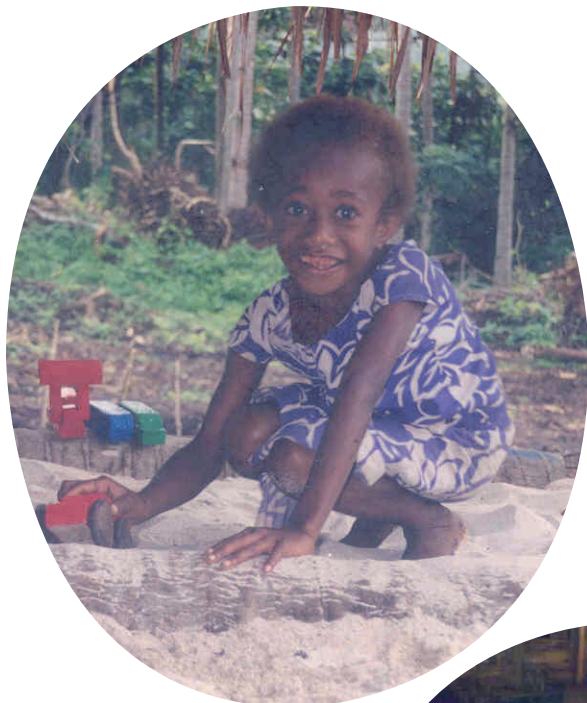


Bubbles are lots of fun, and pawpaw stalks make lovely straws.





Early childhood care and education in the Pacific



This little girl enjoys playing with trucks. They are made from cut-offs that are sandpapered and then painted and fitted with seeds for wheels.

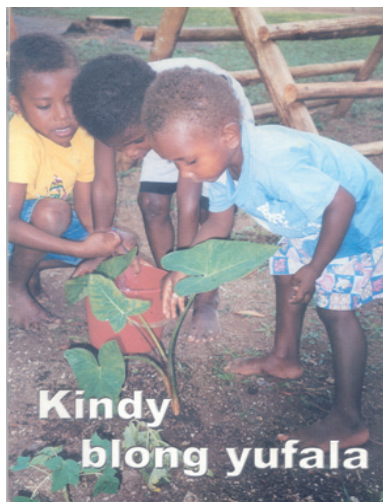


These girls are enjoying doing the things their mothers do. Brushes, cloths, pegs and line are all provided.





Water play at a cut-out canoe provides a fun way of learning about floating and sinking, pouring and filling. Behind the canoe are two sand pits, one wet and one dry,



Kindy blong yufala, shown in the picture on the left, is the title of a delightful booklet written specially for pre-schools and communities. It has information and plenty of illustrations and photographs showing what a good pre-school should be like, what activities can take place, and what skills children learn when using the toys that the teachers have made. It tells the parents and communities that children should use their vernacular, and it also has information on how communities can help. The booklet was compiled for the Pri Skul Asosiesen Blong Vanuatu (PSABV) by a volunteer, Judy Craddock.



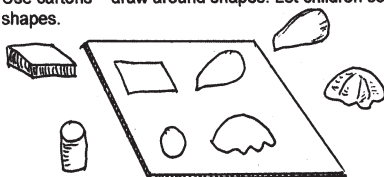


The next pages show a 'how to' booklet which was compiled by Janet Bunyan, a former President of the Pri Skul Asosiesen Blong Vanuatu, and Judy Craddock and Dianne Thorne George, who were both volunteers working with the PSABV.

Vanuatu Pre School Locally Made Games/Toys

1. Matching Games:

Use cartons – draw around shapes. Let children sort which objects go into which shapes.

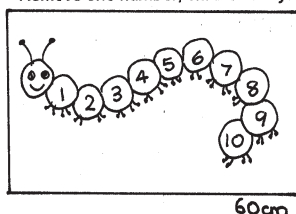


2. Number Caterpillar:

Use a large carton – 60cm x 30cm

Cut out 10 circles and on one side put numbers 1–10, on the other side put dots. Draw 11 circles on the cardboard 10 with numbers and one with a caterpillar face as on the picture below.

- Children match the numbers.
- Children count dots and place in appropriate circles
- Children close eyes, teacher move the numbers around and children have to put in correct order.
- Remove one number, children tell you what number is missing.



7.5cm



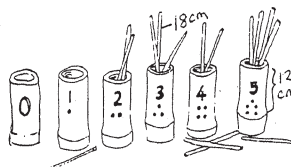
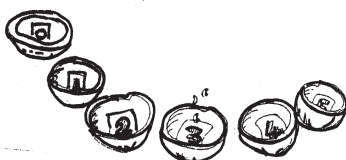
3. Bamboo and Coconut Number games:

A. Clean 10 coconut shells with sand paper and varnish. Write numbers 1–10 in the shells.

Children then put the correct number of objects (shells, seeds, cards with numbers, sticks etc) in the correct coconut shell.

B. Varnish 10 bamboo cups. Write numbers 1–10 on the outside of the bamboo, draw dots below the numbers.

Children put the correct number of sticks in the cup with the right numbers.

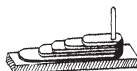




4. Bamboo Grading:

Cut a piece of timber. Make a hole on one end of the timber and glue a piece of wood (dowell) in the hole.

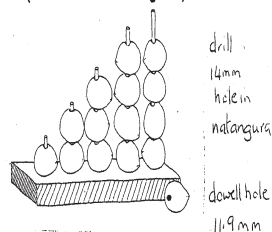
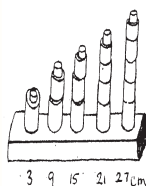
Cut 10 different size flat bamboos, sandpaper and varnish the bamboo. Make a hole on one end and children put the bamboo in sizes.



5. Counting Games:

Using timber as the base – drill 5 x 14mm holes on the base. Make sure the holes are 6cm apart

Glue 5 dowel in the holes. In one you can use small bamboos that can fit in the dowel. In another, we use natangura seed (from the roof thatching tree)



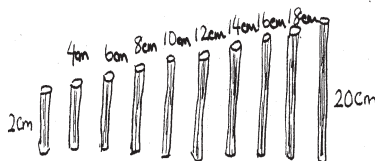
6. Shell Sizing:

Collect different sizes of sea shells and children are asked to place them in sizes of big to small.



7. Stick Sizing:

Cut different sizes of sticks and children place them in lengths from longest to shortest.



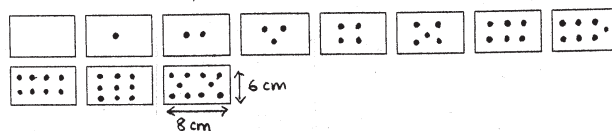
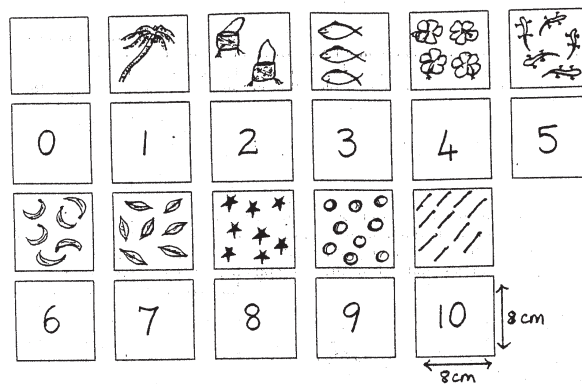
2





8. Number Matching:

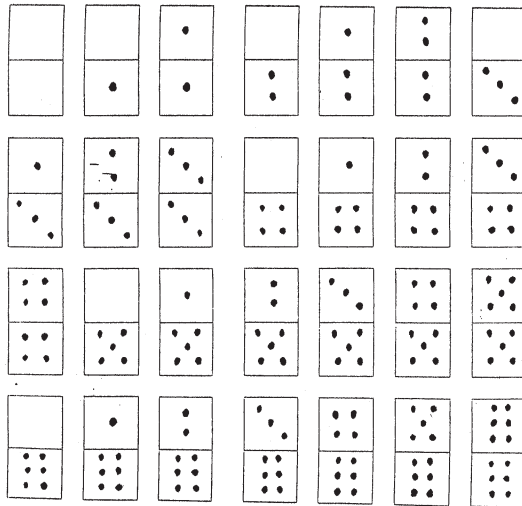
Use cardboard – cut them into 8cm x 8cm square. On one set write 0 – 10. On another set draw the correct number of object 1 – 10. On another set draw dots. See the picture below.





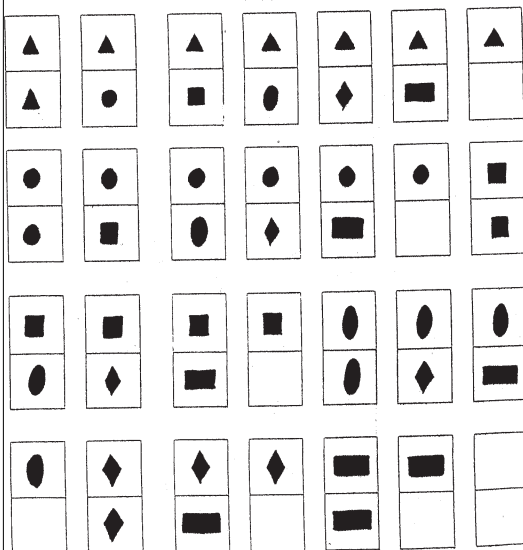
9. Domino

Use cartons, or plywood, markers and templates to make dominoes.



10. Domino Shapes:

Use cartons or plywood cut up, sandpapered and varnished.





11. Pairing of objects:

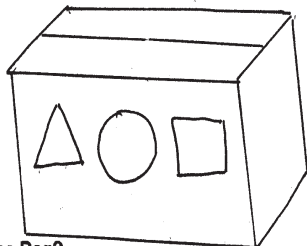
In a basket collect 2 of the same objects (about 40 – 50) eg 2 shells, 2 seeds, 2 buttons, 2 smooth pebbles etc

Children can:-

- Sort objects into pairs
- Sort objects into families or place of origin
- Sort according to a theme eg soft/hard light/heavy smooth/rough colors etc
- Use the objects to play memory games – line about 7-10 objects, children observe for a few minutes, close their eyes and teacher or a child removes one object, children work out what object is missing.
 - Line about 6 objects in a line; children close eyes, move one object around, children guess which object have been shifted.

12. Shaped Box

Cut shapes in a cardboard box, cut different colored shapes and children put the right shapes into the right windows. Call out colored shapes to make it more challenging. You can differ the sizes and ask the child to put the "smallest blue circle in the circle window."



13. What's in the Bag?

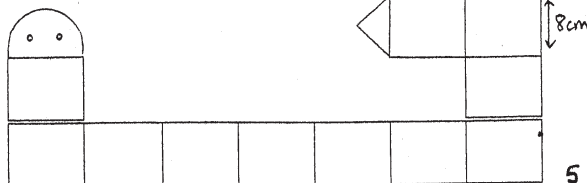
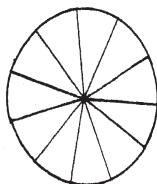
Collect several objects and place in a pillowcase or a woven basket and ask the child to put his hand into the bag and feel and describe the object and name it.

14. Colored Snake:

Make 11 squared cards 8cm x 8cm – color each card a different color – blue, green, red, yellow, white, black, pink, brown, purple, orange, grey.

Make a wheel and color it using the 11 colors.

Spin the wheel and children place the correct colored card on the squares till complete.

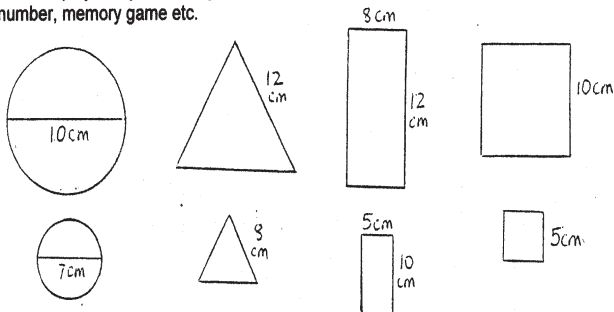




14. Shapes:

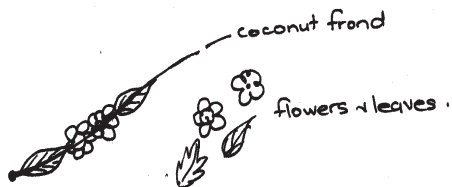
Out of cardboards, make 4 x big circles, 4 x big squares, 4 x big rectangle and 4 x big triangle. Do the same for the smaller shapes x 4 each. From each of the shapes eg big circle – color one blue, one red, one green and one yellow. Do the same for the other shapes.

You can play many different games using the shapes – to teach color, size, number, memory game etc.



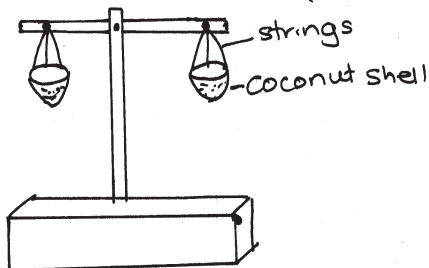
15. Threading:

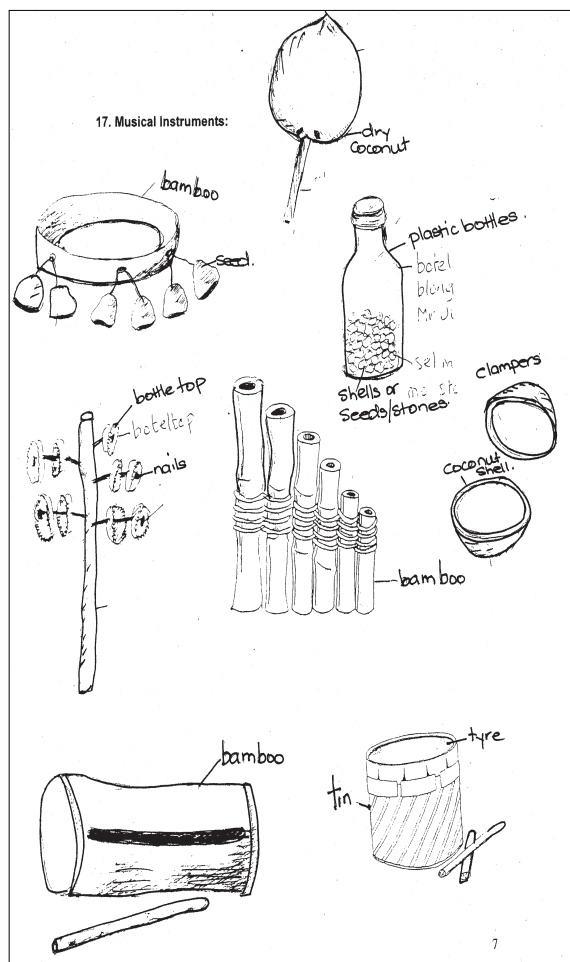
Using coconut fronds as needle, provide flowers, leaves, shells, seeds and allow children to thread.



16. Scales:

Using sticks or wood and coconut shells for scales.





One of the commonest complaints from ECCE teachers is the lack of resources for teaching. Such a complaint need not be heard again; this chapter is full of ideas that can be used or adapted to suit a variety of situations. In the Pacific, where our surroundings are full of natural resources and our communities are caring, we can count ourselves very fortunate. Where children are in need, and teachers and communities have the skills and imagination to invent, there can be no truer saying than **necessity is the mother of invention.**





9

Developing an early childhood curriculum with standards in mind

Glen Palmer

Introduction

This chapter discusses general issues around the use of early learning and development standards (ELDS), and describes how they are being used in Fiji as a basis for curriculum development and implementation.

Standards have entered the early childhood field, not only overseas, but also in the Pacific region. In 2006 UNICEF and Columbia University included Fiji in the 'Going Global with Early Learning and Development Standards' initiative. This project started in 2002 with six countries (Brazil, Ghana, Jordan, Paraguay, Philippines and South Africa), with the intent of helping those countries develop nationally accepted ELDS that could be used in country-determined ways. Despite being a latecomer to the project, Fiji engaged enthusiastically with it and, at the time of writing, the review and validation of national standards for young children in Fiji is well under way. This initiative has developed alongside other national projects, in particular the development of a national curriculum framework (NCF)





that encompasses kindergarten to Form 7, and also the development of curriculum guidelines for 3 – 6 year-olds.

Consciously or unconsciously, most early childhood teachers set goals for children's learning and development. Based on their understanding of children, they plan experiences with the objective of helping individual children and groups of children acquire certain knowledge, skills and behaviours. The introduction of early learning and development standards should not change this. Rather, ELDS should help teachers define their goals more specifically. They should also inform teachers, administrators, families and management about what are appropriate expectations for young children's learning and development.

Teachers who use ELDS will continue to encourage play-based, active learning, with a focus on the interests and holistic needs of children. While the standards outline destinations for learning and development, teachers determine the 'how'; that is, they decide how to help their children reach the destinations or standards.

Understanding standards

In addressing the topic of ELDS, several questions must initially be considered:

- What are Early Learning and Development Standards?
- What should be the focus of ELDS for young children?
- What are some pros and cons of using ELDS?

What are ELDS?

Standards are statements that specify an expectation for achievement (Wah, 2006). They may be developed for various purposes, e.g. teacher standards are developed to define what teachers should know and be able to do. Early learning and development standards are one type of standard. They describe widely accepted expectations for what children should know and be able to do by a certain age or period of time (e.g. by 12 months or three years of age, or by the end of pre-school). The term 'early learning and development standards' is typically used with reference to standards for children 0 to 6 years of age, although the age range





can be extended. Because development is greatly influenced by the culture and context within which a child and his/her family are situated, such standards must be developed for that context, rather than transplanted from another country or context. National standards should be statements of what the country values for its youngest citizens. While achieving complete cultural relevance may not be possible for countries with tremendous regional, linguistic, racial-ethnic, and socio-economic diversity, 'the intent should be to create standards that are applicable to all children in the country' (Wah, 2006: 10).

What should be the focus of ELDS for young children?

Gronlund (2006) emphasises the point that standards for pre-school children should be different from those for older children. Children in the pre-school years are developing skills, knowledge and values that lay the foundation for later learning and development. For example, they are learning to listen, to work with others, and to use language to express themselves. Developing these foundation skills is more important than content knowledge. While content knowledge becomes more important as children move into school, standards for Class 1 and 2 children should still address all areas of development, including social and emotional development and creativity. Fisher (2002:39) comments wisely:

Foundations have to go broad and deep before a building can go high. If the foundations of learning are to be adequate, then it may be some time before the building is actually seen. Once constructed, however, the building should go higher and be more adaptable than anything constructed with narrower, more hurried, less secure foundations.

There is a strong message here for all those involved with young children's learning and development. Providing a broad and holistic curriculum, with ample time and opportunities for meaningful learning, is necessary if young children are to develop the foundations essential for later learning and development.

What are some pros and cons of using ELDS?

There are many benefits for using ELDS; there are also potential hazards. Some of these pros and cons are identified in Table 1.





Table 1 The advantages and disadvantages of ELDS

Advantages of ELDS	Disadvantages of ELDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They provide richness to our understanding of children's development and learning.• Teachers can link standards to what they are already doing.• They can be linked to curriculum standards in the school so that there is continuity.• They help us identify next steps in children's learning and development.• They help us have realistic expectations for children.• They provide a tool whereby teachers can monitor children's learning and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resources are needed to train teachers and administrators in the use of standards. Without this, the risks noted below are likely.• The integrated approach used in early childhood could be lost if teachers just teach to standards.• There is a risk of a push-down curriculum.• Direct instruction, rather than self-directed, exploratory and play-based learning might be encouraged.• Testing and other inappropriate assessment might be used.

Source: Adapted from Gronlund, 2006.

An approach based on standards or outcomes should ensure more accountability from all those involved with the learning and development of young children. At the same time, the uniqueness of early childhood curriculum—holistic and play-based—must be preserved. Oliver and Klugman (2006) write of the potential dilemma, exploring how play and standards-driven curricula can work together. In Fiji, this too is the challenge. In providing expectations or standards for children's learning and development it is critical not to lose sight of the fact that children learn largely through play and exploration, and that their learning is integrated, not segmented into subject areas. Furthermore, the focus on learning and development must be maintained. 'Providing play, exploration, and active learning opportunities and recognising the value in daily routines and the importance of caring adults as guides and observers are still the best ways to teach young children' (Gronlund, 2006:16).

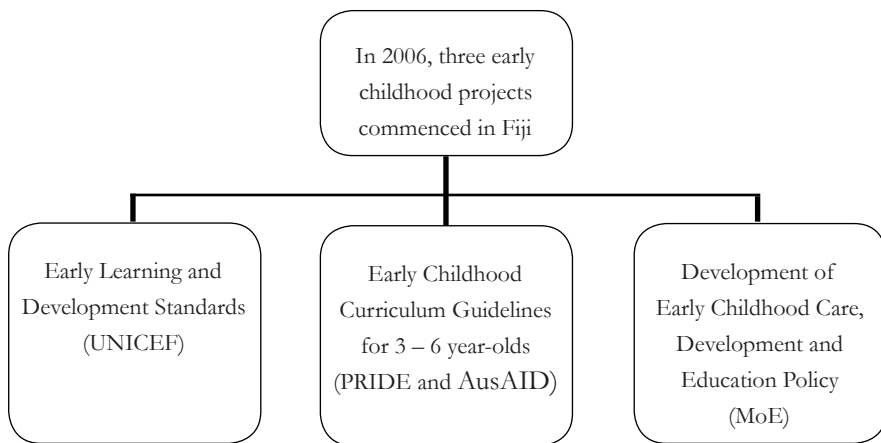




The Fiji experience

As mentioned above, the development of ELDS in Fiji has occurred alongside other national projects. In 2006, Fiji embarked on several early childhood projects (see Figure 1): firstly, the development of ELDS, supported by UNICEF; secondly, the development of an early childhood curriculum for 3 to 6 year-olds, supported by PRIDE and AusAID (under the auspices of the Fiji Education Sector Programme, FESP); and thirdly, a Ministry of Education initiative to review and update the early childhood policy. At the same time, a national curriculum framework (NCF) that addresses all levels of schooling, from kindergarten to Form 7, has been under construction.

Figure 1 ECCE projects in Fiji, 2006



Twelve months on, the three early childhood projects have become interdependent. The team drafting the curriculum guidelines has taken the standards being developed for 3-6 year-olds, extended them, and used them as a basis for an outcomes approach to the curriculum, in line with the approach being used in the NCF. This work has, in turn, fuelled development of the ELDS and the early childhood policy.





Validation of the ELDS remains a major task. At this stage, the standards have been written by a small, representative team of early childhood educators and other stakeholders. They do not yet fit the definition of standards as ‘widely accepted expectations of what children (in Fiji) should know and be able to do’. Plans are in place to validate them during 2007. A draft of the *Early Childhood Curriculum Guidelines for Fiji* is also being taken into the field for trialing and further development during the year.

Standards and the *Early Childhood Curriculum Guidelines for Fiji*

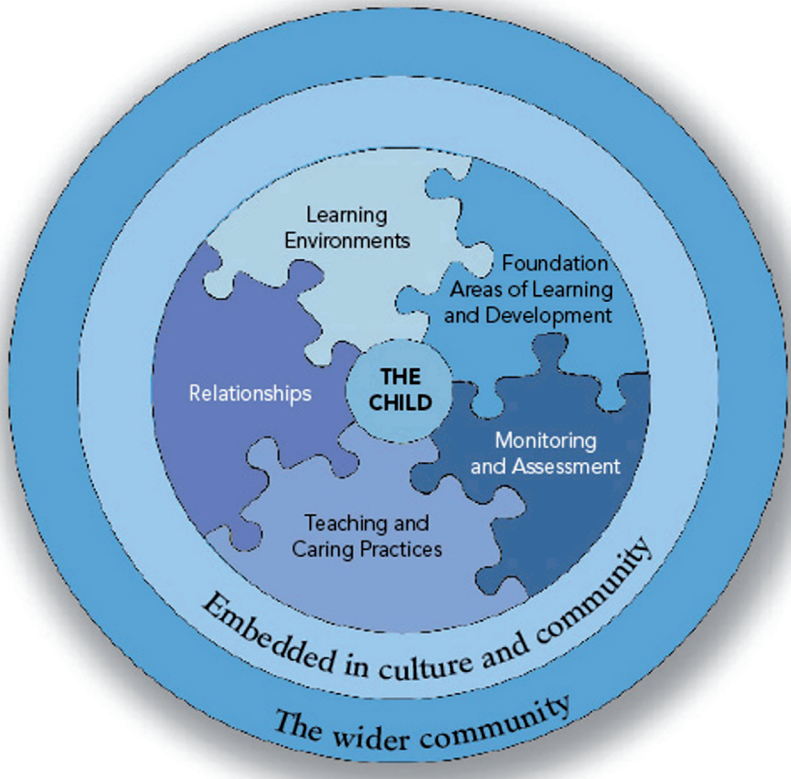
Expectations for children’s learning prior to school entry vary across families, schools and communities in Fiji. In many situations, kindergarten/pre-school children are tested on a range of academic skills and offered or denied access to a school based on their test results. With or without tests, it is common for teachers and parents to expect children to enter Class 1 competent in a narrow range of academic skills related to literacy and numeracy (e.g. writing numerals and letters, and knowing the alphabet). Expectations for children’s social and emotional readiness for school are given little consideration. On the other hand, there are many pre-school teachers who underestimate the potential of young children, and who offer very limited opportunities for meaningful, child-centred learning. For many years, senior early childhood professionals have been voicing their concerns, and advocating the development of curriculum guidelines to address these many shortcomings in the kindergarten/pre-school sector.

The development of curriculum guidelines at the same time as projects for the development of early learning and development standards and the national curriculum framework (NCF) has given the curriculum a direction that it probably would not have taken a few years ago. In line with the NCF, the *Early Childhood Curriculum Guidelines for Fiji: 3-6 years* has adopted an outcomes approach. For consistency with the NCF, the term ‘outcomes’ rather than ‘standards’ is used. However, as used in the curriculum document, the terms are synonymous. ‘Outcomes’ also refers to what children should know and be able to do. The outcomes are accompanied by descriptions of how children might demonstrate that they have met them.





Figure 2 The curriculum framework



The curriculum framework

The curriculum framework identifies five components considered essential for an effective child-centred curriculum for young children (see Figure 2). These components are:

- Learning Environments
- Relationships
- Teaching and Caring Practices
- Content (organised around six Foundation Areas of Learning and Development, FALD)
- Monitoring and Assessment.





The surrounding circles indicate the various influences on the curriculum: the children's families, their cultures and practices, as well as values, government policies and other factors in the wider community.

While kindergartens in Fiji are community responsibilities, strong partnerships between kindergartens and teachers, schools, families, communities and government/non government organisations are needed if kindergartens are to provide strong foundations for future learning .

Outcomes/standards within the curriculum framework

Outcomes have been identified for each FALD. At the time of writing, these are in draft form, as is the entire curriculum. Further development will occur, as the draft curriculum is taken to the field in a series of workshops and consultations. Draft outcomes for the FALD 'learning to know' are shown in Table 2 to demonstrate the process of using outcomes/standards to develop early childhood curriculum guidelines.

Table 2 An example of outcomes (draft)

FALD: Learning to know
STRAND: Early mathematical understanding
Children demonstrate an awareness and understanding of number. Children demonstrate an understanding of measurement, including, time, volume, temperature, money, length, area. Children apply understanding of shape and space. Children can find, repeat, extend and create patterns. Children can gather and interpret basic information, and make predictions about everyday events in their lives (e.g. the weather).
STRAND: Inquiry and investigation
Children notice, talk about and represent things in the environment. Children use various thinking skills to explore and find information on topics of interest.
STRAND: Representing and symbolic thinking
Children use actions, objects and words in fantasy or dramatic play. Children represent ideas and thinking in a variety of ways (e.g. drawing, painting, construction, music, movement, dance).





Indicators of how 3 – 6 year-old children might show they are developing each outcome are also being developed. Table 3 shows an example, using the first outcome, ‘Children demonstrate an awareness and understanding of number’. Note that there are three steps or phases identified for 3 – 6 year-olds’ development of the outcome—emerging, developing, and competent.

Table 3 Examples of indicators

Pathways of learning and development for 3-6 year-olds		
Emerging	Developing	Competent
Number: Children demonstrate an awareness and understanding of number		
The child:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• imitates numbers used by the family,• recognises similarities between two objects, and can match them,• joins in number songs and number games,• rote counts small numbers, but without understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• shows an interest in counting, and using numbers in everyday activities,• sorts objects into groups and explains why they are the same,• identifies numerals as different from letters,• responds with a number when asked a ‘how many’ question,• recognises and names up to three things without counting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• matches objects one-to-one; e.g. recognizes three objects regardless of how they are arranged,• puts groups of up to five objects in order (e.g. from shortest to longest),• sorts and classifies objects according to colour, size, texture etc.,• identifies and names numerals up to five,• uses numbers accurately in their conversations, e.g. ‘We are three in our group’,• uses language of comparison, e.g. may say which group has more or fewer objects; may say, ‘He’s got more than me; there are lots and lots of ...’,• uses ordinal numbers with some accuracy (e.g. 1st, 2nd, 3rd),• describes a sequence of events (e.g. tells the steps they took to complete an activity).





Assessment and curriculum planning with standards/outcomes in mind

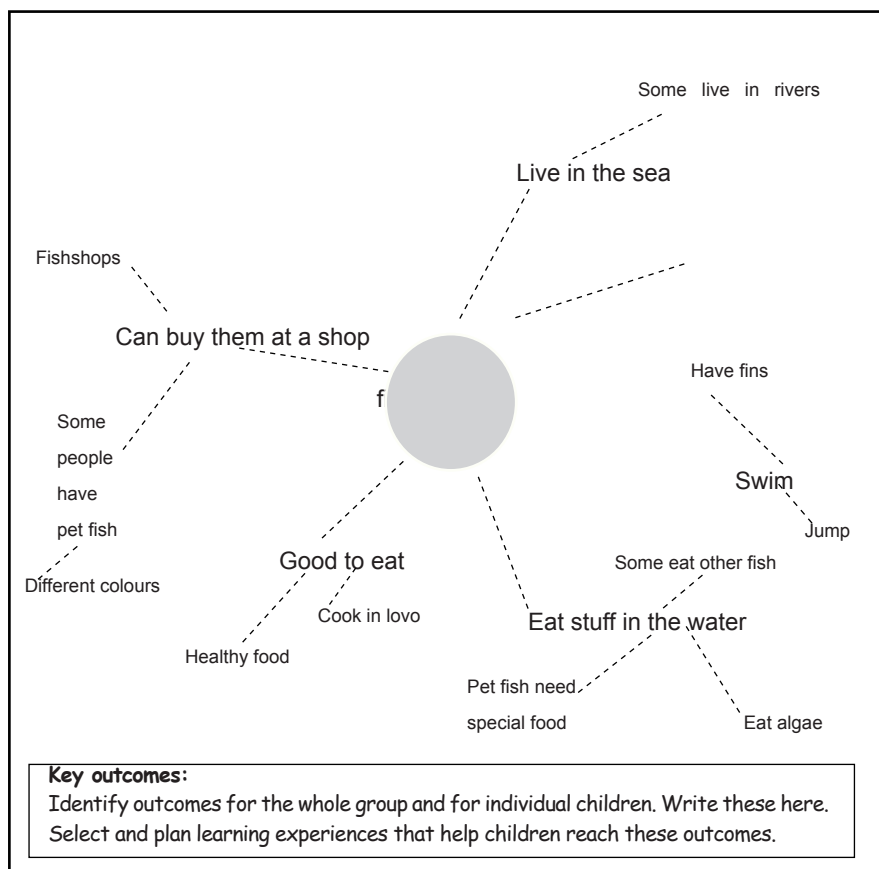
Assessment and curriculum planning should go hand in hand. Copple and Bredekamp (2006: 47) explain the connection very simply: 'Curriculum is the plan for enabling children to reach desired outcomes; assessment is the process of looking at children's progress towards those outcomes'. Outcomes/standards have the potential, therefore, to strengthen the link between monitoring/assessing young children's learning, and planning curricula that are based on their needs and interests. However, assessment approaches must be developmentally and culturally appropriate. In the early childhood years, formal testing is not recommended. It is neither appropriate nor reliable. Early childhood teachers and caregivers find out what children know and can do through observation and interactions during play and other activities, through talking to them and their families, and through collecting samples of work such as paintings and drawings. Teachers and caregivers reflect on this information and use it to plan experiences that support further learning and development. In this way, teachers can plan with specific standards in mind, as well as respond to the spontaneous happenings of the day. Teachers in Fiji will be encouraged to keep portfolios on all their children, and to share relevant information with families, administrators and other stakeholders. A child profile will be developed to accompany this process.

Incorporating standards/outcomes does not require a complete change in practice. Rather, it requires that teachers add a layer of awareness as they plan and implement the curriculum. Teachers who are familiar with the outcomes can incorporate them into their regular planning as well as respond to outcomes as they go about the daily interactions and transitions in the pre-school programme. Figure 3 shows an example of how teachers can include outcomes when planning a topic on fish. The choice of topic is a result of children's interests. Teachers would use their observations and understanding of children to identify outcomes for individual children and groups, and would write these outcomes on the plan. They then incorporate this information into their weekly and/or daily plans.





Figure 3 Developing a web from children's ideas and interests



Conclusion

The need for curriculum guidelines for pre-school is being expressed across the Pacific region. While each country must determine the approach most suited to its needs, Fiji has embarked on an outcomes approach within a holistic early childhood framework. This direction was largely determined by Fiji's inclusion in the 'Going Global with Early Learning and Development Standards' initiative, and the inclusion of kindergarten in the national curriculum framework currently being developed for Fiji.





A representative group of teachers, senior early childhood professionals and other stakeholders has developed a draft of the curriculum guidelines. The draft will be taken to the field for further development and consultation in 2007. Including outcomes has the potential to enhance and enrich the pre-school curriculum in Fiji, and to give direction and purpose to those involved with young children. However, outcomes must be used wisely, and in ways that positively support children's learning, development and well-being. The uniqueness of an early childhood curriculum—holistic and play-based—must be preserved, whatever the curriculum approach adopted. As mentioned earlier, “Providing play, exploration, and active learning opportunities and recognising the value in daily routines and the importance of caring adults as guides and observers are still the best ways to teach young children” (Gronlund, 2006: 16).

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10

Teacher education in ECCE

Desma Hughes, Ufemia Camaitoga and Jessie Fuamatu

In this chapter, we describe the early childhood teacher education programmes in the institutions where we teach: the University of the South Pacific (USP), Lautoka Teachers' College and Fulton College. While these institutions are situated in Fiji, USP also has campuses in the 12 Pacific Island countries that make up the University. The USP programme is, therefore, a regional one.

The University of the South Pacific

Desma Hughes

Early childhood teacher training began at USP in 1982 with the Pacific Preschool Teachers Certificate programme offered through the Continuing Education Section. The certificate was developed through the collaborative efforts of the Pacific Preschool Council, Continuing Education and the Institute of Education of USP. The programme consisted of three modules which could be studied over three semesters through distance education. This qualification was initially aimed at further developing early childhood education teachers' knowledge and skills in working with young children and their families in the region.





Over a number of years, many teachers from all the USP member countries, but especially Fiji, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, were awarded the certificate. At its Conference in 1985 at USP, the Pacific Preschool Council discussed the possibility of an advanced course to be offered after the certificate programme, in response to requests from the certificate graduates. Funding to write courses and provide ECCE books for a Diploma in Early Childhood Education through the distance mode was provided by UNICEF. Several writers were involved in this and, in 1994, USP offered the Diploma in ECE for the first time. In 1996 Ms Anne Glover was seconded from the University of South Australia for a year to reorganise as well as revise some units of the Diploma programme. There were only six students in the first intake, but numbers grew steadily and, in 1998, a permanent ECE Coordinator took up the lecturer's position. Over 100 students have now completed the ECE Diploma.

Early childhood education is a specialist area as this is where the foundation is laid for the child's later development and learning. Additionally, parent and family involvement is an integral part of any early childhood programme as they are viewed as partners in their children's education. The period of early childhood (birth to eight years of age) is a time when children are still developing and are vulnerable, so the focus of an early childhood curriculum should be holistic, caring, and developmentally as well as culturally appropriate. If children's development is well rounded in the five areas (emotional, social, intellectual, physical and language), they are more likely to succeed in school. On the other hand, if children's development is poor in these areas, they are likely to fall behind. Too often in the Pacific the value of early childhood education is underestimated and not seen as crucial to a child's later achievements.

The philosophy of teaching and learning in early childhood education is very different from other teaching areas in that it uses a *play-based approach*, with a focus on individuality and the uniqueness of each child, rather than seeing children as a fairly homogenous group. ECCE uses a broad base of knowledge which includes health, nutrition, holistic development, developmental psychology, leadership, art, craft, music, movement, language, working with families, and early intervention.





Since the introduction of better teacher training programmes in recent years, communities have begun to see the value of ECCE programmes and teacher training. In urban areas, where extended family members are often absent and cannot look after children, preschool enrolments have burgeoned. This increase and the establishment of new centres (pre-schools, kindergartens and day-care centres) have led to a rising demand for teachers.

In addition, as a result of the *Education for All* programme, many Pacific Island governments are focussing on the ECE sector and have made early childhood education a priority, persuaded by the growing amount of research evidence showing that quality in early childhood education gives children a stronger foundation for formal education.

As a consequence, changes have occurred in the delivery of early childhood education. For example, in the Marshall Islands, kindergarten classes are now overseen by the Ministry of Education and are part of the formal education system. The RMI has also prioritised ECCE teacher training and their USP Centre in Majuro has made ECCE a priority. To assist this, AusAID gave scholarships to ten students to enrol in the ECCE degree programme.

The Cook Islands will start a Diploma in ECE training programme with USP in 2008. This training will most likely lead students into the degree in ECE. In Fiji, early childhood centres are already regulated by the Ministry of Education and they too are upgrading the minimum level of training for ECCE teachers. The Fiji Ministry of Education has pledged their support for the USP ECE degree. In Vanuatu, the Ministry of Education is beginning to regulate preschool education and it is expected that all teachers will have a qualification or will have upgraded existing qualifications by 2010.

Another boost to numbers in the ECCE teacher training programmes results from funding agencies (e.g. AusAID and NZAID) which now provide scholarships to ECE students who in the past were self- or privately-funded. This has begun to impact on and increase numbers of students enrolling and completing ECCE programmes and will enable students to complete at a faster rate.





Early childhood education includes classes 1 and 2 in primary education. In many Pacific countries, certificated primary trained teachers who teach these classes in primary school find it difficult to work with 7 and 8 year-old children. To prepare themselves better, many have enrolled in the ECE Diploma programme. This will have a follow through effect into the degree programme since the level of study is related to salary scales.

In addition, regional teacher education institutions such as Lautoka Teachers' College, Solomon Islands College of Higher Education and Kiribati Teachers' College have, or will shortly have, ECCE teacher training at the certificate or advanced certificate level and are encouraging their students to move into the diploma and degree programmes.

The USP degree programme

As senior lecturer in the School of Education at USP, I recently carried out a research project into the needs of ECE teachers. I interviewed and surveyed USP Diploma in ECE graduates. I found that 89% of the graduates indicated that they wished to do further studies in early childhood education. Many of them were already teachers in preschool and primary school, or were working in ministries of education as advisors or conducting special projects in the field to assist other early childhood education teachers. They believed that they were not adequately prepared for such positions by the certificate and diploma programmes. Many expressed a desire to do postgraduate study and carry out research in ECCE, which is sadly lacking in the Pacific context. As a consequence of this expressed desire and of the increasing numbers of centres, USP developed a bachelor's degree in ECE. An Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee, consisting of representatives from most of the larger nations of the Pacific, met several times to discuss possible courses for the degree, based on perceived needs of existing teachers, and new courses were written, many of them by myself. The new courses studied in the degree are related to young children's management and understanding of behaviour; language and literacy development; an inquiry approach to maths, science and the environment; art, craft, music, and movement; developing social competence and emotional health; play; health safety and nutrition; and early intervention (early special education).





Eight courses from the Diploma in ECE or the Advanced Certificate in ECE from Lautoka Teachers' College can be cross-credited towards the new BED.

Within the diploma there is a practicum. The practicum is a structured course with set tasks. It consists of a compulsory five-day workshop with the lecturer and a minimum 10-week placement in an approved ECCE centre. The student teacher is expected to demonstrate an ability to relate previously studied theoretical material to its application in set tasks such as child observations; planning individual and whole class programmes; planning, implementation and evaluation of programme plans; parent talks; administrative tasks and so on. By the completion of the practicum the student should be able to take responsibility for teaching and leadership/management tasks in an ECCE setting. In the degree programme, students perform practical activities and a short practicum may be included in the future.

Early childhood education is based on the context of the child. For example, a child who lives by the sea will experience many activities related to the sea. Most of the courses emphasise the context of the child and the family. The ECCE degree programme will be unique to the Pacific context—another priority area in the USP Strategic Plan.

The future of early childhood education rests with people who value it and make a commitment to this special branch of education—the families, teachers, early childhood workers, caregivers, ECCE leaders, ECCE senior guidance officers in ministries of education and teacher trainers. Already, teachers show a huge commitment by studying for few incentives, paying for their own studies, and teaching long hours for very low wages. They are shown little appreciation by many community members. It is hoped that the wider community will see the improved performance in primary school among children who have had quality early childhood education, and become advocates, putting pressure on governments to increase funding to ECCE, especially teacher training, teaching resources and books. Early childhood education in many countries only improves when the families join with the teachers to push for better conditions, funding and appreciation for this 'poor cousin' in education.





Lautoka Teachers' College

Ufemia Camaitoga

The first Early Childhood Education (ECE) certificate programme at Lautoka Teachers' College (LTC) was offered in 1999. In that year, 15 in-service students from rural communities were enrolled into the one year on-campus programme. In 2003, a comprehensive review of LTC's teacher-education programmes was conducted, beginning with ECE. The review was funded by AusAID and Dr Glen Palmer was the ECE consultant. She consulted extensively with key stakeholders during the review and recommended that the ECE courses be upgraded to what is currently the Advanced Certificate in Early Childhood Education (ACECE) with some modifications to the structure and pedagogies of the first certificate programme.

Based on the review, Dr Glen Palmer, Biu Cava and I designed and developed twelve courses for the ACECE programme: Semester One courses are: child development, communication and study skills, early childhood learning environment, early language and literacy, language study (Fijian/Hindi/Tamil/Urdu/Rotuman) and music, movement and drama. Semester Two courses are: art for young children, management/leadership/advocacy, programming and planning, working with parents and families, foundations of maths and science, and health and nutrition.

Professional practice is built into each semester, totalling six weeks in the year. The establishment of a campus playgroup to support students' observational research and training in collaboration with the parents paved the way for participatory action research.

ACECE students attend lectures with the pre-service diplomates in the following courses: child development, communication and study skills, language study. Both music and art are specialised areas so the diploma lecturers' expertise is utilised, offering personal strands, whilst the professional strand is taken care of by the ECE lecturers. Assessment tasks are also shared to ensure articulation into the diploma programme.





Eight of the ACECE courses are cross-credited to the Bachelor in Education, EC (in-service) at USP.

Where to from here?

In the past three years, Dr Glen Palmer recommended in her report that the ACECE could articulate into the LTC Diploma in Primary Education programme, and we hope the College will respond positively to a new direction in what Fiji can call its own innovation in teacher-education. The issue of a growing lack of concern in teaching infant classes could be filled by early childhood graduates seeing the diploma programme has not articulated early childhood pedagogies with a strong focus on transition to primary school. The question of monitoring and evaluating graduates and practising teachers is of grave concern too. To do this, negotiations could begin with the Ministry of Education and Public Service Commission in allocating ten places from the pre-service programme for selected early childhood trainees to upskill to the first year in the diploma programme. This, I believe is the way forward for ECCD teacher education in Fiji.

Fulton College

Jessie Fuamatu

Fulton College provides a teacher training Primary Education course for many of the teachers in the Pacific. At present it is undergoing changes in staff and as a result new challenges have presented opportunities to develop our focus in the area of ECCE. Currently ECCE features in several courses in the Primary Diploma programme. These include the Learning and Teaching, Human Development, Philosophy on Christian Education, and Special Needs courses.

These courses provide students with knowledge and skills that build on quality foundations to enhance rich learning experiences in the early years. This quality in ECCE contributes directly to the success of children in primary school. The learning and teaching courses emphasise the importance of developing this quality learning experience through the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. This is all part of preparing children not only for primary schooling but also





lifelong learning. Early childhood education will continue to feature prominently within the Primary programme and address the importance of the early years from birth to eight years of age.

We plan to offer some specialist courses in the area of early childhood education. Students will be provided with evidence from research on the significant benefits for children in the early years. These course will focus on the importance of nurturing children's mental, physical, social, and spiritual development. This ties in very closely with the principles and philosophy of Christian education and the special character of our institution.

Fulton College as a training institution offers not only Primary Education, Business, and IT courses; we also offer a Theology Diploma and B.A degree programme. Many of the men who study in these programmes at Fulton are married students and their wives are left at home with young children. The women decided to meet regularly as a group to prepare themselves for the roles they are expected to carry out when their husbands graduate. They started up a play group which meets once a month, with plans to increase the time when a more appropriate venue is established. This group was formed by the women of the College community and the purpose was to provide support for the mothers and allow children across campus to interact with one another. The women were keen to access information on the development of young children and the importance of play in the early years. This interest has created opportunities to share valuable information on healthy practices, and physical and cognitive development of young children.

One of our visionary educational goals is to explore the possibility of delivering a Certificate in ECCE and, later, developing this towards a Diploma and finally a Bachelor of Education course. These stages of development are the result of interest expressed by the women from the community group and the plans of the education staff on campus.

As an educational institution, Fulton College is committed to making a difference in people's lives in the Pacific. We believe that early childhood education is a critical link to providing a strong foundation for children and it can bring communities





Desma Hughes, Ufemia Camaitoga, Jessie Fuamatu – Teacher education in ECCE

together and make strong links. Families can learn how to nurture young children and build strong learning communities to support the role of the teacher in the school.





11

The way forward for ECCE in Pacific Island countries

Ufemia Camaitoga

Research has provided substantial evidence on the multiple socio-economic benefits that early childhood care and education (ECCE) have on a country. It seems, however, that these benefits are still not enough to convince government leaders to prioritise ECCE, despite the fact that Pacific Island countries (PICs) are well aware of the recent focus on ECCE in international conventions such as the UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Millennium Development Goals, the UNESCO World Declaration on Education for All and the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

While some PICs have put in place mandatory laws and policies which articulate some strategic measures (e.g. banning of corporal punishment in Fiji, and child protection in Vanuatu, Fiji and Samoa), there remains much to do in terms of access to early childhood education for under-privileged or at risk children in squatter, disadvantaged and rural communities; providing equipment for centres; paying early childhood teachers' salaries; and improving their work conditions.





These shortcomings show that ECCE is not given the priority it rightly deserves, bearing in mind that '[t]he satisfaction of these [basic learning] needs empowers individuals in any society and confers upon them a *responsibility* to respect and build upon their collective and cultural, linguistic and spiritual heritage to promote the education of others' (EFA Jomtien Declaration Article 1, emphasis added).

Pacific Island leaders—traditional and government—need to develop a better understanding of leadership in ECCE. If we are the mandated parents (natural or surrogate); if we are the mandated government and leaders in our villages or communities; if we are the chosen ones to speak for as well as advocate for young children and their families, we are obliged to provide the best living conditions and environments for them, irrespective of their race, colour or creed. It is everyone's responsibility; we do not have a choice. We are talking about our children, their future and their country's future. We are talking about 'Supporting learning from 0 – 8, Creating the future' for PICs.

The Preamble of the 1989 *Convention on the Rights of the Child* defines the family as the 'fundamental group' and the 'natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children'. PIC governments are obliged to support and facilitate these care-giving environments. In Pacific Island societies, taking care of and providing education for some other children within one's own immediate family clan, wider family unit and even tribe is acceptable and demonstrates love, respect and the reciprocity values which are part of our heritage. It can be appropriately said that we do prioritise our children in the Pacific islands; children have a special place in our cultures and this is evident in each Pacific Island's celebration of children in unique ways from the birth of a first born, first birthdays, children's Sundays and through to puberty. Culturally, children are already seen as special and they are our responsibility in terms of education.

I draw wisdom from my late father's words, '*E lakovata na qaravi itavi kei na vanua, lotu kei na matanitu*' meaning, you have a duty to serve the land, the church and the government equally. For me, this suggests that children are the responsibility of the *vanua* (family, tribe and community), the church (through the priest, *talatala*,





pastor, church elders and congregation), and the government at the political level (laws, policies) if we ‘measure what we treasure, we treasure what we measure’—the young child in the Pacific islands. I also draw from Nelson Mandela’s wisdom: ‘It takes the whole village to raise a child’.

Sadly, we are neither listening nor learning to be proactive about ECCE issues in a challenging modern world. There needs to be greater commitment by all stakeholders as we cannot continue to depend on donors to meet our commitments. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory¹⁵ has long been in existence within our Pacific island communities. For instance a Pacific child grows up with conventions, traditional beliefs, values and a culture which define his/her ecology. Networking and support systems need to be put in place in light of this knowledge in order to maximise a child’s learning and development from the early years.

Political will and commitment

Given all the current data and research on the impact of early brain-wiring from 0 – 3 years, it is imperative that governments, within their resources and in partnership with NGOs, explore what this means for them as policy-makers, caregivers, practitioners, front-line workers, traditional leaders and so on. Considering the limited resources, there is a strong call for a cross-sectoral approach to pave the way for ECCE in the Pacific Islands.

In a holistic ECCE approach, policies and programmes that safeguard a child’s right to health, nutrition, cognitive and psycho-social development and protection should be clearly articulated and aligned to mandatory government documents. A requirement of the holistic approach to ECCE is protecting and promoting women’s rights; it is the first step in securing gains for young

15. Bronfenbrenner (1979) posited that child development cannot be explained by a single concept, but rather by a complex system – the microsystem, the mesosystem, the ecosystem, the macrosystem, the chronosystem. His ecological model theorises that a child does not exist alone but in a given context represented by layers or systems. Bronfenbrenner, U. 1979. *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.





children. This ought to be articulated in countries' corporate and strategic plans and translation of funds into the annual budget of key government ministries and departments: health, education, social welfare, women and culture, information, the judiciary, regional development, the environment and local government.

Visionary and dynamic leadership

Passion and **power** are two concepts associated with the 2007 ECCE Honiara workshop and its theme of *Supporting learning from 0 – 8: creating the future*. In their wisdom, the organisers brought in participants representing governments and NGOs who have **passion** for young children and their families to share and explore best practices, and therefore are mandated or have the **power** to make some firm decisions, thus moving ECCE forward in their own countries. As critical friend to the workshop, my conceptual findings can be summed up in three Vs—voice, visibility and value-added. To move ECCE forward in Pacific Island countries, I strongly believe the workshop participants must speak up for young children (have a **voice**) in all forums, be **visible**, and make a commitment to give value to young children's lives and future (**value-added**).

Inspiration for change

The workshop partners and the Solomon Island secretariat gave ECCE advocates and practitioners the opportunity to exchange ideas and information and, as a result, the workshop was a source of inspiration on many fronts. It confirmed what the Solomon Islands Minister for Education, the Honourable Derek Sikua, said in his opening address: that this spirit of cooperation and support among the organisers of the workshop is a classical example of the Paris Declaration which calls for donor harmonisation.

Participants were made aware of PRIDE's¹⁶ Resource Centre and Pacific Archive of Digital Data for Learning and Education (PADDLE), and the SPBEA¹⁷ web

16. Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education

17. South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment





pages which are actively gathering and synthesising information from within the region in order to improve access to relevant data and documents. Furthermore, it was noted that the Pacific Island Forum Ministers for Education would meet in Auckland in late 2007 and the four recommendations from the workshop would be presented to them by PRIDE and SPBEA.

Global and regional perspectives

Globally, there has been steady progress towards achieving the goals in the *Declaration on Education for All* since 1990, especially towards universal primary education (UPE) and gender parity amongst the poorest countries, but the pace is too slow for the goals to be met in the remaining years to 2015.

Maki Hayashikawa (UNESCO, Bangkok) in her keynote address provided data from the *EEA Global Monitoring Report 2007* (see Chapter 5) and gave the workshop participants many insights into the position of ECCE at both the global and regional level. The scarcity of data for monitoring the childhood care component in the Pacific is of great concern as it limits its inclusion in global, regional and national policies and planning. Dr Visessio Pongpi (UNESCO) in his presentation added that there needed to be greater utilisation of the research data that is available in ECCE policy decisions. Regular provision of data and information to international, regional and national fora is essential for moving ECCE forward, and child development research findings, which are often not widely disseminated, could be an immediate area for PICs to concentrate on. There is a lot of observational research that could be used effectively for a variety of purposes.

Strengthening documentation of ECCE practices and action research for Pacific Island countries ought to be a collaborative effort by stakeholders. Adi Davila Toganivalu in her address (see Chapter 3) emphasised the importance of knowing and documenting our ECCE history, our present and plans for our future as leaders, practitioners and caregivers so that we can continue to empower one another in determining our children's future in the Pacific.

Establishing and building up a database for ECCE in-country is crucial for national planning purposes. However, the success of gathering authentic, reliable and



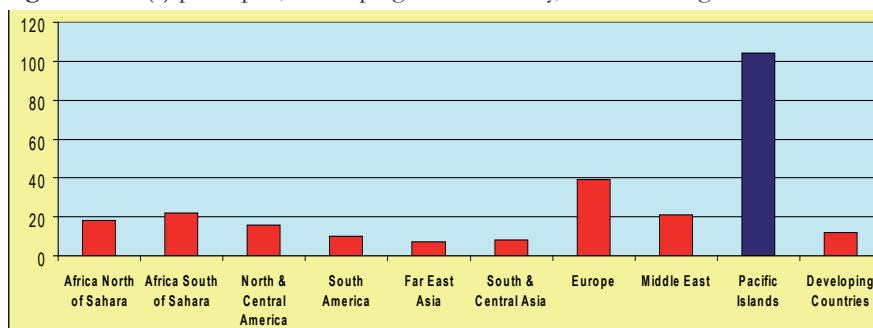


timely data for monitoring and evaluation hinges on a well-defined ECCE unit with resources. Support must be drawn from government and traditional leaders and a proactive stance could be taken by them to ensure this is in place.

Pacific voices

Adi Davila Toganivalu spoke about the Pacific Pre-school Council (PPC) and its functions. The workshop participants were in favour of reactivating it; it has not met since 1995. Being an affiliate to the World Forum Foundations, the PPC currently enjoys privileges such as sending fully or partially sponsored participants to international workshops and conferences. Fiji has been an active participant and has carried the voice of the Pacific, but needs vary from country to country. Common sense tells us that we should make use of the existing PPC set-up, rather than re-invent the wheel, in order to address local or regional issues and present a united ‘voice’ for children. Countries could use this machinery to organise themselves and learn from one another. The *malua* fever, the waiting or delaying attitude, must be shelved if we intend to move ECCE forward.

Figure 1 Aid (\$) per capita, developing countries only, 2002-3 average



Source: OECD & World Bank Indicators

As Dr Visessio Pongi pointed out in his presentation at the workshop, statistically, the Pacific is the biggest recipient of donor funds in the world (see Figure 1). However, some of this assistance proved to be of little use because the donor projects were not ‘owned’ by the people who they were intended to assist. We





need to learn from this and ensure stakeholders have a voice in the decision-making process in all phases of a project: the design phase, the implementation, the monitoring and the evaluation phase.

Assessment

The assessment of 0 – 3 years old is carried out by health authorities in most PICs. They monitor growth and development with a focus on appropriate care and health practices. Current brain research has revealed the importance of early stimulation, balanced nutrition and appropriate care for 0 – 3 year-olds as vital for intelligence and a springboard for later learning and development. Unaisi Vasu Tuivaga, in her summing up of the panel discussion on this topic, made it clear that practitioners need more training and guidance in order to improve assessment of this age-group—yet another challenge. Added to this is the growing focus on monitoring and evaluation that goes with the recent shift to outcomes-based assessment. How do practitioners, caregivers and families grapple with pedagogies that centre on local and global transmission of ECCE knowledge, skills and attitudes in a rapidly growing world?

A curriculum for the future

The fact that we are creating a future for 0 – 8 year olds means that ECCE curriculum guidelines need to provide a framework that will be relevant in the future. This requires reconceptualising childhood for Pacific Island countries. Factors that need to be considered are our Pacific values and what we want our children to know and be able to do. The guidelines must be culturally relevant and also be based on child development principles and early learning development standards. Glen Palmer (Chapter 9) in her description of Fiji's example, explains the process of simultaneously developing the curriculum guidelines and early learning standards. How and where they merge is a decision for the stakeholders but what is important is that both are widely disseminated for consultation and validation with the users and beneficiaries.

Being involved in the decision-making process concerning children's care and education is a new direction for many practitioners, parents and caregivers. For this reason, any curriculum must give clear directions to policy/decision-makers,





parents, families, practitioners and caregivers. In other words, it must be user-friendly and readable at all levels, so that the essential process of draft → review → draft → review is successful.

Strategies for stakeholders to consider for moving ECCE forward in the Pacific

1. Make a clear overarching policy covering ECCE in general as well as operational policies covering implementation.
2. Make a commitment to reactivate the Pacific Pre-school Council and renew membership as this is an ideal forum for the Pacific voice for young children. UNESCO could be approached to support its activities.
3. Revisit EFA, CRC and MDG goals as a focal point for effective policy and programming decisions.
4. Strengthen ECCE issues in teacher training for pre-service and in-service programmes. These issues include special needs, inclusivity, children's rights, gender balance and social cohesion, culture-based and evidence-based practices.
5. Establish and strengthen ECCE data bases in countries to support policy making and programme development.
6. Establish cross-sectoral partnerships with key government ministries and NGOs that work with young children and their families so there is a holistic approach to care and education, thus utilising maximum benefit from the resources available.
7. Strengthen the use of the mother-tongue as a spring board for acquiring a second language.
8. Establish a regional networking system via email for sharing of information.
9. Encourage the use of local materials and resources.

The publication of this book is a landmark in the history of ECCE, gathering as it does the status quo of ECCE in the Pacific; the global, regional and local perspectives; modern knowledge and thinking regarding many ECCE issues; and the thoughts and recommendations of experts in the field. It can be thought of as the voice of the ECCE community in the Pacific, our contribution to the effort to push ECCE forward so that it gets the priority it rightfully deserves.





Appendix A: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

COOK ISLANDS

Ms Upokoina Tamarua
Ministry of Education
P.O. Box 3211
Avarua, Rarotonga
Tel.: (682) 25030
email: itamarua@education.gov.ck

Ms Stephanie Louise Puirī
C/- Blackrock Pre-school
P.O. Box 3211
Avarua, Rarotonga
Tel.: (682) 26456
Fax : (682) 26456
email: brockece@oyster.co.ck

FIJI

Mr Laisenia Seru
Ministry of Education
Marela House,
Private Mail Bag
Suva
email: laisenia.seru@govnet.gov.fj

Ms Purnima D. Chandra
P.O. Box 3924
Lautoka
Tel.: (679) 666 0739/666 6610
email: purnima_kevin@yahoo.com

Ms Unaisi Vasu Tuivaga
P.O. Box 10334
Laulala Beach Estate
Suva
Tel.: (679) 339 5171/323 2488
Fax : (679) 323 1417
email : tuivaga_v@usp.ac.fj

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

Mr Shelten Neth
Chief, ECE Division
P.O. Box 1030
Pohnpei 96941
Tel.: (691) 320 2705/920 7551
Fax: (691) 320 5363
email: ecechie@mail.fm

KIRIBATI

Ms Bwenata Kienene
Ministry of Education
Bikenibeu
Tarawa
Tel.: (686) 28091
Fax: (686) 28222

Ms Elenoa Titaake
Ministry of Education
Bikenibeu
Tarawa
Tel.: (686) 26434 Mob: (686) 94231





REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

Ms Daisy Alik-Momotaro
Executive Director, WUTMI
P.O. Box 195
Majuro, MH 96960
Tel.: (692) 625 4296/5290
Fax: (692) 625 4296
email: wutmi@ntamar,
alik_momotaro@yahoo.com

REPUBLIC OF NAURU

Ms Sarina Tamakin
C.A.S.E.
Education Head Office
Yaren District
email: case@cenpac.net.nr

Ms Mary Tebouwa
Yaren Primary School
Education Office
email: mary_tebouwa@yahoo.com

Ms Madonna Dongobir
Anetan Infant School
A/T.I.C.
C/- Education Office
Yaren District
email: dondi_md@yahoo.com

NIUE

Ms Janet Tasmania
Deputy Director, Ministry of Education
Alofi
Tel.: (683) 4070
email: janet-tasmania@mail.nu
email: educ.deputy.jt@mail.gov.nu

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Ms Maria Kopkop
Kopkop College
Box 5079
Boroko, NCD
Tel.: (675) 326 1822
email: kopcol@dalston.com.pg

SAMOA

Ms Utumoa Oloapu
ECE Coordinator
Ministry of Education, Sports &
Culture
P.O. Box 9215
Apia
Tel.: (685) 27220/751 5606/24614
Fax: (685) 20004

Ms Silafaga Apisaloma-Malaga
ECE Coordinator for NGOs
P.O. Box 2595
Apia
Tel.: (685) 2595
email: silafaga@ipasifica.net





Early childhood care and education in the Pacific

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Ms Bernadine Ha'amori
ECE Coordinator
Ministry of Education & Human
Resources Development
P.O. Box G28
Honiara
Tel.: (677) 28804/3
Fax: (677) 22042/28805
email: bhaamori@hotmail.com

Ms Emily Siriki
ECE Assistant
(Address as above)
email: esirikipita@hotmail.com

Ms Raewyn Magu
Education Office
Gizo
Western Province

Mr Dudley Siufimae
Education Office
P.O. Box 36
Auki
Malaita Province

Ms Crispin Dora
Education Division
P.O. Box 40
Makira Province

Ms Agatha Siota
Honiara City Council
Education Division
P.O. Box 324
Honiara

Mr Commins Lelea
Education Division
P.O. Box 4
Buala
Isabel Province

Ms Niulyn Basi
Perch Christian School
P.O. Box 1995
Honiara
Tel.: (677) 24889

Ms Rosemary Kafa
Nutrition Unit
Ministry of Health & Medical Services
P.O. Box 345
Honiara
email: kafarosemary@yahoo.com

Ms Wryne Bennett
UNICEF Solomon Islands
P.O. Box 1786
Honiara
email: cfsbuala@unicef.org.sb
wmbennett2002@yahoo.com





Mr Commins Kema-Keza
Save the Children
P.O. Box 1149
Honiara
email: cap@savethechildren.org.sb

Ms Joanna Daiwo
SICHE
P.O. Box R113
Honiara
email: jodaiwo@solomon.com.sb

Mr Marthin Popot
SICHE
P.O. Box R113
Honiara

Mr Joseph Manurapu
School of Education (SICHE)
P.O. Box R113
Honiara

Mr Benedict Esibaea
Ministry of Education
P.O. Box G28
Honiara
Tel.: (677) 28803

Mr Moala Bana
Development Planning
P.O. Box G30
Honiara
email: moalab2@yahoo.com

Ms Laiza Keniwaia
Education Division
Quadalcanal Province
P.O. Box GC7
Honiara
Tel.: (677) 28042

Mr Sam Obadiah
Curriculum Development Centre
P.O. Box G27
Honiara
email: s_obadiah@cdc.edu.sb

TOKELAU

Ms Rosa Maria Tuia
Department of Education
Atafu
Tel.: (690) 2137
email: rosa_tuia@yahoo.co.nz

TONGA

Ms Latai Tuimana
ECE Officer, Ministry of Education
Nuku'alofa
Tel.: (676) 23511
email: tongapreschool@yahoo.co

Ms Ene'io Fekau
Tonga Preschool Association
P.O. Box 2931
Nuku'alofa
email: tongapreschool@yahoo.co





Early childhood care and education in the Pacific

TUVALU

Ms Teimana Avaniatele
Ministry of Education & Sports
Vaiaku
Funafuti
Tel.: (688) 20414
email: teimaena@yahoo.com

Ms Sunema Makatui
Pre-school Council
Vaiaku, Funafuti
Tel.: (688) 90623

Ms Maliesi Kamuta Latasi
Ministry of Education & Sports
Vaiaku, Funafuti
Tel.: (688) 90952/20952
email: m_latasi@yahoo.com

VANUATU

Ms Jennifer James
National Preschool
Ministry of Education
P.O. Box 674
Port Vila
Tel.: (678) 22309/26408
email: jjames@vanuatu.gov.vu

Ms Sembu Mermer
P.O. Box 2007
Port Vila
Tel. : (678) 25542/42471
email: sembu_m@yahoo.com

PARTNERS

Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL)

Mr Canisius Filibert
Pacific Resources for Education and Learning
(PREL)
900 Fort St. Mall, Suite 300
Honolulu, HI96813
Tel.: (808) 441 1343
Fax: (808) 441 1385
email: filiberc@prel.org

Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE) Project

Dr Priscilla Puamau
Team Leader
PRIDE Project
University of the South Pacific
Suva
Tel.: (679) 323 2786
email: puamau_p@usp.ac.fj

Ms Ufemia Camaitoga
Lautoka Teachers' College
Lautoka
Fiji
Mob.: (679) 929 3410
email: camaitoga@yahoo.com





Adi Davila Toganivalu
P.O. Box 220
Nausori
Tel.: (679) 347 8556
Mob.: (679) 927 3655
email: datoganivalu@connect.com.fj

Ms Frances Pene
Institute of Education
University of the South Pacific
Suva
Tel. : (679) 323 2821
email: pene_f@usp.ac.fj

UNESCO

Dr Visessio Pongi
Director
UNESCO Cluster Office for the Pacific
P.O. Box 615
Apia, Samoa
Tel.: (685) 24276
Fax: (685) 26593/22253
email: vise@unesco.org.ws

Ms Maki Hayashikawa
Programme Specialist
Gender & Quality Basic Ed.
Tel.: (662) 391 0577
Fax: (662) 391 0866
email: m.hayashikawa@unescobkk.org

Asia-Pacific Programme of Education For All (APPEAL)

UNESCO Bangkok
THAILAND

SPBEA

Ms Anaseini Raivoce
Director, SPBEA
P.O. Box 2083
Government Buildings
26 McGregor Road
Suva
Tel.: (679) 331 5600/330 2141
Fax: (679) 330 2898/330 3633
email: araivoce@spbea.org.fj

Dr Richard Wah
email: rwah@spbea.org.fj
Senior Professional Officer
(As above)

UNICEF

Ms Emmanuelle Abrioux
Education Specialist
UNICEF Regional Office
Bangkok
THAILAND





Early childhood care and education in the Pacific

SECRETARIAT

Mr Aseri Yalangono
Director, Secondary Schools
Ministry of Education
Honiara
Tel.: (677) 28804
Fax: (677) 22042/28805
email: yalangono@gmail.com
yalangono@solomon.com.sb
Mob.: (677) 88484

Ms Bernadine Ha'amoori
(address above)

Ms Emily Siriki
(address above)

Ms Ema Ho'ota
Tel. : (677) 28804
email: e_furai@yahoo.com.au

SPBEA

Ms Roshni Mala

UNESCO

Ms Tosi Mata'utia
UNESCO Apia
Tel.: (685) 24276
Fax: (685) 22253/26593
email: tosi.matautia@gmail.com
tosimatautia@unesco.org.ws



APPENDIX B: Participants, Partners and Secretariat





Early Childhood Care and Education in the Pacific





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Early Childhood Care and Education in the Pacific



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Preface

This book is the fifth in the PRIDE Project Pacific Education Series published by the Institute of Education, University of the South Pacific.

It is an outcome of the regional workshop on early childhood, care and education (ECCE) held in Honiara, Solomon Islands from 26 – 30th March 2007. With the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment taking the lead role in organising the workshop in conjunction with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education, this workshop was co-sponsored by five other development partners: Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education (PRIDE), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, UNESCO and UNICEF.

Another significant outcome of this regional workshop was the opportunity to influence policy through the presentation of workshop recommendations to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat for consideration by the Forum Education Ministers' meeting held in November 2007 in Auckland, New Zealand. These recommendations were endorsed by the Ministers for Education and have subsequently been added to the Forum Basic Education Action Plan.

In preparing this book, we are grateful for the contributions of the resource people, participants and development partners who are listed at the end of the book. We appreciate also the work of the secretariat – staff of the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education, UNESCO and SPBEA. In particular, we say thank you to the former Minister for Education, current Prime Minister, the Honourable Derek Sikua, for championing ECCE.





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Portraits of the contributors

Ufemia Camaitoga

With 30 years of varied teaching experience, including early childhood education, special education, primary teaching and, for the past eight years, teacher education at Lautoka Teachers' College (LTC)—Ufemia Camaitoga is one of the leaders in early childhood education in Fiji. She has represented Fiji in a number of national, regional and international workshops and conferences in this field. As local counterpart in the recent AusAID upgrade project at LTC, she was involved in course development, implementation and review. Ufemia is a key person in the current development of the Early Childhood Education Curriculum Guidelines for Fiji and other national ECCE projects.

Ufemia graduated from Wellington Teachers' College, New Zealand where she specialised in ECCE, and is currently doing postgraduate studies in leadership at the University of Fiji. Her interests are advocacy, curriculum and leadership.

Jessie Fuamatu

Jessie Fuamatu is Samoan, born in the heart of South Auckland, New Zealand. She has been teaching for 29 years and her work has taken her across the Pacific to Samoa, Fiji and Cook Islands as well as New Zealand. She has a broad experience in all sectors: early childhood, primary, secondary, and tertiary. Jessie has held positions of responsibility as deputy principal in intermediate and primary schools, and she was Programme Leader at Auckland Teachers' College and Principal Lecturer for the Faculty of Education at the University of Auckland. She is currently Head of the Department of Education at Fulton College and is, at the same time, completing a Masters degree in Education with the University of Auckland.

Her strengths and interests are in the following curriculum areas: science, music, performing arts, special education, health and languages. Her area of study is 'Gifted and Talented Pasifika children, Learning and Teaching Pasifika, Leadership and Management for Pasifika'.





Jennifer James

Jennifer James gained a Diploma in ECE at Palmerston North Teachers' College, New Zealand (1976 - 1978) and then returned to Vanuatu where she taught at the Central Primary School Kindy for 21 years (1979 - 1999). Soon after her return to Vanuatu, she started an NGO, the Pre-School Association of Vanuatu (PSABV), and is still an executive member after being President for several years.

In 2000, Jennifer started work at the Ministry of Education as the National Pre-School Coordinator, looking after the Provincial Pre-School coordinators working in the six provinces of Vanuatu. Her job involves looking for funding so that the coordinators can carry out training and upgrading of the pre-schools in their province.

Jennifer's interest at the moment is encouraging the communities to get more involved in the running of their pre-schools because the government does not have the resources, although it is giving a lot of support to training and awareness programmes. Another area of interest is producing materials in Bislama so that both the French and English-speaking teachers and parents will benefit.

Maki Hayashikawa

Maki Hayashikawa holds a BSc (Econ) in International Relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, and an MA(Ed) in Educational Planning from the Institute of Education, University of London. She is currently pursuing an MEd in Early Childhood Education with the South Australia University.

Maki worked as a Research Assistant with the International Development Cooperation Japan and joined UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, in 1993 as Associate Expert in Basic Education, focusing on literacy and non-formal education. From 1998 to 2003, Maki worked as Education Officer in UNESCO's Beijing office, covering China, DPR Korea, Japan, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea. In 2003, she took up a special two-year assignment with the Japan International Cooperation Agency in Tokyo, Japan, as Senior Advisor for Education. In August 2005, she joined the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the





Pacific, based in Bangkok, Thailand, as Programme Specialist in Gender and Quality Basic Education. Her current responsibilities include the development of the programmes and giving policy advice on gender in education, ECCE, inclusive education and right to education issues in EFA.

Desma Hughes

Desma Hughes is senior lecturer in Early Childhood Education at the University of the South Pacific, in Port Vila, Vanuatu and coordinator for the ECE Diploma and Degree programmes. She was previously a lecturer in Special Education at the University of New England (UNE). Prior to that she worked for ten years as an early intervention teacher in Armidale, NSW Australia, working with 3 – 5 year-olds. She gained a PhD at UNE in 1996 in the area of social competence in 3 – 5 year-olds. Her interest areas are early childhood development, early science, early special education and social and emotional competence.

Junko Miyahara

Junko Miyahara completed her Masters in Social Work at Columbia University, USA in 2000 with a focus on international social welfare and families and children. Since she joined UNICEF in September 2001, she has worked extensively on early childhood development. The UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office is a regional focal point for integrated early childhood development, and Junko has been responsible for regional coordination and networking, advocacy and capacity building. She has organized and coordinated a number of regional and global training workshops, collated good practice case studies publications, and contributed to country-level programme/project development and review. During 2005-2007, she was consultant for country-level projects in Malaysia, Thailand, Mongolia and Cambodia, as well as in the regional office. The projects included *Early Learning and Development Standards* and *Early Childhood Policy Review*. Her professional interests include child and family policies, programme evaluation, parenting education and support, and child development and cultural diversity.

Glen Palmer

Dr Palmer (Ph.D, M.Ed, B.Ed, Grad.Dip. Arts Therapy) has been working part-time as an Early Childhood Advisor at Lautoka Teachers' College, Fiji, for the





past four years. This has involved working with the early childhood lecturers to upgrade the programme to an Advanced Certificate in Early Childhood Education. In September 2006 she also began as an Adviser with the Ministry of Education in Fiji for the development of early childhood curriculum guidelines. Both positions are funded by AusAID.

Glen has worked for many years in teacher education and curriculum development—in Australia, Canada and, briefly, in East Timor. Most recently she was a Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Education at Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia. Prior to that she worked at the de Lissa Institute at the University of South Australia. She resigned from university life in 2005, preferring the challenges of development and education work, especially in the Pacific region.

Frances Pene

Frances Pene was born in England. She obtained a BA in Scandinavian Studies at Newcastle-upon-Tyne University and then a PGCE in Teaching English as a Foreign Language at London University. She came to Fiji and joined the civil service as an assistant teacher and, later, head of department, teaching English in secondary schools in Nausori, Rotuma, Levuka and Suva. She then taught for four years at the Fiji College of Advanced Education and studied part-time at USP for a PGDip (Linguistics) before joining the staff at USP's Institute of Education, where she works as an editor.

Priscilla Puamau

Dr Priscilla Qolisaya Puamau has worked in the field of education for 25 years in various capacities: secondary school teacher of English, Head of Languages (secondary school), Head of Education (tertiary teacher education), performance management trainer, senior education officer, and Deputy Principal and Principal of the Fiji College of Advanced Education, a teacher education institution in Fiji. She is currently Team Leader of the PRIDE Project, an acronym for the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education. Her research interests are ethical and moral leadership, values education, educational reform, educational underachievement, indigenous education and teacher education. She obtained a





PhD in Education from the University of Queensland and Masters in Education from the University of the South Pacific. Her main point of identity is Christian first, then indigenous Fijian, female, professional worker, mother, and so on.

Adi Asilina Davila Toganivalu

Adi Davila holds a Diploma of Kindergarten Teaching from the Melbourne Kindergarten Teachers' College (Dip MKTC, 1965), a BEd in ECE from the University of Southern Queensland (USQ, 1992), and a Masters in Education (USQ, 1998). She worked as a kindergarten teacher in Suva from 1966 to 1972 having established one of two kindergartens for the YWCA in Suva. These were the first kindergartens run by qualified teachers and served the multicultural community in Fiji. She later became supervisor of four kindergartens in Suva, Lautoka and Levuka.

Adi Davila took time off (1973 to 1985) to raise a family but in 1986 she returned to work as Coordinator of the Pacific Pre-school Teachers Course at Continuing Education, Extension USP until 1990. She studied in Toowoomba from 1991 to 1993 and then joined the UNICEF Pacific office in Suva as its Education Project Officer from 1994 until her retirement in July, 2005. She has held positions for many years as President of the Fiji Pre-school Association and President of the Pacific Preschool Council.

Her work has taken her to Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Tonga, Samoa, Nauru and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Although her specialist field is ECCE, she has taken a very keen interest in the early primary school years. During her term with UNICEF she worked with the Ministries of Education in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands to develop Child Friendly Schools.

In her retirement Adi Davila continues to maintain her broad interests in education, not only in the formal settings but more especially now in community education and development.





Abbreviations

ACECE	Advanced Certificate in Early Childhood Education
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIMS Unit	Assessment, Information Systems, Monitoring & Statistics Unit
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BELS	Basic Education Life Skills (Regional Project)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECCD	Early childhood care and development
ECCDES	Early childhood care, development and education standards
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
ECE	Early childhood education
ECPE	Early childhood parent education
EDI	EFA Index
EFA	<i>Education For All</i> (UNESCO)
ELDS	Early learning and development standards
EU	European Union
FALD	Foundation areas of learning and development
FBEAP	<i>Forum Basic Education Action Plan</i>
FESP	Fiji Education Sector Programme
FIC(s)	Forum Island country/ies
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GER	Gross enrolment ratio
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GPI(s)	Gender parity index (indices)
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KECEA	Kiribati Early Childhood Education Association
KTC	Kiribati Teachers' College
LTC	Lautoka Teachers' College
MDG(s)	Millennium Development Goal(s)
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development
MESC	Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture
MEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MOE	Ministry of Education





NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NCECES	National Council for Early Childhood Education in Samoa
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NEP	Niue Education Project
NER	Net enrolment ratio
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NNER	Net non-enrolled rates
NUS	National University of Samoa
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PADDLE	Pacific Archive of Digital Data for Learning and Education
PAFT	Parents as First Teachers (Programme)
PAT	Parents as teachers
PIC(s)	Pacific Island country/ies
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PPC	Pacific Pre-school Council
PREL	Pacific Resources for Education and Learning
PRIDE	Pacific Regional Initiatives for the delivery of basic Education
PSAVB	Pri Skul Asosiesen Blong Vanuatu
PTR	Pupil:teacher ratio
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
SPBEA	South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment
SUNGO	Samoa Umbrella for Non-government Organisations
TVET	Technical and vocation education and training
TWG	(Regional) Thematic Working Group
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal primary education
USP	University of the South Pacific
WHO	World Health Organisation
WUTMI	Women United Together Marshall Islands
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association





1

Opening Address at the Regional ECCE workshop, Honiara, Solomon Islands, 26 – 30 March 2007

Hon. Derek Sikua, Solomon Islands Minister for Education (MEHRD)

At the outset, I wish to acknowledge the presence of our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Livestock, Hon. Toswel Kaua; fellow cabinet ministers; senior government officials; representatives of regional and UN agencies in the Pacific; members of the media; and ladies and gentlemen. Your presence here with us this morning during your busy schedules is greatly appreciated.

I am honoured to accept the invitation of the organisers of this workshop to officiate at the opening of this timely workshop. It is timely for the Solomon Islands as we are about to wrap up the research and formulation of our Early Childhood Education Policy.

At this juncture, I am also honoured to formally convey to the co-sponsors of this workshop, namely PREL, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, SPBEA, USP, UNESCO and UNICEF our most sincere gratitude for the close collaboration with my Ministry on behalf of our Grand Coalition for Change Government.





On this note, I wish to welcome particularly two of our keynote speakers, Ms Maki Hayashikawa, UNESCO Regional Programme Specialist in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Primary Education and Gender, based in Bangkok; and Dr Glen Palmer, Early Childhood Care and Education consultant, who have come to share the global perspective and their experience on the issues listed on the agenda of this workshop.

I would also like to commend the co-organisers of this workshop for their support and decision to co-host this workshop here in Honiara. This is an indicator of harmonisation which is at the heart of the Pacific Plan. This not only indicated to me the confidence that they have in our Grand Coalition for Change Government, but also created that opportunity for the officials of my Ministry and their colleagues to be exposed to best practices and challenges when organising such events.

As many of you are aware, this workshop is a continuation of a similar workshop that was convened by UNICEF and USP in June 2004 in Fiji. This workshop will follow up and build on various initiatives to further develop current initiatives on early childhood care and education for our Pacific children in all our countries, largely through the efforts of other education stakeholders, including our NGOs and dedicated persons in each of our countries.

I am glad to note that many of these dedicated persons are also here to assist the facilitators and panellists of this workshop.

I admire the structure of this workshop as it starts with the global perspective and then shifts to a regional perspective to set the tone of the workshop. This is then continued with issues of 'brainwiring', research, culture, language and assessment, which are grounded in theory and global perspectives but will be adapted for the Pacific context.

The theme for this workshop is *Supporting learning from 0-8: creating the future*. It ties in very well with the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) and in fact emphasises a very important foundation on which the Plan must be built,





something that has been most difficult to negotiate and implement. I believe that this is an issue that Pacific Ministers for Education need to revisit at our forthcoming Forum Education Ministers' Meeting planned for Auckland, New Zealand later this year.

The next five days will be an opportune time for our facilitators, panellists, participants and observers to achieve many things: to re-confirm the importance of 0 – 8 year-olds' learning and lived experiences; to involve government policy-makers and practitioners concerned with 0 – 8 years-olds' education in developing a vision, a policy, a curriculum and a conducive learning environment for this age group; to strengthen national and regional networking amongst 0 – 8 practitioners; and to share assessment techniques used for 0 – 8 year-olds. The facilitators and participants alike will discuss various issues and build on the work that they have started.

In this regard, I wish to remind you to maintain the links between the discussions at this workshop with the two regional programmes, namely Goal One of *Education For All (EFA)* and the Regional Benchmarking endorsed by the Forum Education Ministers in our meeting in 2006 in Fiji.

There is merit in organising such workshops, as they will create opportunities and avenues for our regional educators and carers of children aged 0 – 8 years to contribute to the body of knowledge of best practice for the Pacific, rather than relying solely on speakers from outside the region.

As a starting point for this initiative, you will notice that we have invited keynote speakers both from the Pacific Region and outside our region to guide our discussion, and share their experiences with us as we search for sound policies and best practices of early childhood care and education for our region.

That said, I wish to urge our participants to fully utilise the planned discussion sessions of this workshop, as this will indicate to many of us that you are champions of this subject in your own countries.





Early childhood care and education in the Pacific

This could be that moment or opportunity that many of us have been waiting for to contribute towards quality education and create the means of accessing this quality education in the region and through our own education systems.

In conclusion, I once again wish to thank our co-hosts for the positive response to our proposal to co-host this regional workshop on early childhood care and education here in Honiara. I am confident that the envisaged objectives of this workshop are achievable, given the experiences and expertise of our keynote speakers, facilitators and panellists.

I am sure that our participants will greatly appreciate the envisaged outcomes of this workshop, as these will remind and better inform them of their commitments and responsibilities for the development and advancement of key strategic issues and activities for this sub-sector.

Colleague Ministers, invited guests, keynote speakers, workshop facilitators, panellists, participants, ladies and gentlemen, I wish this workshop every success in its deliberations, and I am honoured to now formally declare the Regional Workshop on Early Childhood Care and Education open.





2

The education and care of 0 – 8 year-olds: building strong foundations for the future

Priscilla Puamau

The years 0-8 are foundational years for all individuals. Children in this age range therefore need special attention in their care, nutrition, education and development. Importantly, they need to be nurtured and educated in the ins and outs of their cultural practices, values, traditions, knowledge and wisdom. They also need to be gradually prepared to live in a rapidly globalising world that extends beyond the shores of their local and national communities.

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is not just concerned with children who attend pre-schools or kindergartens (usually 3 – 5 age range) which, historically, is the way it has been perceived by Pacific governments and communities. Instead, there is consensus that it should be concerned with the development of children from birth, through pre-school/kindergarten to grade/class two, and that it should be holistic, embracing their physical, emotional, psychological, cognitive, spiritual, cultural and social development.





Historically, ECCE in the Pacific emerged through the efforts of concerned educators, parents, community members and stakeholders, such as NGOs and church organisations. International organisations have also played a pivotal role in advancing the development of ECCE and basic education in the region.

Because of the enormous costs associated with ECCE, Pacific governments have yet to fully commit to supporting and funding ECCE activities. However, with increased lobbying by ECCE advocates, ECCE is gaining prominence such that some Pacific Ministries/Departments of Education have developed or are in the process of developing ECCE policies and guidelines and other activities at the national level.

Pacific Vision for Education

Political recognition of the importance of ECCE is inherent in the support that Ministers for Education of Pacific Island countries have accorded it in the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP), a document guiding educational development in fifteen countries of the region.

As used in this volume, the Pacific refers to fourteen politically independent countries that have membership in the Pacific Islands Forum (more commonly known as the Forum): Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Tokelau is included as the fifteenth country—it is in the process of achieving self-government in free association with New Zealand.

The Ministers for Education of the Pacific Islands Forum met in Auckland in 2001 at the instruction of the Forum Leaders (at their meeting in late 1999) to consider issues related to human resource development in their countries. The vision of the Ministers for Education was articulated thus.

Basic education as the fundamental building block for society should engender the broader life skills that lead to social cohesion and provide the foundations for vocational callings, higher education and life long learning.





These when combined with enhanced employment opportunities create a higher level of personal and societal security and development.

Forum members recognised that development of basic education takes place in the context of commitments to the world community and meeting the new demands of the global economy, which should be balanced with the enhancement of their own distinctive Pacific values, morals, social, political, economic and cultural heritages, and reflect the Pacific's unique geographical context. (PIFS, 2001)

The goals were defined as achieving universal and equitable educational participation and achievement, ensuring access and equity, and improving quality and outcomes.

The Forum Ministers for Education reaffirmed their commitment to the Dakar 2000 Education for All Framework for Action goals which included expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. The Ministers further agreed that in relation to improving quality in basic education, early childhood education (ECE), amongst other things, was highlighted as an important component. In particular, the Ministers for Education agreed:

[t]hat while continuing with collaborative efforts with NGOs, church and community organisations in providing ECE to pre-school age children, governments should address resource requirements for ECE teacher training and assess how ECE teachers can obtain appropriate status and conditions of employment. (PIFS, 2001)

In the 2002 review of FBEAP, the shift in terminology from ECE to ECCE was obvious with Ministers for Education recommitting themselves to ECCE. Specifically, they recognised that 'high quality ECCE programmes can benefit countries by promoting intelligence of young children' and acknowledged other benefits of ECCE to other sectors of education, to society and the economy (PIFS, 2002). The Education Ministers acknowledged that 'integrated ECCE programmes may be the single most effective intervention for helping children,





families, communities, and nations break the cycle of poverty' (PIFS, 2002). Ministers agreed that they would undertake country reviews of national policies on ECCE using a set of prepared guidelines.

The PRIDE Project

The PRIDE Project¹, an initiative of the Forum Ministers for Education, was designed to implement the Pacific vision for education encapsulated in FBEAP. Implementation of this project began in 2004 and is expected to end in December 2009. Its overall objective is:

To expand opportunities for children and youth to acquire the values, knowledge and skills that will enable them to actively participate in the social, spiritual, economic and cultural development of their communities and to contribute positively to creating sustainable futures (www.usp.ac.fj/pride).

The Project seeks to strengthen the capacity of each of the 15 countries identified above to deliver quality basic education through both formal and non-formal means in order to achieve its objective. The development of strategic plans for education in each country that blend the best global approaches with local values and ways of thinking is the expected key outcome. Support for the implementation of these national strategic plans is provided by the Project. Sharing of best practice and experience amongst countries is also an important project outcome, evidenced by the development of an online resource centre (see www.usp.ac.paddle). Ministers for Education have defined basic education as all educational provision for children and youths, ranging from early childhood, through to primary, secondary and technical/vocational in both the formal and non-formal sectors. In fact, it is everything excepting higher or adult education.

In relation to ECCE, the PRIDE Project Benchmarks document (see www.usp.ac.fj/pride), a key document that contains 11 benchmarks used to review national

1. PRIDE is an acronym for the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education, a project funded by the EU and NZAID and implemented by the University of the South Pacific. More information is available on (www.usp.ac.fj/pride)





education strategic plans, articulates Benchmark 6 as a holistic approach to basic education. One of the three principles underlying this benchmark includes the following statement: ‘The Plan addresses the challenges of effective articulation between each level of education: from pre-school/early childhood to elementary/primary, from elementary/primary to secondary, and from secondary to TVET’.

There are two other PRIDE benchmarks that have relevance for ECCE. Benchmark 1, pride in cultural and national identity, clearly stipulates that national education plans of the fifteen Forum countries ought to be built:

on a strong foundation of local foundations of local cultures and languages, thus enabling students to develop a deep pride in their own values, traditions and wisdoms, and a clear sense of their own local cultural identity, as well as their identity as citizens of the nation. (www.usp.ac.fj/pride)

Implicit in this is the understanding that the language for ECCE should be the mother tongue of the child and that his/her cultural values will be valued.

The second benchmark that has salience for ECCE is Benchmark 3, alignment with National Development Plan and Regional and International Conventions, which has this statement as an indicator: ‘The Plan contains a statement of commitment to regional conventions and frameworks, such as FBEAP... and international commitments such as EFA,...Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC)...’ (The PRIDE Project, 2007: 3)

Increased focus on ECCE at national level

The increased emphasis on ECCE is evident when one searches through some Pacific national Education Strategic Plans and ECCE policy documents. An examination of three strategic plans should be sufficient evidence of this. The Tonga Education Policy Framework 2004 – 2019, for example, devotes two pages to early childhood education, the first part on the policy issue and outcome; the second part on what government’s policy response is; and the third part on the proposed new investments in ECCE. In acknowledging the ‘high rate of return from investments in early childhood education’, particularly its importance in ‘laying





the foundation for primary schooling' and 'equity dimensions' where 'children from least disadvantaged communities are likely to benefit from early childhood education', some of the policy responses include the following strategies.

- Form national working parties to survey and report on early childhood provision in Tonga
- Formal registration of all pre-schools
- Development of an early childhood education curriculum
- Production and dissemination of culturally appropriate developmental learning resources
- Provision of pre-service and in-service training and professional development programmes for early childhood teachers
- Support for parent education initiatives.

(Tonga Ministry of Education, 2004: p. 33)

Similarly, Samoa devoted a section of their education strategic plan to ECE. It recognised the importance of early childhood learning and noted that since 1999, 'government support of ECE has increased' (Samoa Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2006: 19). An ECE Coordinator was appointed in 2000 and all registered ECE centres are now eligible to obtain financial assistance from the Government through an annual Government grant.

Tokelau is in the process of developing standardised curriculum statements for each learning area from ECE to Year 11 'adhering to the policies as outlined in the National Curriculum Policy Framework' (Tokelau Department of Education, 2005: p. 5). While the focus for Tonga and Samoa is pre-school education, Tokelau's early childhood curriculum is intended to cover the years from birth to school entry age and identifies three broad overlapping age ranges: infant (birth to 18 months); toddler (1 – 3 years); and young child (1 ½ years – school entry). The Tokelau Department of Education (2007: 19) 'will develop minimum standards' for schools and will be guided by the four curriculum principles of empowerment, holistic development, family and community, and relationships.

I have already mentioned above that support for the implementation of key priority areas from national education strategic plans is a key function of the PRIDE





Project. Tonga has three sub-projects in the area of early childhood education: one on the development of an early childhood education policy, the second on ECE teacher in-service training and the third on ECE curriculum development at the teacher training institution. Similarly, Fiji has a sub-project on the development of their early childhood education curriculum framework. Both Vanuatu and the Cook Islands also have a sub-project in the area of ECCE—the Early Childhood Bookmaking in the Vernacular Project in Vanuatu and the Enhancing Creativity and Learning in Early Childhood Education Project in the Cook Islands.

Increasingly, ECCE is being recognised as an important area for government intervention in the region. Forum Ministers for Education have in the past endorsed various recommendations on ECCE, including strengthening national policies, clarifying government roles and responsibilities, addressing resource requirements and developing national plans of action. Despite this, development in ECCE has been erratic in Pacific island countries. More information on the status of ECCE provision in the fifteen Pacific countries covered in this volume can be found in Chapter 4.

Regional partnership: ECCE workshop, Solomon Islands, March 2007

An experiment in collaborative partnerships between development partners in the Pacific was carried out in the organisation and management of a regional ECCE workshop. ‘Supporting learning from 0-8, creating the future’ was the theme of the workshop held in Solomon Islands from 26-30 March 2007. It was co-hosted by seven agencies, including Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education (PRIDE), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA) and the Solomon Islands Government.

Attending the workshop were 42 participants, representing government policy makers and NGOs engaged in ECCE in all the Forum countries except Palau.





The workshop objectives included:

- reconfirming the importance of the care, development and learning of 0 – 8 year-olds
- getting government policy-makers and practitioners involved in the education of 0 – 8 year-olds to commit to developing a vision, a policy, curriculum guidelines/frameworks and appropriate programmes and initiatives for this age group in their own country
- strengthening national and regional networking amongst 0 – 8 practitioners
- sharing assessment techniques used for 0 – 8 years-olds.

The workshop covered the following four areas for 0 – 8 year-olds: importance and effectiveness of their education; commitment to develop vision, policy and curriculum; assessment; and culture and language. There were keynote presentations on both the global and local perspectives to ECCE and case studies from Fiji, the Northern Pacific and Papua New Guinea. There were also group sessions and panel discussions to tease out the main issues around ECCE and to discuss the way forward in national contexts.

The following are some of the struggles in ECCE that were identified at the workshop.

- Government support can be problematic since ECCE is not generally seen as part of basic education and many governments place an emphasis on primary education, with very little support, if any for ECCE.
- The links between the education and health sectors are weak and need strengthening.
- The most vulnerable age group in ECCE is 0 – 3 years, yet programmes and strategies for this age group are neglected. Who is responsible for the care and development aspects of the 0 – 3 year-olds before they attend preschool centres? There is an understanding that parents are but who provides education and training for those parents who need it? How do parents become educated on the physical, emotional and development needs of their children? Should governments not be concerned with the care of their national treasures—the children who will become the leaders of the future? There is the recognition that parent-community-government partnerships are vital, as are government partnerships with NGOs, and with religious and community organisations.





- An important question that some ECCE providers struggle with is what and whose values should their programmes be grounded in and what language should be valued?
- The importance of play in preschool years is not fully appreciated by some teachers as they place a premium on preparing students for class one by, for example, teaching them English or arithmetic. There is a struggle here between formal instruction and learning through play in ECCE.

The workshop participants recognized that interventions for ECCE ought to begin at birth and would continue into preschool, kindergarten and the transition to classes 1 and 2. They acknowledged that all agencies dealing with the health, care, development and education of young children from birth to 8 years of age ought to work collaboratively to ensure that children are well prepared to enter the formal school system. Moreover, they acknowledged the importance of grounding ECCE in the children's own languages and cultures.

The participants noted that many Pacific countries were yet to develop their ECCE policy and did not have an adequate data management system to capture relevant ECCE data. The workshop also noted that national governments have been hesitant to commit to ECCE because of high budgetary implications.

Highlights of the workshop included field visits to three ECCE centres, the insights provided daily by critical friend and workshop evaluator, Ufemia Camaitoga, and the formulation of an outcomes document.

Outcomes of the workshop

There was a sense of excitement and accomplishment during the latter part of the workshop, when the participants realised that they had the agency to place a recommendation on the way forward for ECCE to a high policy forum—that of the Forum Education Ministers' Meeting that was scheduled for the latter part of the year.





The following recommendations from this regional ECCE workshop were presented to and endorsed by the Ministers of Education when they met in New Zealand in November 2007:

- a) that each Government work with stakeholders to develop its national policy for early childhood care and education with age parameters to be set nationally;
- b) that a national advisory body is established to advise government on early childhood matters;
- c) that a regional council is established to coordinate professional and community issues relating to early childhood in the Pacific;
- d) that early childhood curriculum, teaching pedagogies, assessment strategies, resources and teacher education are grounded in local cultures and languages; and
- e) that data for 0-8 year olds in both licensed and unlicensed centres are included in the education management information system.

(PIFS, 2007: 3)

The onus now rests with workshop participants, ECCE providers and advocates to continue to work with their government and other stakeholders to build a solid foundation in ECCE.

Book outline

Chapter 1 is the opening address by the Solomon Islands Minister for Education, the Honourable Dr Derek Sikua. Dr Sikua spoke with passion and conviction and participants quickly realised that they had an ECCE champion in the Minister. I am sure I speak for the workshop participants and regional partners when I offer our heartfelt congratulations to Dr Sikua on his recent appointment to the position of Prime Minister of Solomon Islands.

The rest of the chapters were prepared by the resource people and participants at the ECCE regional workshop. Chapter 3 by Adi Davila Toganivalu, regarded as the grandmother of ECCE in the Pacific, is significant in several ways. First, it documents the genesis and progress of ECCE in the Pacific region over the last three decades. This, in itself, is an important achievement, given the paucity





of information and data on ECCE. Second, it captures the struggles that ECCE has had since its inception, not only in the movement itself but also, and just as importantly, in the mindsets of teachers who teach an imported programme of western origin in the context of traditional cultures and values in a changing world. Toganivalu also discusses recent international initiatives that have elevated the position of ECCE globally and which, in turn, have impacted on ECCE development and achievements regionally and nationally.

In validating the critical place of indigenous knowledge, language and culture in ECCE programmes, Toganivalu challenges Pacific early childhood practitioners to 'be bold in creating pre-schools or early childhood education centres that characterise who we are as a people—not just poor replicas of models copied from other countries or places'. She adds:

PIC centres for ECCE ought to be places where children are understood, and treated with respect and dignity; where Pacific languages, stories, music, dance, art and crafts are promoted; and where beliefs, values, customs and traditions are evident and respected. When people come to these centres they must see and feel that they are in a **Pacific** centre for ECCE. (See Chapter 3.)

In Chapter 4, Frances Pene provides a summary of the current status of ECCE in Pacific countries, drawing from information provided by participants from the fourteen participating countries. The section for each country ends with an articulation of what needs to be done in order to improve ECCE in that country.

Maki Hayashikawa, in Chapter 5, provides a global and regional overview of ECCE developments, with a specific focus on the Asia/Pacific region. Her paper draws heavily on the Global Monitoring Report 2007. She emphasises the point that, despite ECCE being the first goal of Education for All (EFA) and the multiple benefits of ECCE, it has not been the first priority for most governments. This policy neglect is particularly true for Pacific Island countries. She also highlights the lack of evidence-based research and studies in ECCE in the Pacific. Notwithstanding these and other challenges and issues associated with





ECCE, Hayashikawa makes a compelling case for countries investing in ECCE and highlights its multiple benefits from the perspectives of child development, social and economic development, education achievements and human rights to ECCE. Two key messages come out clearly in this chapter. First, ECCE provides a strong foundation for life and for learning. Second, the multiple effects of ECCE are not limited to the early years but continue long after. Hayashikawa then provides some recommendations for consideration by Pacific countries to move ECCE forward.

Chapter 6 by Junko Miyahara provides six reasons to support early childhood development with a specific focus placed on the scientific rationale. The other five reasons include children's rights; promoting social equity; economic benefits; an entry point for social mobilisation; and achieving international development goals. Miyahara provides scientific evidence to demonstrate the significance of early stimulation of the brain, the critical importance of good nutrition and health and the quality of child-caregiver attention in order to confirm that 'the early years of life are the most crucial periods for healthy development and well-being'. (See Chapter 6.)

Frances Pene, in Chapter 7, reports on assessment of 0–8 year-olds, and evaluation and monitoring of ECCE, drawing from presentations made by Dr Richard Wah and Dr Visessio Pongi, as well as the outcome of the group discussion that participants had on current assessment strategies carried out in their countries. Pene sums up assessment strategies for the three age groups: 0–3 years; 3–6 years and 6–8 years.

Chapter 8 by Jennifer James provides a pictorial story of the development of ECCE resources, drawing on her recipe of 'lots of imagination, community participation, local materials and minimum expenditure'. This practical do-it-yourself chapter contains many useful tips for making toys, games, teaching aids, play equipment and other resources that ECCE providers and teachers can use.

A case study in how Fiji developed the early learning and development standards (ELDS) for ECCE is described in detail by Glen Palmer in Chapter 9. Palmer





begins her chapter by answering three questions: What are early learning and development standards? What should be the focus of ELDS for young children? What are some pros and cons for using ELDS? She then describes the Fiji experience which uses ‘an outcomes approach within a holistic early childhood framework’. Her diagram of the curriculum framework may be particularly useful for other countries interested in developing ELDS for ECCE.

In Chapter 10, a joint approach is taken by Desma Hughes, Ufemia Camaitoga and Jessie Fuamatu to describe what ECCE teacher preparation provision is available in three teacher training institutions: The University of the South Pacific, Lautoka Teachers’ College and Fulton College, all physically situated in Fiji.

The final chapter in this volume is written by Ufemia Camaitoga, the workshop critical friend and workshop evaluator. Camaitoga sums up some of the key issues facing ECCE in the Pacific region which collectively demonstrate its lack of priority in national government circles. And yet, she argues, ECCE ‘is everyone’s responsibility; we do not have a choice’. Political will and commitment are needed by governments, in partnership with NGOs, to pay more attention to improving ECCE provision and quality. Moreover, she argues for visionary and dynamic leadership in ECCE. Camaitoga uses two Ps and three Vs to encapsulate her notion of what this visionary and dynamic leadership would entail: passion, power, voice, visibility and value-added. She also makes the point that ECCE has gained greater visibility and voice through two tangible outcomes of the 2007 Honiara regional ECCE workshop in 2007: the workshop outcomes paper with a recommendation to be submitted to the Forum Ministers for Education meeting and the publication of this book. She concludes by providing nine strategies to move ECCE forward in the Pacific region.

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3

Early childhood care and education in the Pacific: reflections of our past, our present and our future

Davila Toganivalu

Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of some historical landmarks in the history of early childhood care and education (ECCE) in the Pacific region over the last thirty years. It goes on to highlight some of the relatively recent international initiatives that have pushed ECCE to prominence on the global agenda and have led to many achievements in the Pacific region. Finally, this chapter raises some questions in relation to these achievements and presents some of the challenges facing ECCE practitioners in the Pacific region today.

First regional ECCE meeting: Suva 1980

Pre-schools, or early childhood education programmes—the more widely used term nowadays to refer to a variety of early education programmes for the 0 – 8 year-olds—have been in existence in the Pacific Islands since the 1960s (although





Fiji recorded its first kindergartens as having started in the 1930s). Not much was known about these programmes until August 1980, when the first gathering of 30 pre-school/early childhood educators from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Pohnpei, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Western Samoa, New Zealand and Australia was held in Suva, Fiji.

The purpose of the workshop was to bring together people active in ECCE to share their stories and aspirations, focus their attention on ECCE in their own and neighbouring countries, and identify issues of common interest and concern, as well as common problems.

The organisers of the meeting were aware of the long and painful struggle, the frustration and the isolation that many of the educators from these small island states were facing, and funds were sought to support this initial meeting. The workshop was co-ordinated by the YWCA's South Pacific Area Office, and the University of the South Pacific's (USP's) Extension Services, Continuing Education and Institute of Education. Funding support came from the *Nederlands Comite Voor Kinderpostzegels*, a non-government agency in the Netherlands, and the Australian Council of Churches.

Why the 1980 workshop was important: cultural issues

The workshop was the first of its kind for Pacific Island people involved in pre-school education. It showed that Pacific early childhood educators were concerned about what was happening in pre-schools and were asking questions. The topics generated much enthusiasm and interest amongst the delegates, who spoke openly and passionately about their work, and at the same time learned much from one another. The discussions delved into issues such as the relevance of child developmental theories for Pacific Island people; the place of culture, values and traditions in pre-school education; how to deal with western as well as traditional practices; and the lack of studies and research on Pacific Island children, their families and situations and the challenges this lack posed for early childhood educators. The concerns raised are described in the sections that follow.





(a) Imported programmes in Pacific pre-schools

Participants remarked that most of their early childhood programmes were based on models mainly from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and noted the major influence that western child developmental theories were having on these pre-school programmes. Although the participants respected the knowledge and research on children derived from the developmental theories of Piaget, Eriksson, Montessori and others, little was known about how these theories related to the Pacific situation, to Pacific children's development, and whether the programmes based on them were appropriate for Pacific children or were in harmony with the cultural and traditional values of the people whose children were attending the centres. Furthermore, participants observed that Pacific pre-schools would need to have different programmes in view of the different lifestyles and social contexts that their children represented.

(b) Traditional values and change

The participants identified a range of traditional cultural values and practices: family values and communal hierarchical values; the status of chiefs versus commoners, with some people in the community having more rights than others; the extended family and decision-making, with males holding the dominant role; and male and female roles in general. Religion was viewed as very important in almost all countries. Shaming children to discourage anti-social behaviour was a popular way of discipline.

The participants also discussed how all these were affected by emerging changes. While family solidarity and interdependence were highlighted as important, and children who lived in villages were members of extended families and were used to being part of a large social group, at the same time individuality was also emerging as a common trend. Clan membership was valued, while multiculturalism was also identified as respected among communities. Respect for elders, chiefs and parents, as well as for culture and language, was seen as highly important for Pacific people. Cooperation, sharing and encouraging self-reliance, and equal opportunities and rights were noted in some instances. Pre-school teachers were adopting many of





the new child development theories in their centres and mentioned that treating all children as equal was important for them, given the hierarchical chiefly structure that some children represented.

The participants agreed that traditional and cultural values differed greatly amongst people. However, it was vital that teachers learned about their own traditional patterns of child rearing and cultural values first, in order to be able to develop the most appropriate programmes for the children in their schools. As participants grappled with child psychology and cultural issues they came up with questions such as: 'Are we putting enough emphasis on our own cultures and traditions, which emphasise sharing and group responsibility? Are we preparing our children for change by helping them to ask questions, speak in groups and work individually on a task? How can we deal with the tensions that arise between these two approaches?' (USP Printing Unit, 1980).

Why the 1980 workshop was important: ECCE data

The 1980 workshop was important for another reason; it was the first time that data about ECCE in the Pacific was gathered and documented. The participants shared information about the ECCE situation in their own country and built up a regional picture. It was found that, in 1980, over 12,000 children were recorded as being enrolled in about 500 currently operating pre-school centres, with one third operating in towns or urban areas. Most programmes catered for three to five-year-olds, except in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea where they catered for three to seven-year-olds. (Primary schools in these two countries started at seven or eight years of age.)

Since the Pacific pre-school education programmes had been heavily influenced by western values and standards, they varied from highly organised, structured timetables to casual free play situations. Sessions were mostly of half-day duration and were held in village centres, churches, homes, health clinics or specially built facilities. The type of care/education also varied; there were kindergartens, play centres, child-minding facilities, prep classes, day-care centres, Head Start (United States of American territories), pre-schools and schools of nine (Fiji).





Most governments were seen as not taking enough interest in pre-schools. However, where they were involved, they generally licensed centres and provided some form of supervision. In the Cook Islands and Nauru, kindergartens and preparatory classes were integrated into the education systems and, in Micronesia, Head Start programmes operated under a US federal grant. Non-government organisations (e.g. the YWCA), religious bodies and parent committees were the backbone of the Pacific pre-school movement.

The use of local vernacular or mother tongue languages was common throughout. Little emphasis was placed on learning English in most of Polynesia and Micronesia, although English was occasionally introduced through songs and finger plays. In Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu, emphasis was placed on using English because of the many local languages spoken and the high proportion of children from English speaking families. Pacific teachers were very aware of the need to enhance traditional values, develop children's language abilities, and stimulate mental development, as well as encourage the involvement of parents and community elders in the pre-school centres.

Problems identified at the 1980 workshop

The following common problems were identified at the 1980 workshop, most of them relating to lack of finance:

- low wages for the teachers, or they worked as volunteers
- high cost of equipment, especially if not available locally
- difficulty in collecting fees from parents
- burdensome fund-raising activities to meet costs
- limited training opportunities for teachers in the islands.

Recommendations from the 1980 workshop

The findings from the workshop were used to formulate seven recommendations. These became the basis for discussions with development partners and spearheaded many regional initiatives and achievements, which are described below.





It was recommended that:

- people who are active in pre-schools be brought together to share programmes, information and common problems
- the use of local, inexpensive materials be encouraged, and people involved in ECCE be trained in how to make teaching aids
- written materials for Pacific Island pre-school teachers be created and shared
- the writing of children's books, using the writers' own Pacific backgrounds and languages, be encouraged
- more learning about child development patterns in the South Pacific take place
- a Pacific Pre-school Teacher Training Course be established
- a regional Pre-school Council be established.

Achievements after the 1980 workshop

One of the first achievements after the 1980 workshop was the establishment of the Pacific Pre-school Council, which was tasked to follow up on the workshop recommendations and to actively support the member countries. The Council has met four times since its inception (1985 in Fiji, 1987 in Tonga, 1990 in Vanuatu and 1995 in Samoa). In each of the Council meetings members provided country updates as well as progress in areas of regional teacher training and their use of the ECCE resources they had developed. Since the UNICEF funding for the non-formal ECCE programme run by the Continuing Education section of USP ceased in 1997, Fiji has been the only country in the region to pay its registration fee to the Council. In 2000, the Council became an alliance member of the World Forum and since then has maintained its involvement and participation in World Forum initiatives.

Fulfilling another recommendation, the Pacific Pre-school Certificate Course at USP's Continuing Education was developed in 1982, followed in 1997 by the USP Diploma Course in ECE and in 2006 by the BEd in ECE. The emphasis in these endeavours was on creating Pacific courses, tailored to the Pacific context of ECCE.





A non-formal ECCE project (1992 – 1997), funded by UNICEF, with USP's Continuing Education Programme was developed to strengthen the national ECCE associations in the region in their organisational structure and advocacy through the production of materials, including a trainer's manual, a toy-making handbook, brochures and posters, plays and videos for advocacy and training, newsletters and supporting Pacific regional and in-country training workshops.

Other major achievements were the Basic Education Life Skills (BELS) Regional Project (1993 – 2001), the Pacific Islands Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) and the Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE) Project – April 2004. These were all funded by international organisations and need to be seen against the backdrop of what was happening globally.

Global initiatives: 1979 to the present

At the same time that the ECCE movement was gaining momentum in the Pacific, there were several global initiatives that influenced much of what was happening in this region. Some of the key global conventions and initiatives were:

- 1979: the International Year of the Child
- 1989: the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- 1990: the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) (including the adoption of the *World Declaration on Education for All* which endorsed a 'Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs')
- 2000 – 2015: the Dakar Framework for Action Education For All
- 2000 – 2015: the Millennium Development Goals.

Highlighting the importance of children globally and ensuring commitments by governments to their survival and care, development and education, their protection and participation added a new impetus in how countries reassessed their responsibilities and support towards their own children. The right of the child to basic education became an important goal for all Pacific Island countries (PICs) and governments made concerted efforts to achieve that objective. However, while Pacific governments became signatories to these conventions and initiatives, progress was slow. The 1990 – 2000 Pacific country reports on EFA (which





stresses the importance of the early years as a foundation for future learning and development) highlighted several major gaps and challenges in ECCE. These were the lack of accurate, disaggregated data and relevant information on ECCE in many of the countries; the lack of country/national action plans; and the need to address access to ECCE, especially for the vulnerable and disadvantaged. In other words, although the countries reported supporting ECCE programme activities, many did not have national strategic plans, policies, guidelines or indicators to follow, nor the commitment and resources to support national initiatives. This is where international organisations entered the arena and played a major role in advancing the development of ECCE and basic education in the region. The three major initiatives mentioned earlier are described below.

(a) The Basic Education Life Skills (BELS) Regional Project (1993 – 2001)

A multi-donor regional project for basic education, namely BELS, was set up to assist PICs strengthen their Education for All (EFA) commitments in areas such as literacy, assessment and community support. The BELS project was jointly sponsored by UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, AusAID and NZAID and was implemented by USP. During the BELS third phase (1998 – 2001), a component on ECCE was included within the Community Support area with a link to literacy education. This new focus on ECCE was in direct response to requests from the member countries. The BELS early childhood specialist worked with Pacific governments to develop national policies and curriculum guidelines for ECCE. The ECCE component aimed at enhancing children's learning and development in their early years by ensuring that quality programmes were provided by capable teachers and empowered communities.

(b) The Pacific Islands Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP)

In May 2001, under the directive of the Pacific Islands Forum leaders, the Ministers of Education of the Pacific Islands met for the first time in Auckland, New Zealand and deliberated on issues concerning the delivery of basic education to the people of the Pacific islands. The ministers from 14 Forum Island countries (FICs) adopted the goals, framework and processes of the Dakar 2000 EFA at this





meeting. They also endorsed a Pacific vision for education for Forum members: to achieve universal and equitable educational participation and achievement, and to ensure access and equity and improve quality outcomes.

The ministers noted that actions were taken at the country level for the development of strategic plans on all facets of education, beginning with ECE through to primary, secondary and technical, vocational education and training (TVET). In reviewing elements affecting the quality of education, the ministers further agreed that, 'while collaborating with providers of ECCE services, governments should address resource requirements for ECCE teacher training and assess how ECCE teachers can obtain appropriate status and conditions of employment'. They then formulated what became known as the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) and requested the Forum Secretariat to facilitate its implementation.

The Pacific FBEAP (2001) also decided to address the contentious issue of conditions of employment of ECCE teachers and their status through the collaborative efforts of governments with NGOs, church and community organisations in providing ECCE to pre-school-age children.

The 2002 review of ECCE and the Forum ministers' guidelines

In 2002, two consultants, Dr Diana Guild (of New Zealand and USA citizenship) and Mrs Vasu Tuivaga (a Fiji citizen), were tasked to undertake the first comprehensive review of ECCE and to provide a status report of ECCE in FICs to the Pacific Forum ministers of education for their December 2002 meeting. Guild and Tuivaga found that accurate information about ECCE policies, enrolment of children, teachers' qualifications and remuneration, curriculum, programme operations and development participation was difficult to obtain or unavailable. However, despite this major obstacle, information was collected from a variety of sources: regional programme documents; country reports; early childhood education/pre-school associations; international development partnership reports; and communications with those partners, including questionnaires sent to in-country ECCE personnel. Guild and Tuivaga provided this broad overview of ECCE to the FICs ministers of education for their deliberation.





Overview of status of ECCE in 2002

- The status of ECCE components varied throughout the FICs.
- Components of ECCE were addressed in some fashion by most governments.
- Policies ~ 60% of FICs had some sort of policy guidelines, ranging from very brief statements to detailed and comprehensive documents.
- Curriculum Development and Implementation ~ Most FICs had used the BELS ECCE Curriculum Guidelines to develop their own curriculum guidelines. Some national curricula were very brief and general, others were detailed and articulate. A few countries used the Head Start Programme or Te Whaariki, a New Zealand early childhood education curriculum document. Samoa and Vanuatu had vernacular curricula.
- Six FICs had a person designated in the Ministry of Education for ECCE.
- Half of the FICs had ECCE/pre-school associations.
- Children's enrolment ~ The percentage of the total age population in ECCE programmes varied greatly throughout the region. The typical age range was between 3 – 6 years, although some covered children aged 0 – 8 years.
- Teacher qualifications ~ Many teachers had little formal ECCE training. Education and/or requirements to be considered a qualified teacher varied throughout the region. Funding of teacher education and training also varied but it appeared that, in many FICs, governments took on a large portion of responsibility, with development partners and private citizens also contributing to the cost.
- Teacher remuneration ~ Although little information was available, teachers were generally poorly paid. The governments of six FICs took at least some responsibility for teacher remuneration, but typically remuneration was from a variety of sources. A few countries indicated that teachers regularly volunteered their services, or were remunerated in kind.
- Teacher:children ratios ~ The ratios varied widely, with teachers having responsibility for between ten to forty children. However, several countries' statistics indicated an optimum ratio of one teacher for fifteen children (1:15).
- Programme operations ~ Most had programmes that operated between three to five days a week, for half a day (3 – 4 hour) sessions. The responsibility for maintenance of the facility and educational resources and materials was divided among governments, development partners, management committees and communities.





- Facilities ~ There were some purpose-built facilities throughout, especially in urban areas. However, not all children and teachers had access to working toilets and/or safe drinking water.
- Development partners ~ A wide variety of activities was occurring. Educational materials and equipment, facilities, curriculum development, and teacher training had all been addressed to some extent in many countries. However, the types of assistance received might not have been in response to coherent plans of actions for ECCE development. The countries generally had accepted assistance in any area in which it was available, rather than focusing assistance from a variety of development partners into one specific area.
- FIC governments could play an important role in the implementation of high quality ECCE programmes in financially realistic ways. For them to take full responsibility for ECCE is not necessary, neither is it desirable; ECCE programmes can be implemented in stages or phases. However, governments must be very clear about the areas of responsibility that they will accept and allocate the remaining responsibilities to other more capable groups. The identification of priorities for coherent ECCE development and clarification of government roles and responsibilities for ECCE are two of the most important things that governments can do at this time.
- Costs for ECCE programmes could be shared. As FIC governments clarify their policies and their own roles and responsibilities for ECCE, a coherent plan of support can be addressed. Financial commitments can be determined, and the roles and responsibilities of parents and teachers, communities, and development partners can be identified.
- Implementation of comprehensive, high quality ECCE programmes is still in the future of FICs.

2002 Pacific Islands Forum Ministers for Education meeting

The December 2002 Pacific Islands Forum Ministers for Education meeting recognised and acknowledged that high quality ECCE programmes had multiple benefits for children, as well as their countries, in a variety of ways. They endorsed the fact that ECCE promoted the intelligence of young children, increased the efficiency of primary education, contributed to future productivity and income, reduced costs of health and other public services, reduced gender inequities and increased female participation in the labour force.





The ministers subsequently committed to undertake regular reviews of their country's ECCE policies using the following proposed guidelines.

- a) Clarifying government roles and responsibilities for ECCE programmes.
- b) Undertaking a leading role in the coordination of development partnership assistance in order to create sustainable support and ensure follow-through of development plans.
- c) Developing action plans on ECCE that identify the priorities and specific areas of development to include the following.
 - Appoint a national ECCE coordinator and area advisors to provide advisory services, monitor development of ECCE programmes, and liaise between communities, pre-school associations and governments.
 - Prioritise curriculum development and implementation in their national education development plans.
 - Undertake an analysis of teacher remuneration costs in order to inform governments' future discussions for the financial assistance of teachers' salaries.
 - Prioritise the clarification of roles and responsibilities of providing teacher education and training in ECCE policy guidelines.
 - Conduct an analysis of trained and untrained teacher needs in order to inform teacher education plans.
 - Develop a consistent, ongoing programme of professional education utilising national and/or regional tertiary institutions.
 - Initiate the collection of data in order to monitor ECCE programme operations and inform future plans for upgrading of ECCE services.
 - Develop policies on facilities, toilets, safe drinking water, and educational materials and resources for licensing and monitoring.

The FIC Education Ministers met five times between 2002 and 2006. In their review of the FBEAP in 2005, they found that ECCE and special education required further attention. ECCE stakeholders in FICs need to keep the ECCE momentum alive and progressing well at the country level, in view of the competing demands of the other educational areas of focus: primary and secondary education, TVET, and formal and non-formal education.





(c) Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education (PRIDE) Project – April 2004

The third major initiative was a regional project on basic education, namely PRIDE. This project was designed by the Pacific Ministers of Education to implement the FBEAP and to support the reform of education in all forms and at all levels: early childhood, primary, secondary, TVET, formal and non-formal education. The PRIDE Project, which was up and running by April 2004, is implemented by the Institute of Education at USP and is jointly funded by the European Union and NZAID.

Second Regional Meeting: June 2004

After the 1980 regional workshop, 24 years passed before another regional ECCE conference was held. This conference, held in June 2004 in Suva, was jointly sponsored by UNICEF and USP's Distance and Flexible Learning Support Centre. The meeting aimed at bringing Pacific ECCE people together to raise awareness of the critical importance of the first eight years of life with an emphasis on the care of young children from birth to three years of age. The first three years of life are seen as the most crucial period for brain development and directly affect the development of cognitive, language, social, motor and emotional skills of the child. It is also a time when young children face the greatest risks to their survival, health, and emotional and physical growth.

It became apparent during the conference that PICs were catering mainly for pre-school programmes for children from three to five or six years; there was very little evidence of activities for children below three years of age, except in the few countries that had day care, playgroup, or play centre programmes. Other topics covered included country updates, parents as teachers, case studies, capacity building of ECCE personnel and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The sessions were both enriching and challenging, as delegates learned about the importance of growth and development in the first three years of a child's life, and how innovative approaches could enhance the overall development of young children in the home, prior to coming to a centre-based early childhood





programme. Parents, families and other care-givers could benefit greatly if they are supported in their child-rearing and care-giving responsibilities to promote a positive environment for the sound early growth and development of infants and young children. Children need to be nurtured in a loving and caring environment, to be physically healthy, mentally alert, socially stimulated and intellectually able to learn and develop to their full potential.

Participants were made further aware that implementing any programmes for the 0 – 3 age group requires an integrated, multi-sectoral approach. Addressing the needs of very young children involves bringing in expertise from civil society, local government, donors, families and communities to be responsible for health, social welfare, rural development, finance and planning, and education. An outcome of the conference was action plans for 0 – 3 year-olds developed by the countries represented.

Third regional meeting on ECCE: March 2007

The third Pacific regional workshop was held in Honiara in March 2007, almost thirty years after the first in 1980, and three years after the second in 2004. It brought together representatives from government and non-government stakeholders to focus on the theme: *Supporting learning from 0 – 8: creating the future*. It also brought together many new key players in the region, as well as some who were initial players thirty years ago.

The objectives of the workshop were: reconfirming the importance of the 0 – 8 year age range; developing vision, policy, curriculum guidelines and appropriate learning environments and facilities for 0 – 8 year-olds; strengthening national and regional networking of stakeholders; and sharing assessment techniques used for 0 – 8 year-old children.

Given the agenda of this workshop in Honiara, it can be surmised that ECCE in the Pacific region has indeed come a long way, and it is currently grappling with many of the important issues and challenges that will determine the future directions that the individual countries will choose to take them forward.





Issues and challenges for Pacific Island countries

Since 1980, much progress has been made, as this review of the history of ECCE in the Pacific shows, and many PICs have developed innovative programmes for their children. Many challenges remain, however, which need to be addressed. These are discussed below.

The cultural context

Over the years there has been wide acknowledgement of the importance of the social and cultural worlds in which children live and learn. Children develop their sense of identity and learn their cultural skills from their families and those around them. As they grow and mature they further gain knowledge of human relationships and develop interpersonal skills while gradually learning about the rules and values of their culture and society. Among the rules they learn are how to show respect, how to interact with people they know well compared to those they have just met, how to organise time, how to dress, what and when to eat, how to respond to major life transitions or celebrations, and how to worship.

Early childhood programmes exist in contexts which are influenced by many factors. Among them are the parents' or family's preferences, community values, societal expectations, the demands of institutions at the next level of education, and broadly-defined values of a specific culture. When we talk about culture, we mean a way of life of a discrete group, which includes a body of accumulated knowledge, skills, beliefs and values. In the Pacific, we use the terms *faka-Tonga*, *fa'a Samoa*, *vaka Viti* and so on. When children at four or five years of age come to pre-school, they already know who they are and what culture they belong to. They already have cultural skills such as the use of a first language or mother tongue. Children who have a good command of the mother tongue will rapidly and easily acquire a second language as they need it, and children who hear their language validated at school will have greater confidence in their culture and in themselves as mother tongue speakers.

Therefore, in planning an appropriate learning environment which will promote children's learning, we need to listen to children to determine what they actually know and understand, rather than assume what they do not know.





Innovative learning environments

The city of Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy places great importance on the creation of learning environments for its early childhood schools. It affirms that ‘the environments we provide make a public statement about the importance we give to young children and their education, and the choices society makes in its provisions for children indicate the recognition and value society gives to children’ (Millikan *et al.* 2003: 66, 69). The Reggio Emilia project commenced in 1963, ‘with the awareness across Italy that children needed to be prepared for life in a democracy, that society needed to respond to the uniqueness in every child and there needed to be meaningful communication with both the child and the family’ (Millikan 2003: 2).

Early childhood educators who have visited this centre and have become familiar with its methodology and practices believe that we can all learn a lot from Reggio Emilia’s philosophy and work. The important point is how to create our own settings based on our culture, beliefs and local environment. Pacific early childhood practitioners must be bold in creating pre-schools or early childhood education centres that characterise who we are as a people—not just poor replicas of models copied from other countries or places. Our long history of ECCE development and rich experience should prepare us well to forge ahead and find the right mix of the old and new and to enable us to choose the way forward. Let us be imaginative by becoming architects and designers of children’s learning environments that will enhance their learning and development. PIC centres for ECCE ought to be places where children are understood, and treated with respect and dignity; where Pacific languages, stories, music, dance, art and crafts are promoted; and where beliefs, values, customs and traditions are evident and respected. When people come to these centres they must see and feel that they are in a **Pacific** centre for ECCE.

Reinforcing developmentally appropriate curriculum

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), a highly respected authority on ECCE in the USA, believes that a high quality ECCE programme provides a safe and nurturing environment that promotes the physical,





social, emotional and cognitive development of young children, while responding to the need of the families. Although the quality of an early childhood programme may be affected by many factors, a major determining factor of programme quality is the extent to which knowledge of child development is applied in programme practices and the degree to which the programme is developmentally appropriate. NAEYC (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) specifically highlights the three dimensions of the concept of ‘developmental appropriateness’ as being based on:

- what is known about child development and learning. This criterion refers specifically to the child’s age-related stages of development;
- what is known about the strengths, interests and needs of each individual, based on a belief in the uniqueness of the child;
- knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful and relevant for the participating children and their families.

Given the 30 years of progress and development of ECCE in the Pacific, a question that needs to be asked is: Where are we with regard to developmentally appropriate programmes?

Formal instruction versus play in ECCE

ECCE programmes have changed in response to social, economic and political demands. In addition, the number of programmes has increased in response to the growing demand for out of home care and education during the early years, and in response also to the need for extended hours of care for children of employed parents. Children are now enrolled in programmes at a younger age, many from infancy. However, the changes have not always taken into account the basic developmental needs of young children, which have remained constant. In recent years, a trend towards formal instruction in academic skills of literacy and numeracy has emerged in ECCE programmes, and the Pacific countries are not immune to this strong pressure, which emanates from primary school teachers and parents. This is not to say that pre-reading and pre-numeracy activities cannot take place; they should take place—in an informal way. However, this should not be extended to any kind of formal instruction. This push toward formal academic





instruction for younger children is based on misconceptions about early learning. **There is no evidence to support the idea that children learn any better in primary school if they have academic instruction in the early years.** Early childhood educators believe that children learn most effectively through a hands-on, play-oriented approach. Children are naturally curious and playful and they learn best when they:

- explore and play
- involve all of their senses
- manipulate real objects in the environment
- work or play with adults and other children
- make meaningful plans and decisions
- build upon what they already know.

Teaching resources

Children learn when there are objects and materials to manipulate and people and children to interact with. Yet many pre-schools still lack adequate supplies of suitable play materials, including teaching resources, books and toys. Some of these can be made easily with local materials. Although commercial toys are attractive and widely available nowadays, they are costly and need to be carefully selected, as some are easily broken. At the same time, indoor and outdoor equipment require careful choosing or making, as well as regular maintenance to ensure the safety of children. (See Chapter 8.)

Teacher training

The decision made by FICs Ministers of Education in 2001 to review the conditions of work and status of ECCE teachers in their various countries is highly commendable, for teachers are the backbone of ECCE. For too long, teachers in early childhood education have worked under extremely difficult circumstances with poor pay and low status. If teachers are to provide a high quality service, they require not only appropriate specialist training to prepare them adequately for this major task and responsibility, but also the pay they merit and the recognition they deserve.





It is vital that teachers and early educators fully understand what they are supposed to be doing and this is where training is crucial. All early childhood educators need a belief or philosophy of ECCE principles, which form the framework for all their work with children. In order for teachers to make sound decisions about how to teach young children, they must know something about how children grow, develop and learn and the interaction between these. Teachers must also be aware of individual differences among children, affirming the child's uniqueness, and they must also support a positive sense of identity in each child. Teachers must know about individual learning styles, interests and preferences, personality and temperament, skills and talents, challenges and difficulties. All these are aspects of quality teaching and they need to underpin any teacher training programme.

Making ECCE more visible

Despite ECCE's long existence in the Pacific, it remains weak and relatively invisible, and people's knowledge about it in ministries of education, in other sectors of government and in our Pacific communities is vague and limited. ECCE practitioners have to learn to speak about it with confidence and conviction. They have to be advocates who promote ECCE, using the work place, community and media, at all levels—national, provincial, district and community. They have to speak with one voice, work together as a cohesive whole, rather than as fragmented parts, guarding their own individual territory and shutting out those who may be able to contribute or add value to their work. Collaboration implies a willingness to listen, let go a little and learn from others, at the same time building bridges with partners and colleagues to strengthen partnerships and links which are necessary and highly desirable in working in ECCE.

Articulation of the three stages of early childhood

In 1999, UNICEF came up with some essential strategies that focus on the development of children during the first eight years of life. The early childhood period is divided into three stages: before birth to age three, from three to six years and from six to eight years. A brief revisit to these strategies will provide some food for thought for ECCE practitioners if they are struggling to find suitable approaches to apply to any of these three stages.





The quality of the critical early years in the child's life and the experiences to which the child is exposed from birth set the stage for lifelong health and learning. Children from 0 – 8 years old are the responsibility of ECCE practitioners, but within this age group there are differences.

The 0 – 3 age range is when the child's brain development is most intense. This age group is still an area which needs more attention from PICs. The major task is to help families and care-givers provide optimal care for their young children. The challenge is to blend basic child development knowledge with an understanding of culture and country-specific child-rearing practices that support the child's healthy and holistic development. Emphasis needs to be placed on interventions designed to reach children, and their care-givers, from before birth through the first three years of life. Children in this age range benefit most from integrated health, nutrition and developmental services.

The next stage, 3 – 6 years, is when socialisation and the foundation for learning are laid. Although this stage is familiar to Pacific ECCE workers because most programmes cater for children in this category, we can learn still more from what others have been doing. UNICEF (1999) proposes a strategy of informal, community-based programmes that support the capacity of families and communities to provide enriched learning environments for these children and enhance their overall development. It involves establishing parent and child organisations and centres, creating integrated educational activities and promoting integrated community child development programmes.

For the 6 – 8 year-olds, the transition from the early years to primary school is an important phase of their development. It is a transition to formal schooling and regular, independent interaction outside the immediate family. Children need to be ready for school and schools ready for children. Transition is most effective when viewed as an ongoing process that begins before school entry, continues to the point of entry and into the first two years of schooling. Transition programmes that will introduce children and their parents to some of the activities, skills and themes the children will experience in class one are needed in order to strengthen teachers' and parents' support of children.





The first year of school can be traumatic for many young children. Some of the changes children encounter as they move into a new learning environment include the change from:

- informal learning to formal learning
- an oral culture to a written culture
- relative freedom of movement to adherence to strict rules
- patterns of a minority culture to expectations of the dominant culture
- mother tongue to competence in a new language without prior instruction
- a family group to a larger group of peers.

Without adequate preparation, a child is likely to under-perform, ends up repeating grades, becomes uninterested in learning, develops a sense of failure and low self-esteem and ultimately drops out

Parent partnership awareness

There are many different ways in which parent participation in ECCE programmes can be achieved; the challenge is to select what is appropriate in the specific context. This is a very important partnership and needs to be seriously nurtured and respected to allow it to strengthen. Children are happy when their families are part of their ECCE environment and, overall, parents want the best for their children. One way to proceed is for teachers to find out what parents expect of their children's pre-school and what types of involvement parents can provide; they can be a great resource to the centre. Increasing the involvement of fathers will also be a positive move. Programmes can be designed in collaboration with parents, who will be an integral part of implementation in order to assure sustainability.

Leadership in ECCE

Governments, through their relevant ministries—a ministry of education in most cases—have several responsibilities: formulating ECCE policies within the context of national education plans; mobilising political and popular support; and promoting flexible, adaptable programmes for young children that are appropriate to their age. In PICs, there is a tendency to equate ECCE with formal programmes, i.e. pre-schools, instead of valuing and encouraging the non-formal family and





community-based, community-owned initiatives. Governments must ensure that a flexible range of support is available to families and communities that will strengthen their ability to support their children's overall development. Governments need to adopt a holistic policy and planning framework when expanding their national ECCE. The first step is to assess the present situation and then to look at ways to strengthen and supplement existing programmes. Moreover, **there needs to be a strong, central coordinating body to assist the government in overseeing all aspects of national ECCE issues and development.** These include: developing a curriculum framework or guidelines, targeting provision for the disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, encouraging flexible implementation, recognising sector realities, fostering approaches which build on strengths, working in genuine partnerships, making advocacy more effective, providing local evidence to support research, and monitoring and assessment of ECCE programmes.

PIC governments have done a fair amount for ECCE in their various countries, but there is still much to be done and they cannot do it alone. The governments need to take a leading role and work with both local and international stakeholders to develop national visions, goals and strategic plans to establish a framework for the holistic development of the child. This requires inputs from the various sectors of government, NGOs, donors, the private sector, local municipalities, teacher training institutions, teacher associations, parents and community groups.

Emerging issues and challenges

Although many of the old issues such as inadequate finance, lack of teacher training and lack of resources continue to pose major challenges for ECCE, emerging issues are impacting ECCE today, and educators need to be prepared to deal with them. Some examples are the HIV and AIDS epidemic, violence and abuse against children and women, substance and drug abuse, poverty, and the effects of television and technology. ECCE has a major role to play in championing children's issues and raising awareness on their behalf, as they and their families do not have a voice.





Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the development of ECCE in the Pacific region since 1980, highlights some of the major global conventions and initiatives that have had an impact on the current focus of attention, describes some of the major ECCE achievements in the Pacific, and raises what are deemed to be critical issues and challenges for Pacific Island countries to consider in pursuing their own way forward. Governments could play an important role in the implementation of high quality ECCE programmes in financially realistic ways. It is not necessary, nor is it desirable, for one player alone to shoulder the full responsibility for ECCE; programmes can be implemented by other players in phases or stages. However, governments must be very clear about the areas of responsibility that they will accept, and allocate remaining responsibilities to capable groups. The identification of priorities for coherent ECCE development and clarification of government roles and responsibilities for ECCE are two of the most important actions that government can undertake at this time. Costs for ECCE programmes could be shared. As governments clarify their policies and their own roles and responsibilities to ECCE, a coherent plan of support can be addressed. Financial commitments can be determined, and the roles and responsibilities of parents and teachers, communities and development partners can be identified. The critical role of communities and the great contribution Pacific communities have made need to be recognised, and they need to be supported and strengthened so that they can continue their sterling work.

It is only by addressing these critical issues that an equitable, affordable and high quality ECCE programmes can be achieved for the children of the Pacific.

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4

The current status of ECCE in Pacific Island countries

Frances Pene

At the regional ECCE workshop in Honiara, there were two participants from each of the fifteen Forum Pacific Island countries, one representing the government and the other representing the non-government organisations involved in ECCE in their country. These participants contributed information to a matrix which had the following sections: strategy/operational plans, finances, EC development issues for 0 – 3 year-olds, organisational issues, and action that needs to be undertaken by the government/NGOs. This information provides a picture of the current ECCE status quo in the Pacific region in 2007. It should be mentioned here that, in most of the countries, provision for 0 – 3 year-olds is the responsibility of the health authorities, but there is a general feeling among the workshop participants that the education and health authorities should work together for the holistic benefit of children in this age group.

Cook Islands

The Cook Islands has a set of Education Regulations, which states that all children who are 3½ years old are eligible to attend pre-school, and strategies are being





implemented to ensure that all do so. The Cook Islands Curriculum Framework (2002: 28)² includes ECE and states: 'The early childhood education curriculum provides guidance for designing and establishing learning environments that are non-threatening, closely linked to the home environment, caring and safe, involving participation of adults in a variety of supportive roles'. There is government funding for ECE, determined by the roll of each centre, most of which are attached to primary schools. The Ministry of Education coordinates monthly meetings for ECE teachers.

What needs to be done

While the government has already begun to implement some of its policies, a lot more work is needed to raise public awareness and disseminate information about ECCE, support ECCE teachers and encourage them to become qualified.

Fiji

In Fiji, ECCE centres are established by NGOs. However, there is an Action Plan for Implementation of the Recommendations of the 2000 *Report of the Fiji Islands Education Commission/Panel* and the Fiji Ministry of Education's *Education for All 2015 National Action Plan*, the first goal of which is to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. There is also the 2005 Suva Declaration, where Framework 1 targets the child. The Fiji Ministry of Education has formulated a Policy in Early Childhood Education and is currently working on Early Childhood Care, Development and Education Standards (ECCDES) for the 0 – 6 age range (see Chapter 9). The government supplies salary grants for ECE teachers. In the 2007 budget the Salary Assistance was F\$550,000.00, the Building Grant was \$100,000.00, the Equipment grant was \$32,000.00 and the ECE Grant was \$50,000.00. Other sources of finance are UNICEF, school management committees, NGOs, communities and donor countries.

Concerning provision for the 0 – 3 year-olds, some local government authorities provide playgrounds and parks, and Ministry of Health clinics are baby-friendly, with nursing and diaper changing facilities.

2. All the documents mentioned in this chapter can be accessed from: www.paddle.usp.ac.fj.





What needs to be done

The status of ECCE teachers needs to be regularised and improved. This can be done if the Fiji Government absorbs them into the civil service and pays them a salary according to their qualifications and experience, rather than continuing the current system of salary assistance grants. When it comes to the 0 – 3 age group, a lot more could be done if local authorities and the health and education ministries combined efforts to provide safe, clean and baby-friendly facilities in public places.

Kiribati

ECCE in Kiribati caters for 3 – 5 year-olds and is mostly run by island councils, the churches (the Bahai, the Kiribati Protestant Church, the Catholic Church and the SDA), and private individuals. The council and church schools are often conducted in the village *mwaneaba*, or meeting house, although some church-run schools in Tarawa have their own premises. The individuals who run schools are trained ECCE teachers and retired primary school teachers, but there is concern about some of these schools as they are run in private homes that do not offer a safe, healthy environment and many are not registered. All three types of pre-school levy fees of varying amounts which are used to pay the teachers. Like Tonga and Vanuatu, Kiribati has no government budget allocation for ECCE.

Government and pre-school operators are working together and teachers are expected to use the national curriculum after attending workshops on how to do so. These workshops have been held on most islands in the group. Most pre-schools with a small roll follow a multi-age organisation, where children work together but do different activities according to their interest and ability. If there are enough children of the same age, they are grouped according to their age for some activities.

Several years ago, the pre-schools formed KECEA, the Kiribati Early Childhood Education Association. KECEA has had a varied history, sometimes very active, other times less so. One of the things they achieved was to endorse a set of standards relating to fees, safe environments for ECCE centres, teachers' qualifications, teacher:child ratio and curriculum.





Provision for 0 – 3 year-olds

In Kiribati, workshops for island councillors, pre-school teachers, and community and church leaders were conducted in many villages by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MEYS) and the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, funded by AusAID. The aim was for interested stakeholders to learn how to provide appropriate care, health and a safe learning environment for the children in their community, and to raise awareness of pre-school, rather than primary school, being the first stage of education. An action plan on how to go about establishing play centres for this age group was formulated by representatives from different church denominations.

In addition, KECEA intends to include provision for 0 – 3 year-olds in their plan. They have encouraged urban and island councils to include play areas for young children in public parks and to set up play centres.

What needs to be done

After several years of little progress regarding the improvement of ECCE provision in Kiribati, plans are now taking shape to remedy this. Education Ministry personnel are currently reviewing and refining the ECCE policy, which was written in 2000, but they need assistance to finalise it. At the time of the March 2007 Honiara workshop, a draft policy had been written which includes: the age range (2 – 5), fees, teacher qualifications, curriculum, health and safety, teachers' responsibilities, resources, relationship with the community, medium of instruction (Kiribati), excursions, assessment and record keeping. Plans for the next few years have also been drafted and include expanding the number of centres; redesigning the one-year course for ECCE teaching at Kiribati Teachers' College (KTC), first begun in 1996 but discontinued after six years; regularising the registration of ECCE centres; and translating the curriculum into Kiribati (personal communication Bwenaata Baukin, MEYS).

There is also a need to revive KECEA and work with MEYS, as it is felt that together they can play a big part in ECCE development. Another need is a resource centre for ECCE providers.





Nauru

Nauru has an Educational Strategic Plan (2005 – 2006) which promises to '[r]eview existing successful Early Childhood curriculum through a process of backward mapping to ensure continuity with primary education'. The Plan is based on outcomes of students, schools and management team and has three major components: the learning programme, the school support services programme and the management and accountability programme. Finances come from the Republic of Nauru Government, NZAID and AusAID. Government initiatives include community based child care centres for 0 – 3 year-olds, managed by community groups, with funding and parent education and training programmes provided by the government. A national centre coordinator has been appointed to develop a training programme, formulate policies, collect data and monitor the quality of the ECCE programmes offered in the centres. In addition, the government has initiated parent awareness education workshops. These are conducted by teachers, who produced a series of pamphlets called Parent Kits, which touch on many issues of parenting and culture. The workshops are aimed at promoting the concept of community childcare centres and the training of volunteers to be parent teachers or supervisors. The centres are used as outreach centres by the Health department to screen children from birth and provide health care services, food and nutritional supplements, immunisation and breastfeeding training for mothers.

What needs to be done

Government needs to take an integrated approach to improving parental involvement in their children's development and learning, at home and at school. This should include NGOs, the media, and government departments dealing with women's affairs, youth affairs, and health. More childcare centres and support services are needed, as well as advice and finances from donor organisations.

Niue

With a population of a little over 2,000, Niue runs one pre-school, one primary school and one secondary school. According to the draft Niue EFA National Plan 2003 – 2010, all four-year-olds attend the ECE Centre, which is part of the





primary school, but it is acknowledged that there is room for a lot of improvement in teacher performance. Another problem identified in the Plan is poor sanitation facilities.

Provision for the 0 – 3 year-olds

Provision for this age group between 1993 and 1999 was a Mobile Education Unit run by the Government of Niue to serve village play groups. In 2000, the Niue Education Project (NEP), in partnership with Dunedin College of Education and funded by NZAID, began and is still running. According to the draft Niue EFA National Plan 2003 – 2010, the declining child population affects the establishment of play centres.

Papua New Guinea

The Papua New Guinea Policy on ECCD is a new policy endorsed by the PNG Government in 2007. It took two years to research, consult and collate, and has an implementation strategy for a term of five years. There is a budget allocation to cover the five years. The current allocation is K500,000. Sadly, the Child Care and Pre-school Association that was established in the 1980s is defunct, so there is no NGO involvement in ECE.

What needs to be done

It is important that the Childcare and Pre-school Association be revived, and that the assistance of UNESCO or UNICEF or the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education (PRIDE) be sought for this purpose. Secondly, a permanent technical and advisory mechanism for the Government Sectoral Committee as provided for in the 2007 policy needs to be set up.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)

The Marshall Islands uses a programme run by the NGO Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI). WUTMI's affiliated sponsors and partners include the Asia Foundation, the United Nations Development Programme, Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, several government ministries within the RMI Government, the Council of RMI NGOs and the New Zealand





Agency for International Development. WUTMI has 24 chapters in RMI and serves as the voice of women. Other objectives are to support and strengthen Marshallese families, and prepare the younger generation for their role in society. Among its several programmes is Jined im Jemed ilo Kobo: Early Childhood Parent Education (ECPE) 0 – 5 years old. *Jined ilo Kobo* is a principle upon which Marshallese cultural and social relationships are built. It means that the mother protects and sustains, moulds and shapes. The programme, however, includes fathers and aims to help fathers earn the title of *Jined ilo Kobo*. Patterned on the Parents as Teachers (PAT) programme, it is an early childhood family education and support programme based on research into brain development and its links to behaviour. Activities include home visits; practical advice; parents' group meetings and workshops; medical screening to detect potential problems in development; a radio programme on early childhood parenting skills, and a network of resources and services. Over the next five years, WUTMI hopes to secure more funding and expand the programme.

What needs to be done

Funds are needed so that the ECPE programme can be expanded to all the outer islands in the Republic.

Samoa

In Samoa, the most recent Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture's (MESC) Strategic Policies and Plan 2006 – 2015 states that: 'Government will continue to support the development of ECE. Parents, community and development partners are encouraged to continue their current role in the development of ECE'. The vision is: 'A quality early childhood education for all children between the ages of 3 – 5 in Samoa' (MESC Strategic Policies and Plan:18).

The Policy Statements for ECE are given below.

- The establishment of one ECE centre in a village will be encouraged.
- The Ministry will explore ways to fund ECE teachers' salaries.
- Teachers in ECE centres will be encouraged to enrol in ECE programmes offered by the NCECES, USP and the NUS.





- All ECE programmes should be guided by the approved National Curriculum.
- MESC will conduct in-service training for ECE in collaboration with NCECES.
- MESC and NCECES will collaborate in monitoring the quality of ECE centres. (MESC Strategic Policies and Plan:19)

The NGO, the National Council for early Childhood Education in Samoa (NCECES), was established in 1998. Their objectives are to:

- review the ECE Constitution
- provide training for pre-school teachers
- co-ordinate all activities on ECE in collaboration with MESC
- provide education for all children including those with special needs, through qualified teachers
- facilitate community involvement of early childhood education in the community
- increase service providers' knowledge through creating community awareness of services offered by NCECES
- actively promote principles of the Convention on Rights of Children.

The NCECES Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 covers provision of in-service and pre-service training, workshops on making resources, conducting ECE awareness programmes, classification of pre-schools according to the *Pre-School Standards*, and liaising with the Ministry on progress and future plans.

Within NCECES are several organisations, such as religious organisations, that run their own schools, and there are also village schools and private schools that operate independently. All pre-schools are responsible for hiring staff, for school resources, and for the fees paid by parents. A Minimum Standards Guideline has been formulated that all ECE centres must adhere to.

The Ministry worked with NCECES, has reviewed the national pre-school curriculum and plans to hold in-service training workshops for teachers. The curriculum has three sections. Section 1 focuses on the importance of child development; education in the early years; play; teachers, parents and the





community; health and safety issues; and special needs. Section 2 focuses on the child, the community, animals, machines and physical forces. Section 3 includes guidance for staff, safety and record keeping.

All registered ECCE centres are eligible to receive financial assistance from government grants, but as yet the government does not pay teachers' salaries, although it is considering this. Other funding comes from the Government of Canada and also from JICA, the EU, and the ADB. Links with the Samoa Umbrella for Non-government Organisations (SUNGO) and *Komiti Tumama* have enabled NCECES to access funds for training.

What needs to be done

Funding is urgently needed to develop learning resources, to run ECCE workshops for professional development, and to improve pre-school facilities. Currently, 40% of pre-schools do not have their own premises, operating in school halls, women's committee *fale* and private homes, and the NCECES head office and model school are in need of an upgrade. In addition, it is hoped that the government will find a way to pay teachers' salaries.

Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands Ministry of Education is about to finalise the research and formulation of their new ECCE policy, develop standards and regulations and conduct a baseline survey of all ECCE centres. Funding is sourced from the Solomon Island Government Recurrent Budget SI\$350,000, UNICEF, NZAID (to finalise the ECCE Policy), PRIDE (Standard and Regulations for Registration and Accreditation), and the EU through its provincial support. Financial support is also provided for sponsorship of ECCE training at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education and for teachers' salaries.

Tokelau

Tokelau has a Strategic Plan 2005 – 2006 which includes the strategy: '[to] develop standardised curriculum statements for each learning area from ECE to Year 11 adhering to the policies as outlined in the National Curriculum Policy Framework'.





ECCE is covered under the Tokelau National Curriculum Policy Framework, and is financed by the governments of Tokelau and New Zealand.

Tonga

It was royalty that initiated ECCE in Tonga; the first centre was established in 1965 following a request by King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, and the first Tonga Pre-school Association was established following a request from Queen Halaevalu Mata'aho in 1976. It is still going strong.

The Tonga Education Policy Framework (final draft) 2004–2019 (p 34), undertakes to appoint an ECCE officer (or officers); conduct a survey of pre-school provision in Tonga; register all pre-school centres; review the ECCE curriculum and develop culturally appropriate learning materials; develop and implement a training programme for early childhood teachers; set up pilot projects for community-based ECCE centres; and develop a policy for provision of subsidies for ECCE education. Subsequently, in 2006, the Tonga Early Childhood Advisory Committee was established. It was formed to consult with all early childhood providers, government stakeholders, church leaders and the MOE Management Committee and develop the ECCE Strategic Plan. The survey was completed in the same year and the Strategic Plan is based on this survey.

Also in 2006, the first ECCE officer was appointed and tasked with the job of working closely with the MOE, NGOs, the Tonga Institute of Education and all other ECCE stakeholders. There are currently six main NGO providers of ECE, who work with the MOE in planning and implementing programmes for all the centres. They each run their own programmes, but in 2007 they combined to support the development of the ECCE Policy Framework, the in-service training and the staff professional team.

Unlike most other PICs, the Tongan government has no budgetary allocation for ECCE. PRIDE funded the ECCE policy development and the in-service training for all the ECCE teachers. Salaries are paid by management committees, churches and communities.





Tonga raises awareness through the Parents as First Teachers programme (PAFT). This programme targets parents of 0 – 5 year-olds and is implemented through TV, radio and print.

What needs to be done

There is a need to develop ongoing pre- and in-service training programmes to encourage teachers to qualify and bring retired primary school teachers into the system. Development of good quality resources is another area that needs attention. A lot of work needs to be done to increase community participation in ECCE, and funds are needed to provide strong financial support and improve sustainability. Other needs are to improve the organisational structures and management of ECCE, and make the transition into primary school smooth by developing a transition programme. The Education Ministry's Early Childhood Sector needs a data system, and an ECE curriculum should be developed. Formal support by the government would help to achieve some or all of these.

Tuvalu

The (first draft) of *Tuvalu Te Kakeega II 2005-2015 National Strategies for Sustainable Development* (p 58) states:

Historically, the Government has not been involved with preschools, but is now considering a more supportive and regulatory role. The Government now provides annual grants for salaries of up to three qualified teachers in each registered preschool, support for preschool infrastructure, and materials have been provided through various donor programmes.

There is a government recurrent budgetary allocation for pre-school teachers' salaries of \$45,924 and a pre-school support allocation of \$20,000. In a strategy operational plan 2006 – 2010, designed to set out a phased programme of priority education policy and strategy reform, priority areas for ECCE are: teacher training; improving the existing permanent ECCE centres, all of which are run by their own management committees, at a rate of two centres annually; and developing ECCE curriculum guidelines. Activities which have already been implemented are





the drafting of an ECCE policy, funding two students to study full-time for the ECCE Diploma at USP's Tuvalu Centre, and improving two centres (the Vaimele Centre on Vaitupu Island and the Funafuti Centre). Currently, the National ECCE Council is working with the ECCE Teachers' Association to finalise the ECCE policy.

The ECCE Teachers' Association is very active, meeting monthly at different centres on Funafuti to do their own fund-raising and make teaching resources for the centres at their own expense.

What needs to be done

The upgrading of the existing centres needs to be continued according to plan, and there needs to be more collaboration among NGOs, government, the National ECE Council and other stakeholders so that activities are not duplicated.

Vanuatu

Vanuatu has an Education Master Plan 2000 – 2010, which states:

We intend to introduce vernacular-language education in the early years of the basic-education cycle ... We intend, over a period of ten years or more, to establish community-built and -maintained schools in virtually every village and hamlet, based on Vanuatu's hundreds of existing kindergartens wherever possible, in which a preparatory year and Grades 1 and 2 will be offered in the local vernacular language. ... This measure will enable the smaller children (ages 5-7) to continue to live in their homes and be taught by a teacher living in the village, known to everyone, and speaking the vernacular language. Teachers will be mature individuals who are respected in the community (e.g., retired teachers, community leaders) and who have completed at least ten years of education (pp 6,7).

Their Corporate Plan 2004 – 2006 (p 7) states: 'The Government of Vanuatu policy is to provide national access to basic education up to year 8, working towards ten years of education, including two years of Pre School, over the next decade.'





The Government Strategic Plan, launched in 2006 after the National Educational Summit and in line with the concept of the Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy, includes the following objectives:

- to achieve universal primary school completion
- to strengthen numeracy, literacy and life skills for all children 0 – 8 yrs
- to provide relevant and accessible curriculum materials and assessment systems
- to provide qualified, productive and well-supported teachers for every school
- to strengthen the professional competence of teachers.

There is no budgetary allocation for ECE. In recent years financing has come from UNICEF, the Norman-Kirk Memorial Fund and UNESCO.

Vanuatu has an NGO, the Pri Skul Asosiesen Blong Vanuatu, which plans to (a) have an early childhood centre at Emalus Campus USP by 2008/9, so that students taking ECE courses can use it for their practical training, (b) improve awareness of ECE from 0 – 3 years among teenage mothers, families and the wider community, and (c) encourage the use of the vernacular in centres and the wider community.

Provision for 0 – 3 year-olds

The Pri Skul Asosiesen Blong Vanuatu provides support and training to teenage mothers and caregivers, and raises awareness about ECCE.

Conclusion

These brief ‘snapshots’ of ongoing efforts to improve the provision of ECCE and the participants’ views about what still needs to be done show that efforts are being made to improve provision of ECCE, but that in every country there is still more to be done. More awareness-raising, more financial assistance from governments, better integration of local authorities and NGOs, better training of ECCE teachers, more community participation, and improved data collection will improve the situation. It is encouraging to see what has been achieved, and this workshop has informed, inspired and motivated participants to continue in their efforts.





5

Global and regional perspective: making a compelling case for early childhood care and education³

Maki Hayashikawa

The purpose of this chapter is to present a global and regional overview of the status and trends in early childhood care and education (ECCE). It summarises the main findings and discussions from the *Global Monitoring Report 2007* (GMR, 2007), pulls out some key issues in ECCE at global and regional levels, and highlights some critical areas that call for urgent action. The chapter is divided into four parts. The first part consists of a brief overview of the global progress towards achieving the *Education for All* (EFA) goals, as assessed in the current GMR, in order to have a better understanding of the broader context in which ECCE is being discussed, promoted and assessed around the world. The second part examines the global and regional status and trends in ECCE as reported in

3. This chapter is based on the PowerPoint presentation delivered at the Pacific Regional Workshop on 26 March 2007. The presentation built and expanded on the general presentation prepared by UNESCO Bangkok for the East Asia regional launching of the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007* in November 2007 in Bangkok, Thailand.





the GMR 2007. In the third part of this chapter, some key issues and challenges regarding ECCE are discussed, with more specific reference to the Asia-Pacific region context, and in the fourth and last part, some critical actions are suggested for consideration by countries in this region to realise EFA Goal 1 and place ECCE high on the national priority agenda.

Introduction

Expanding and improving ECCE is the first goal of the Dakar Framework of Action for Education for All adopted in 2000, with countries pledging their commitment to achieve the target by 2015. Since then, some important steps have been taken by several countries in the Asia-Pacific region towards meeting this goal. However, progress between and within countries in the region has been uneven and the situation continues to show vast diversity and disparities.

ECCE is an area that still lacks much evidence-based research and studies, especially in the developing countries, including the countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Even when studies are available, the scope and coverage are too limited to collectively provide a comprehensive picture on development in ECCE, globally and regionally.

The *Global Monitoring Report 2007*, the fifth in the series, focuses on this first EFA goal, with special attention to equity and inclusion in ECCE. In the absence of comprehensive studies and evidence-based research, this issue of the GMR probably gives us the best overall account of the status and trends in ECCE in the world and by regions today. All statistical data referred to in this chapter come from the *Global Monitoring Report 2007*, accessible on the Internet.

Overview on global progress in EFA

EFA goals and MDGs

In looking at global progress in EFA, it is worth revisiting the six EFA goals and the four Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that are typically associated with them in order to keep the focus of the issue and understand better what we are trying to achieve.





Table 1 EFA and MDGs goals

EFA Goals (abridged)	Corresponding MDGs
1. Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education.	1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary education by 2015.	2. Achieve universal primary education.
3. Promote learning and life skills programmes for youth and adults.	3. Promote gender equality and empower women.
4. Increase adult literacy by 50%.	4. Reduce child mortality.
5. Eliminate gender disparities by 2005 and achieve gender equality in education by 2015.	
6. Improve the quality of education.	

Placing the EFA goals and the MDGs side by side shows an important difference between the two sets of goals: the MDGs which make reference to education are more limited in scope and coverage than the EFA goals. For example, with regard to early childhood concerns, the corresponding goal of MDG is Goal 4: ‘Reduce child mortality’. Nowhere do the MDGs address the educational concerns of the child’s early years; the MDG addressing early childhood only partially covers what should be an area that is in fact a more holistic concern. Noticeable also is the fact that there is no goal on literacy in the MDGs.

This difference between the two sets of goals that guide our national development policies and strategies, including education, needs to be recognised and understood, as today there is a tendency of national governments to increasingly give more attention to the MDGs, even when making reference to their education sector goals. If progress is to be made in areas such as ECCE, gender parity or literacy, the commitments to achieving education for all by 2015 will need to be respected by countries, and all those engaged in basic education to promote EFA will have to ensure that the EFA goals are not lost sight of but are kept high up on the political agenda.





Progress with a mixed picture – Universal primary education and secondary education

The overall progress in EFA around the world is succinctly captured by the EFA Index (EDI), which was first introduced in the *Global Monitoring Report* of 2003/4. The EDI is a summary measure of a country's situation vis-à-vis four EFA goals, namely, universal primary education (UPE) (Goal 2), adult literacy (Goal 4), gender parity (Goal 5) and quality of education (Goal 6). ECCE (Goal 1) and the learning needs of youth and adults (Goal 3) are not included as measures for EDI, as data collected for these two goals are not standardised sufficiently. Each of the four goals (2, 4, 5 and 6) is represented by a proxy indicator ⁴ and the EDI is a simple average of the four indicators, varying between 0 and 1, with 1 representing EFA achievement.⁵

The *GMR 2007* reports the situation of 125 countries with data for all four indicators. (See Table 2.) Of the 125 countries, 47 countries are reported to have achieved or are very close to achieving, the four common and measurable EFA targets, as shown in the table below.

For the Pacific region, data have been available only for Fiji to measure the EDI, which, with an EDI of 0.966, belongs to one of the 47 countries that have achieved the EFA targets.

With regard to progress in access to primary education (Goal 2), improvements were seen in almost all countries which had a net enrolment ratio (NER) of below 85% in 1999. For the Pacific region, the NER was comparatively high with 90% (2004) in all countries except for Solomon Islands which reported an NER of 80%. In Fiji and Samoa, the NERs were reported as having declined during the period 1999-2004.

4. The four EFA proxy indicators are: the total primary net enrolment ratio (for UPE), the literacy rate for persons aged 15 and over (for adult literacy), the gender-specific EFA index (for gender parity and equality), and the survival rate to grade 5 (for quality of education).

5. *GMR 2007*, pages 64-65.





Table 2 EDI for 125 countries in nine regions

Regions	Far from EFA (EDI below 0.80)	Intermediate position (EDI between 0.80 and 0.94)	EFA achieved or close (EDI between 0.95 and 1.00)
Sub Saharan Africa	19	8	1
Arab States	4	11	1
Central Asia	0	2	4
East Asia/Pacific	2	6	3
South and West Asia	3	1	0
N.America/West Europe	0	2	17
Latin America/Caribbean	0	18	6
Central Europe/East Europe	0	2	15
Total	28	50	47

Source: *GMR 2007*

Despite the progress being made in the overall participation of children in primary school, the *GMR* reports that there are still an estimated 77 million children who are not in school—the so-called ‘out-of-school’ children.⁶ Although this is a reduction by 21 million from the 1999 figure, the high number implies that there are too many children who are unreached.

India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Ethiopia combined have the largest share of out-of-school children worldwide, with a total of 22.8 million out-of-school children. At the same time, it is important to note that the significant reduction in India between 2002 and 2004 actually contributed to the overall drop in the global figure. East Asia was the only region in the world where the number of out-of-primary school children increased between 1999 and 2004 from 6.4 million in 1999 to 9.3 million

6. In the *GMR 2007*, ‘out-of-school children’ is defined as those children who are not enrolled in either primary or secondary school. This is an expansion on the coverage of statistics, as the previous GMRs looked only at ‘out-of-primary-school children’ with corresponding figures.





in 2004. The Pacific region still had approximately 373,000 out-of-primary-school children in 2004, which represents a reduction of 72,000 from the figure in 1999.

The global estimate on out-of-school children understates the problem. Household survey data often show that, even when children are enrolled in school, many of them do not attend regularly, making them de facto out-of-school children who are likely to be missed out from the official data.

Secondary education is also an area that has been rapidly developing during the reported period 1999 and 2004. In the Pacific countries, the pressure on secondary education is greater than in countries in the East Asia and South and West Asia regions. The average gross enrolment ratio (GER) in the Pacific was 104% for 2004, which is substantially higher than the world average of 65% and 59% for developing countries. However, if we look at the individual country level, the GERs vary significantly, ranging from Australia with 149% to Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands that report less than 30%. Furthermore, the overall secondary GER often hides the disparities between the two stages of secondary education, namely lower and upper.

Literacy—an elusive goal

Compared to the progress being achieved in primary education, little progress has been made in achieving adult literacy. The *GMR 2007* concludes that literacy remains an ‘elusive goal’. A total of 778 million adults aged 15 and above are illiterate, with female adults accounting for two-thirds of the total. This translates to one in five adults and one in four for adult women who lack the basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy.

The vast majority of illiterates are found in South and West Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia, with four countries—China, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan—being home to more than half of the total adult illiterates in the world. In the Pacific region, the average literacy rate has been high at 93% but, as very few countries report data on adult literacy, the reliability of these data is uncertain. For those Pacific countries submitting data, namely, Papua New Guinea (57%) and Vanuatu (74%), adult literacy remains a challenge.





Gender parity—a missed target

Gender parity is the first target of EFA Goal 5—a target with the earliest deadline of 2005, which the world did not meet. Since then, acceleration in national efforts has been witnessed and progress around the world is reported in the current *GMR 2007*. However, the achievement of the gender parity target is not a reality even now. Aggregated regional data and even national data continue to hide gender disparities (e.g. comparatively few female teachers at secondary and tertiary levels) that persist in the teaching/learning process in classrooms, in textbooks, and in academic achievements and learning outcomes, as well as in the higher levels of the teaching profession and administration.

For the East Asia and the Pacific countries, the gender parity indices (GPIs) show that gender parity has been achieved *on average*. However, gender disparities do still remain, even at primary level, in a number of countries where the lowest enrolment rates are also found. Furthermore, the differences between the sexes become greater at higher levels of education, with a rather mixed picture at country level. In East Asia, the GPI for tertiary education on average was 0.88 in 2004, indicating that more males than females were enrolled in the region as a whole. However, in Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, gender disparities favoured females at tertiary level. In the Pacific countries, some gender disparities are still found in favour of boys, but the contrary is found in the Pacific at secondary and tertiary levels, as the GPI for the Pacific region at the tertiary level was 1.27, indicating that many more females than males were enrolled in tertiary education in all countries except Vanuatu.

Gender equality, which is the ultimate target of EFA Goal 5, is a still more difficult target for countries to meet, not only because it implies the need to challenge persisting gender stereotypes in curriculum and learning materials, but also because it necessarily requires an assessment of elements that are difficult to quantify and measure objectively, such as teachers' attitudes and expectations, which may differ with respect to girls and boys.





Looking at the exclusive dimension of EFA

The trends in the statistics reported in the *GMR 2007* overall clearly suggest that countries in all regions are making steady progress, with many countries coming increasingly close to achieving enrolment of all children. While this could be something that countries may wish to commend themselves for, they need to realise that trying to reach the remaining 20% or 10% is many times more difficult than what they have achieved so far. In order to strategise efforts in the right direction, national governments will need to identify those who are left out of school or remain outside the education system as a whole, and design policies and measures that specifically target them. Only by identifying those who are out-of-school and unreached by the system and understanding better who they are can governments prepare effective policies and measures to reduce the number of out-of-school children and make education for all a reality. In other words, they need to turn around their perspectives and understand the 'exclusive' dimensions in EFA. The *GMR 2007* attempts to highlight this point and examines the key features of those children who remain out-of-school, revealing a clear trend, as shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1(a) shows that a girl, living in a rural area, from a poor family with a mother who has no education is likely to have the smallest chance of being enrolled in school, whereas a child, girl or boy, from a rich urban family who has a mother with education would rarely be left out. These multiple disadvantages that characterise out-of-school children prevent them from ever reaching the classroom or, even if they do, prevent them from completing the primary cycle, as described in Figure 1(b). This has many implications for the important role that ECCE could have on improving the situation.

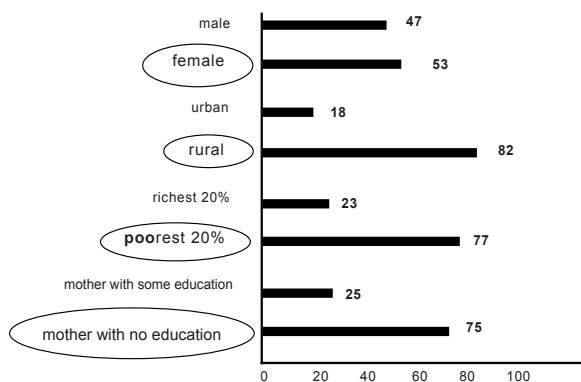
Another way to help visualise the exclusion dimension of primary school enrolment in the regional countries is to look at the situation of those who are not enrolled, based on the net enrolment rate (NER). By calculating the difference between the full enrolment rate of 100% and the current enrolment status, we can get net non-enrolled rates (NNER), as illustrated in Figure 2. This is essentially looking at the situation of those who are not enrolled, and represents the percentage of those children who will require special attention with specifically targeted policies and measures in order to be reached by the deadline of 2015.



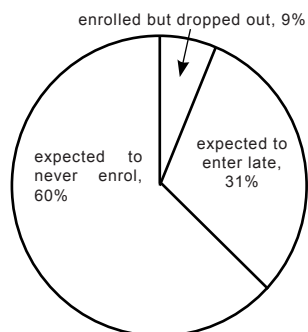


Figure 1 Looking from an exclusive dimension: who are the out-of-school children?

1(a) Distribution of out-of-school children, %, 2001

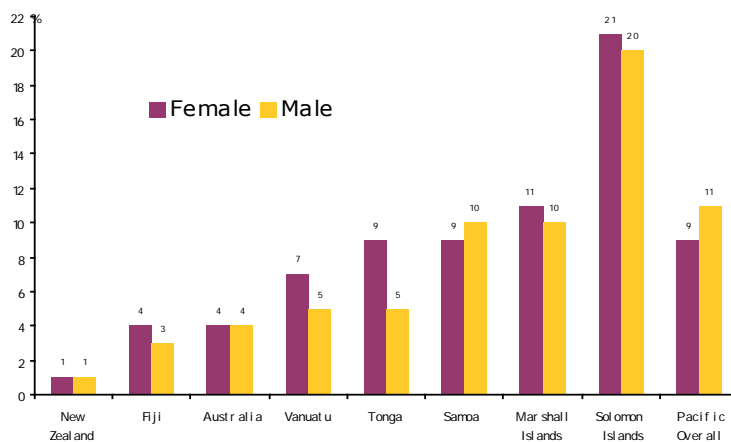


1(b) Implied importance of the impact of ECCE



Source: *GMR 2007*

Figure 2 Net non-enrolled rates in primary education (%) in the Pacific, 2004



Source: *GMR 2007*





Expansion continues at the expense of quality

Expansion of schooling has often occurred at the expense of quality around the world and this continues to be the case, particularly in East Asia, where many children may be enrolling in school today but fail to complete the cycle or reveal poor achievements in literacy and numeracy skills, with high incidence of grade repetition.

The *GMR* reports that, on the whole, the median of survival rates based on data available was below 80% for developing countries. Even in Latin America and the Caribbean, survival rates were reported to be less than 83% in the majority of the countries, despite the high level of access and school completion demonstrated. Less than two-thirds of students reach the last grade in the majority of the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and, in South and West Asia, school retention remains low in several of the countries with available data. It was only the Arab States—except Mauritania (69%), Morocco (76%) and Yemen (67%)—that had survival rates close to or above 90%.

The data on survival rates are not only an indication of the internal inefficiency of the education systems in many of the developing countries, but also provide evidence that students are not mastering the curriculum and acquiring and learning the knowledge and skills essential for their life beyond school.

Teachers are crucial to quality, yet...

EFA cannot be achieved if we do not have sufficient numbers of teachers who are qualified, well-trained and motivated. Without good quality teachers, we cannot ensure good quality education for all. Yet the *GMR 2007* reports that there had been only a slight improvement in both pupil:teacher ratios (PTR) and the percentage of trained teachers during the reporting period. There continues to be a serious shortage of teachers in rural areas, in the most remote areas and for the most disadvantaged population.

The shortage of female teachers reported by many countries is a major concern as their presence is known to be crucial in promoting increased enrolment and





completion in the education of girls. This is a particular concern for countries in the two regions of Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, where the percentage of female teachers in primary education in 2004 accounted only for 45% and 44% of the total number of respectively. Numerous studies now show that an increase in the number of female teachers in these regions can have a major impact on girls' participation, retention and achievement, so urgent measures are called for. Government efforts are needed to recruit and train more female teachers and deploy them through appropriate personnel policies that are gender and culture-sensitive.

In the Pacific, in primary education, women accounted for 60% (2004) of total primary school teachers, but some countries had less than 40%, while in Niue all the primary education teachers were female (100%). The region continues to show a rather mixed situation.

Global and regional status and trends in early childhood care and education

The *GMR 2007* focuses on ECCE and attempts to make a compelling case, based on available (official) data, research and studies. It does this by presenting various arguments for investing in ECCE and highlighting its multiple benefits from the perspectives of child development, social and economic development, educational achievements, as well as human rights to ECCE. With these arguments, the *GMR* brings to us two key messages: (i) ECCE is a strong foundation for life and for learning, and (ii) ECCE has multiple benefits that are not limited to the early years but continue long after.

Why ECCE now?

But why ECCE now? As a way of answering this question, the *GMR 2007* first reminds us that, despite the progress reported on the indicators for women and children, as well as by the EFA indicators, young children today are still living under threat.

- A child born in the developing world today has a 40% chance of living in extreme poverty.





- Each year, 10.5 million under-5 children die, most of them from preventable diseases.
- High under-5 mortality rates persist in Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia.
- In developing countries, 31% of children are moderately or severely stunted.
- Each day 1,800 children are infected with HIV.
- More and more children are found to be living in situations of emergency, conflict and post-conflict, making them highly vulnerable.

(PowerPoint presentation, UNESCO Bangkok)

Many of the risks could be prevented if adequate measures and actions were taken by governments in a timely manner. If no action is taken now, a huge potential and golden opportunity for reducing poverty and achieving the MDG health and education goals as well as the EFA goals will be lost.

ECCE is a human right

Care and education of the young child is an international obligation, not just a family affair or the concern of social workers or pre-school educators. This international obligation is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is today the most widely ratified human rights treaty that commits countries to guarantee the survival, protection and care of children. Governments signing to this Convention are the first and foremost duty bearers with the responsibility to ensure the provision of adequate and quality early childhood care and education for their young children, and especially for those disadvantaged and vulnerable children,⁷ who are essentially the holders of the right to receive such care and education and to benefit from quality ECCE services.

7. In line with the *GMR 2007*, 'disadvantaged and vulnerable children' referred to in this chapter includes children with physical, emotional and learning disabilities; children in emergencies; working children in exploitative conditions; malnourished and undernourished children; street children, orphans, children in institutions; children affected by HIV/AIDS; children in linguistic, ethnic, cultural minorities and indigenous children; migrant and nomad children; and unregistered children. However, countries may define these groups of children in different ways, and may not necessarily cover all of these categories, or may include more.





ECCE is certainly important in itself; as studies have shown, the early years are critical in the formation of intelligence, personality and social behaviours. They are also the most vulnerable time, and the effects of early neglect can be cumulative. The *GMR 2007* highlights the close relationship between nutrition and education, and argues that combined interventions can have a strong impact on improving the chances of participation, retention and learning achievements of a child in later education. This clearly implies that achieving EFA Goal 1 on ECCE is a necessary condition for achieving the rest of the EFA goals, having the most direct impact on the goal of achieving universal primary education.

Taking a holistic approach to ECCE

Thus, the *GMR 2007* adopts a holistic definition of ECCE, whereby ECCE is understood as covering care, health and nutrition; education to support children's survival, growth and learning; and cognitive, social, physical and emotional development. Taking this comprehensive, holistic approach draws attention to the facts that learning begins at birth and the early years continue into the initial years of primary education (hence covering the age group of 0-8 years old).

This holistic definition of ECCE also implies that ECCE is not just a right recognised in the Convention on the Rights of the Child but is also an instrument for guaranteeing other rights of children, including the right to education; the right to protection and security; cultural, political and economic rights; and the right to be free from social and economic exclusion and inequality.

From an economic point of view, many studies—mostly carried out in developed countries—have shown that investment in ECCE programmes offers a payoff in terms of human capital. The *GMR 2007* cites one of the most famous studies in this respect, the High/Scope Perry study⁸ that was carried out in the 1960s in the United States. The study was undertaken in order to illustrate that investment in ECCE has positive economic returns and, consequently, may reduce social inequality and compensate for the vulnerability and disadvantage resulting from

8. 'High/Scope Perry Preschool programme 1962-1967': A longitudinal study that followed participants and a control group from the age of 3 and 4 through to age 40 to assess the returns to investment in ECCE. *GMR 2007*, p.112, Box. 5.3 for further details.





poverty, as well as for discrimination stemming from gender, race, ethnicity, caste or religion. These studies have been convincing enough to lead a Nobel economics prizewinner, James Heckman, to observe that:

[I]t is a rare public policy initiative that promotes fairness and social justice and at the same time promotes productivity in the economy and in society at large. Investing in disadvantaged young children is such a policy (Heckman, 2006, cited in *GMR 2007*: 114).

Progress in EFA Goal 1: ECCE

Today, there are 738 million children (approximately 11% of the total world population) that belong to the 0 – 5 age group, and this number is expected to reach 776 million by 2020.

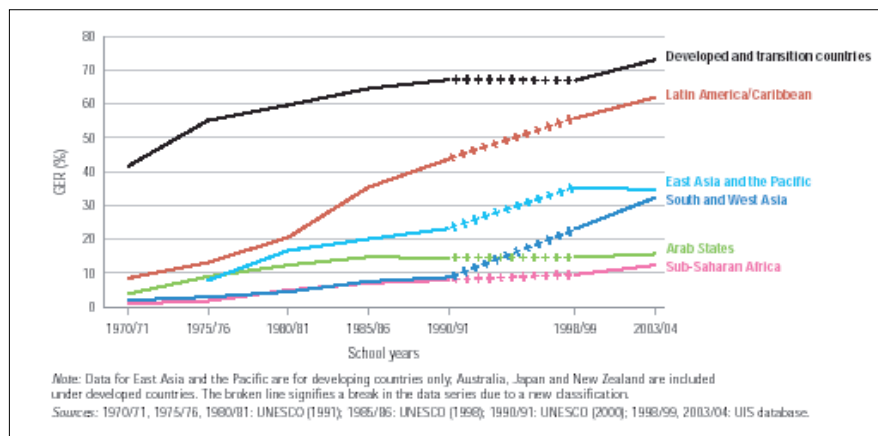
Data from 2004 show that around 124 million children were enrolled in some sort of pre-primary education programmes, either formal or non-formal. This is a 10.7% increase over the 1999 figure. In the developed countries, the gross enrolment rate (GER) for pre-primary education in 2004 was 77%, while the figure was significantly less in developing countries with only 32% GER. Here there were huge regional differences: with the highest GER of 101% in Latin America and the Caribbean and the lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa, with 12.4%. Pre-primary education has seen noticeable expansion in East Asia and the Pacific between 1980 and 1990 and in South and West Asia in the 1990s and 2000s. There was a slight decline in East Asia, mainly due to trends in China. The Central Asian countries, where enrolments in pre-primary education declined in the early 1990s, have not yet recovered.

Figure 3 shows the global trend by region in pre-primary enrolment, a clear trend of steady increase in all regions, showing that, worldwide, the number of children in pre-primary education has tripled since 1970. However, regional differences remain. Participation is still very low in Sub-Saharan Africa, South/West Asia, and the Arab States.





Figure 3 Regional trends in pre-primary gross enrolment ratios (GER)



In the Pacific, while the regional average GER for pre-primary education (for children aged three and over) was 72%—a 14% increase from that in 1999 (at 58%)—the GERs by individual country show huge variations, ranging from countries reporting near full enrolment, such as Australia, Cook Islands, New Zealand, Niue and Tuvalu, to countries where pre-primary education figures remain considerably low, such as Fiji at 16%, Timor-Leste at 11% and Tonga at 23% (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 Gross enrolment ratios (GER) in pre-primary education (%) in the Pacific (1999, 2004)

Country	1999	2004	Country	1999	2004
Timor-Leste		11	Palau	63	64
Fiji	17	16	Kiribati		68
Tonga	30	23	Nauru		71
Solomon Islands	35	41	Cook Islands	86	91
Samoa	51	49	New Zealand	88	92
RMI		50	Niue	154	97
Vanuatu	49	52	Tuvalu		99
PNG	35	59	Australia		102

Source: *GMR 2007*





When it comes to gender parity in ECCE, the gap between the sexes is small in most countries. However, gender parity in ECCE needs to be treated carefully and the statistics should not be interpreted casually; they provide no reason for celebration.

The gender gap is small because pre-primary ratios are relatively low to start with and most children enrolled are from wealthier households, where the gender factor does not always strongly influence the chances of a child enrolling in pre-primary education.

Achieving gender parity is certainly a positive sign, but it carries the risk of reducing the urgency and level of attention on achieving gender equality. The general tendency of governments in many countries, particularly in East Asia and the Pacific, is to claim that they have no more gender issues in education once gender parity is achieved. Governments are often ignorant of the fact that gender parity in terms of gross enrolment in pre-primary education tells us only that there are equal numbers of girls and boys enrolled in the programme, and nothing more. It does not tell us how many children are not enrolled, nor does it reveal the gender stereotypes in the curriculum, or in teachers' attitudes and expectations regarding the way girls and boys learn, develop and interact, which may influence the way in which children learn to perceive gender roles in their society.

The *GMR 2007* also illustrates how countries are trying to expand and improve the quality of their ECCE provisions in order to meet the first EFA goal. For example, as more studies are made on the importance of mother tongue education and its positive impact on performance in the early primary grades, several countries in the Asia Pacific region, such as Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea and Vietnam, have developed effective bilingual early childhood programmes. Slightly over half of the world's countries, and in the Asia Pacific region, 26 of the 35 countries with data, now have at least one formal ECCE programme for children under three years old. This development is accompanied by improvements in the social welfare of working mothers, as about 80% of developing countries today have some form of legally established maternity leave, though implementation may vary. In the Pacific region, however, only two countries (Australia and New





Zealand) are reported to have a statutory duration of maternity leave, despite the fact that in many of these countries more than half of the labour force is female, but there is hardly any provision for the under-3s. In East Asia, eight countries have 8 to 20 weeks legal maternity leave.

Still limited access

On the whole, despite progress documented in some parts of the world, access to ECCE is still very limited and factors affecting access are found to be multiple and complex. Many of these factors are the same as those found for the non-enrolment of children in schools, i.e. the lack of mother's education; place of residence, with rural areas being at particular disadvantage; the absence of early childhood programmes/centres near the child's home; and lack of birth certificates, which often results in marginalisation and discrimination of children in society. At the root of these factors lies poverty; statistics show a clear trend of higher attendance for children from richer households, compared to those from poorer households.

This is the dilemma, and a challenge that the sector continues to face, as it is the disadvantaged and vulnerable children who stand to benefit most from early childhood programmes.

ECCE, a diverse field

ECCE is found to be a diverse field, perhaps due to the very nature of its activities. It involves both public and private providers and can be formal, non-formal, and even informal. The status of policy development on ECCE varies widely across countries; some have no policy at all on early childhood, others have only a loose policy framework, and yet others have a highly comprehensive and sophisticated policy promoting holistic ECCE.

The levels of public and private provision of early childhood programmes can be seen in Table 3, based on 2004 data for 154 countries. In the Pacific, the role of the private sector in providing pre-primary education varied widely. For example, in Fiji all pre-primary education was run by private institutions, while in the Cook Islands, the Marshall Islands, Nauru and Tonga, the public sector predominated in the provision of pre-primary education, accounting for 80% or more of the total enrolment.





Table 3 Private pre-primary enrolment as a percentage of total enrolment, 2004

Region	Number of countries according to % of private pre-enrolment as of total enrolment		
	Low (0% to 32%)	Medium (33% to 66%)	High (67% to 100%)
Sub-Saharan Africa	8	7	12
Arab States	3	4	13
Central Asia	8		
East Asia and the Pacific	7	6	5
South and West Asia	1	2	1
Latin America/Caribbean	19	8	12
North America/West Europe	11	8	1
Central and Eastern Europe	18		
Total	75	35	44

Source: *GMR 2007*

Issues and challenges in ECCE—a focus on the Asia / Pacific region

It is evident that there are still many issues and challenges that need to be addressed in early childhood care and education, both at the policy level and the implementation level. The environment in which ECCE must be provided is already a major challenge in itself.

- Millions of children still live with no access to basic immunisation, clean water, adequate food and early stimulation that are needed for survival, growth and development, and ECCE coverage remains considerably lower for developing countries, with striking differences among and within the regions of Asia and the Pacific. There are large disparities in access to ECCE between the rich and the poor and between urban and rural communities.
- There is a serious lack of awareness among policy-makers that those who benefit the most from ECCE are young children who live in situations of extreme poverty, social exclusion, rural or remote areas, with mothers without education.





- ECCE data collection is generally inadequate; as a result it has been difficult to monitor progress fully in developing countries, especially as providers, forms and delivery modes are so diverse.
- With UPE high on the agenda for many donors, ECCE is not given priority among most donor agencies; allocations for pre-primary education are often less than 10% of the allocation for primary education. Given the limited resources available, ECCE is not a priority for many countries.

These are only some of the many challenges that ECCE faces today. The overall implication is that ECCE is not yet given the attention it deserves, despite the multiple benefits at all levels and aspects of educational, social and economic development.

The policy neglect

ECCE is the first goal of EFA, but it has not been the first priority for most governments. The fundamental cause of this situation is the policy neglect in ECCE, worldwide, but particularly in the Asia/Pacific region. This policy neglect can be attributed to a number of reasons, some of which are given below.

- The ECCE sector tends to respond more slowly to social and economic trends; the role of the family versus the role of the state is still very much under debate.
- Despite the diversity of the sector, few countries have a national framework or mechanism to coordinate ECCE programmes, so ECCE tends to function with fragmented plans and strategies, especially with regard to the educational and non-educational aspects of ECCE.
- Child development research results are not well known, and there is a lack of rigorous studies in developing countries.
- Government priority remains with primary education and is shifting towards secondary education in many countries in East Asia and the Pacific. International aid focuses on these education levels accordingly.

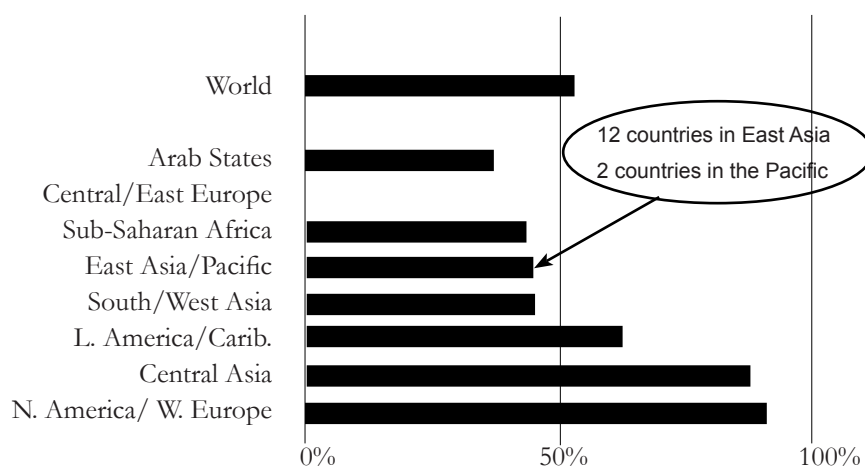




Programmes for 0 – 3 years: the neglected area

As emphasised earlier, a holistic approach to ECCE acknowledges that learning begins at birth and continues into the initial years of primary education, covering the 0 – 8 years age-group. In most countries, this wide age range is divided into three development stages of a child, namely 0 – 3 years, 3 – 6 years and 6 – 8 years, with the recognition and expectation that some form of corresponding programme and provision for each stage will be developed. However, as the *GMR 2007* reveals, many countries in the Asia/Pacific region are found to have no or very few formal programmes and provisions targeting the 0 – 3 year-olds, the youngest and most vulnerable age group in early childhood. Earlier, this chapter referred to the fact that slightly over half the world's countries today have some form of formal provisions for the under-3s as a positive development in ECCE. If we turn this argument around, it also means that nearly half of the world's countries still do not have not any formal ECCE programmes for the under-3s, as Figure 5 shows.

Figure 5 Percentage of countries with formal ECCE programmes for the under-3s



Source: *GMR 2007*





With a closer look at the Asia/Pacific countries, of the 35 countries with information on this, 26 countries reported having at least one formal programme targeting children under the age of three, while nine countries reported having none so far. Of the 18 Pacific Island countries, data are very limited and only two countries, Australia and New Zealand, reported having some formal programmes for the under-3s.

Table 4 Official programmes targeting children under three years old

Region	Countries with provision for the under-3s	Countries without provision for the under-3s
South and West Asia	India, Iran, Maldives, Pakistan (4)	Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal (3)
East Asia	Cambodia, China, DPRK, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam (12)	Macao, China (1)
Pacific	Australia, New Zealand (2)	Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands (4)
Central Asia	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan (8)	Tajikistan (1)

Source: *GMR 2007*

Gender issues in ECCE

The gender issue in ECCE is a concern that continues to be neglected and understated, even in the *GMR 2007* (although this is partly due to the lack of information and data needed to make a stronger case). The fact that the gender gap is small in ECCE actually creates more concern than celebration, as pointed out earlier. When a country achieves gender parity, that government is led to believe that there are no more gender issues in education—or in this case in ECCE.

If we look beyond the parity concern, it is easily observed that ECCE programmes are also often not gender-sensitive and responsive, and that gender stereotypes in the curriculum, learning materials and teachers' attitudes and expectations continue to characterise many ECCE practices.





Gender issues in ECCE are also deeply embedded in the teaching profession, as ECCE tends to be a highly feminised profession. In most countries in the world, particularly in the Asia/Pacific region, more than 90% of the ECCE workforce is female. The feminisation of the ECCE teaching force occurs as it is a sector that is closely linked to the gender stereotyped societal value where caring for young children is traditionally associated with women as mothers; hence a general belief that female teachers are better than men in ECCE. This encourages the persistence of gender stereotypes in ECCE and gender-socialisation. Furthermore, the feminisation of a profession is often found to be linked to lower social status and remuneration of the workers engaged in the profession. This is true for ECCE workers.

The quality concern

There are a number of quality issues that need to be highlighted. One relates to teacher quality. In most developed countries in the west, two years of pre-primary education are widely offered and in some cases are either free or subsidised by the government. Children are taught by highly trained professionals, assisted by childcare workers and part-time volunteers. However, where countries have implemented policies to expand and upgrade the ECCE workforce, progress has been uneven. In developing countries, ECCE staff are poorly trained and poorly paid. Another issue concerns regulatory practices. There is a lack of regulation and minimum acceptable standards applied to providers of ECCE to ensure quality of services and provisions. Relating quality to equity, ECCE programmes in urban areas tend to have more trained teachers with better facilities and care. They are mostly private and cater for those rich families who can afford the fees.

The Way Forward

The compelling case for ECCE has been made globally and regionally with the *GMR 2007*. ECCE is the first goal of EFA and is also recognised as a requisite for achieving the other EFA goals, as children who have access to ECCE are more likely to enrol and stay in school, learn what is taught effectively and perform well. However, ECCE is a sector that still faces some resistance from the education sector and also, despite being the first goal of EFA, governments have a tendency





not to regard ECCE as part of basic education. With the challenges and issues identified earlier, it is high time the international community took action. The last part of this chapter suggests some critical actions that could be considered by countries.

a) Fostering strong ECCE policies

The first step in the right direction to expand and improve the quality of ECCE programmes and provisions is to foster strong and comprehensive ECCE policies that will capture the holistic and broad scope of ECCE, especially if a country is yet to have a policy on ECCE. A comprehensive ECCE policy will necessarily call for effective coordination of all stakeholders in ECCE and clearly define what early childhood means in a given country/local context. An effective and viable policy needs to state clearly the vision and missions for ECCE from a human rights perspective, and spell out a set of objectives that a government would be committed to achieve, such as:

- to provide healthcare, immunisation, feeding and nutrition
- to support parents through information-sharing and parenting education
- to create a safe environment so that young children can play and socialise with their peers
- to compensate for disadvantage and foster the resilience of vulnerable children
- to promote school readiness and prepare children for primary school
- to provide custodial care for children of working parents and for other family members
- to strengthen communities and social cohesion.

Developing the policy will also require the right political environment. Such an environment could have:

- strong political commitment and endorsement for ECCE at the top level
- multiple players in national early childhood policy grouping
- a lead agency to coordinate early childhood policies
- ECCE considered as an integral part of national development documents, such as periodic development plans and poverty reduction strategy papers.





An ECCE policy could address the following issues as policy elements:

- staffing, training and standards for all providers
- explicit provision for disadvantaged and vulnerable children
- partnerships: NGOs, the private sector and international agencies
- financing: higher spending, targeting and more aid.

Any government policy for ECCE must recognise that providing good quality ECCE is a human right of all children.

b) Finding a funding balance

In view of the limited resources available to ECCE, there is a need to find a reasonable balance, so that the limited resources can be allocated to the children in most need. ECCE is necessarily an enterprise where funding comes from both the public and private sectors. With the reality that less than 10 % of public education spending goes to pre-primary education, and given the fact that even in OECD countries, parents' share can run up to 60 %, universal coverage of ECCE can only be realised if it is complemented by extra support to disadvantaged children.

Given the shortage of financial resources, governments need to introduce more targeted and prioritised strategies for funding and to expand ECCE provision by phases, as relevant and needed. Such a targeted approach to ECCE provision could be based on income or geographical location (e.g. remote areas, urban slums), or directed to specific groups, such as the disabled, ethnic minorities, girls, or those in emergency situations.

Whatever funding strategy may be adopted, the important consideration is to ensure equity of access and in the types and forms of programmes and provisions for all children and their families.

c) The quality concern

There is a need to recruit ECCE staff, retain them, and ensure better training and support for them. Some countries have started to introduce more flexible entry routes to higher education and teacher training but more measures need to be in place.





Whether the programmes are provided by the public sector or by the private sector, the government has the responsibility to develop a minimum acceptable standard applicable to all programmes, and to introduce quality regulations to all providers. Some countries in East Asia have started efforts to develop national quality standards for ECCE programmes and to assess the quality of programmes using a standardised instrument. In others, including the Pacific countries, even if quality regulations are in place, the lack of resources prevents sufficient inspection and monitoring of their enforcement.

d) Moving towards gender equality in ECCE

Gender equality must start young; early childhood is a period when perceptions of what is masculine and what is feminine take hold. Gender stereotyping can be addressed through pedagogy, teaching and play if curricula and learning materials are gender responsive and free of gender bias. Gender responsive ECCE can include, for example, a more gender balanced recruitment of teachers/care-givers. This can offer gender balanced role models for both girls and boys, challenging the assumption that the care of young children is the sole responsibility of women; men/fathers play an equally important role in bringing up children. Having more male workers and teachers in this field may also encourage more fathers to be involved in their children's upbringing.

The availability of more gender responsive toys and having girls and boys play together is another example. If both girls and boys play with kitchenware toys, this will demonstrate to boys and girls that household work is the equal responsibility of both men and women. Such games will provide equal stimulation for both boys and girls, and will encourage the imagination and creativity without imposing any gender bias. Making ECCE programmes more gender responsive can have the additional benefit of relieving older sisters from caring for their younger siblings, a common barrier to girls' schooling.

Gender stereotyping begins with the ECCE teachers themselves. Therefore, it is imperative to introduce gender training in all pre-service and in-service training of ECCE workers.





Gender-sensitive and responsive ECCE can thus lay a strong foundation for gender equality in later education and promote gender equality beyond education.

e) Inclusive ECCE is a must

EFA must, by definition, be inclusive and, as part of EFA, so must ECCE. The *GMR*, giving special attention to equity and inclusion in ECCE, repeatedly emphasises that policies and programmes to overcome exclusion in formal school settings through an inclusive approach are indispensable. The Report also implies that the impact of multiple benefits of ECCE can promote a broader concept of inclusive education from primary school onwards.

An inclusive approach to ECCE can help offset disadvantage and overcome exclusion. Inclusive ECCE means that programmes are planned to fit the children—not the other way around. They need to be child-seeking and child-friendly as well, while teacher-friendliness should not be overlooked. ECCE programmes need to take into account the mother tongue of the child, make available specific and targeted support for children needing extra assistance, ensure a child-friendly environment in the ECCE programmes, with learning and play materials that are appropriate for the child's physical and cognitive development.

f) Increased attention to the under-3s

As already mentioned, the issue of 0 – 3 year-olds is one of the key challenges in ECCE, particularly for the Pacific region. While there has been great progress in pre-primary education, access to ECCE programmes for younger children is limited in many countries in the region, which poses a challenge in meeting their basic health, nutrition, development and learning needs. There should be stronger emphasis on taking a holistic approach to ECCE in the region through effective partnerships among the different stakeholders, reminding ourselves that learning does indeed begin at birth.

g) Smoothing transition: family→ECCE→primary school

ECCE lays the foundation for successful transition to and completion of primary school. Child health and nutrition are closely linked to learning opportunities in early childhood and promotes later achievements in school and lifelong learning.





If ECCE prepares children for school, then schools also need to be ready to welcome children and facilitate the transition into primary education, and for this some suggestions are given below.

- Integrate ECCE more closely with primary school.
- Assure continuity in the curriculum.
- Recognise the role of parents and community and engage parents in school activities.
- Use the mother tongue in ECCE and continue in the early grades of primary school.
- Introduce measures to assure professional continuity between pre-primary and primary levels, through such things as joint training and equal professional status.

h) Ensuring coordination

Lastly, whatever the field may be called, the main concern should be to ensure that we are all talking about the same thing: a holistic approach to quality provision of care and education for the 0 – 8 age group. The development of a common language, name or terminology can be facilitated by having a shared vision, one that can guide us in meeting the significant challenges that ECCE faces.

And... ACTION NOW!

What is needed now is action—a compelling case for ECCE has clearly been made. The *GMR* concludes with a list of nine recommendations that warrant urgent policy attention and with which this chapter will also conclude.

1. Act on all goals: early childhood, literacy and primary school.
2. Act with urgency.
3. Emphasise equity and inclusion.
4. Increase public spending and focus it better.
5. Increase aid to basic education and allocate it where most needed.
6. Move ECCE up national and international agendas.
7. Increase public financing for ECCE and target it better.
8. Upgrade the ECCE workforce.
9. Improve the monitoring of ECCE.





6

Six reasons to support early childhood care and education

Junko Miyahara

There are six compelling reasons to support and invest in early childhood development and this chapter discusses them in the context of child rights, scientific rationale, social/gender equity, economic benefits, social mobilisation and a way to achieve international developmental goals, with a specific focus placed on the scientific rationale.

Ensuring children's rights from the start of life

Early childhood is a critical period for realising children's rights. Ensuring the right of every child throughout the early childhood years (from birth to the transition to primary school)⁹ is an obligation of all carers, including parents and primary caregivers, communities and various service providers, governments and civil society as a whole.

9. The CRC's General Comment No 7 (2005) defines early childhood years from birth and throughout infancy, including pre-school years as well as during the transition to school.





While there are several human rights instruments specific to children's rights, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) is the most widely ratified human rights treaty specifying rights of children in the world. It rests on four general principles and rights in early childhood:

- the right to life, survival and development to 'the maximum extent possible' (Article 6)
- the right to protection from discrimination (Article 2)
- the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration (Article 3)
- the right to express views and those views to be given 'due weight' (Article 12).

Recognising parental responsibilities for the child 'to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance' (Article 5), the *CRC* also notes that signatories should '...render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children' (Article 18).

Other articles relevant for young children include: health and social services (Article 24), standard of living (Article 27), education (Article 28), aims of education (Article 29), and leisure, recreation and cultural activities (Article 31). Several other articles¹⁰ specifically recognise the rights of children in need of special protection.

Children's rights are also guaranteed in the *Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All (EFA)*, the 1990 World Summit for Children and the 1994 *UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. There are also complementary rights guaranteed in the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*.

10. Abuse and neglect (Article 19), children without families (20, 21), refugees (22), children with disabilities (23), harmful work (32), substance abuse (33), sexual abuse and exploitation (34), sale, trafficking and abduction of children (35), deviant behaviour and lawbreaking (40). See General Comment No7. (*CRC, 2005*) for further explanation of these articles in relation to young children.





Scientific rationale

Vast amounts of research from the fields of physiology, nutrition, health, sociology, psychology, and education continue to confirm the evidence that the early years of life are the most crucial periods for healthy development and well-being. Children are born with physical, social and psychological capacities that allow them to communicate, learn, and develop. If these capacities are not recognised and supported during the early childhood years, they will wither rather than flourish. Research (e.g. Shore, 1997) suggests that most of the development of intelligence in children occurs before the age of seven, with the first three years being particularly important, as this is when development occurs more rapidly than at any other stage in life.

Development is multi-determined and varies as a function of the child's nutritional and biomedical status, genetic inheritance, and social and cultural context. From the moment of conception, important developments occur that affect the brain, the physical body and the chemistry of the child.

Brain development

The early childhood years are particularly critical in terms of brain maturation, determining how the brain (and the child) will further develop and function throughout life.

At birth, a child's brain is small, but it contains about 100 billion neurons (or nerve cells)—all the cells it will ever have. However, at this stage, most of these neurons are not connected to each other and cannot function on their own. After birth, no new neurons are formed in most regions of the brain. Instead, the brain produces trillions of synapses that connect each neuron and form neural pathways, which allows all of the various areas of the brain to communicate and function together in a coordinated way. During the first two to three years of life, the number of synapses increases twenty-fold. The formation of new synapses occurs throughout life (the brain producing more synapses than it will ever use), but is at its peak during the first three years.

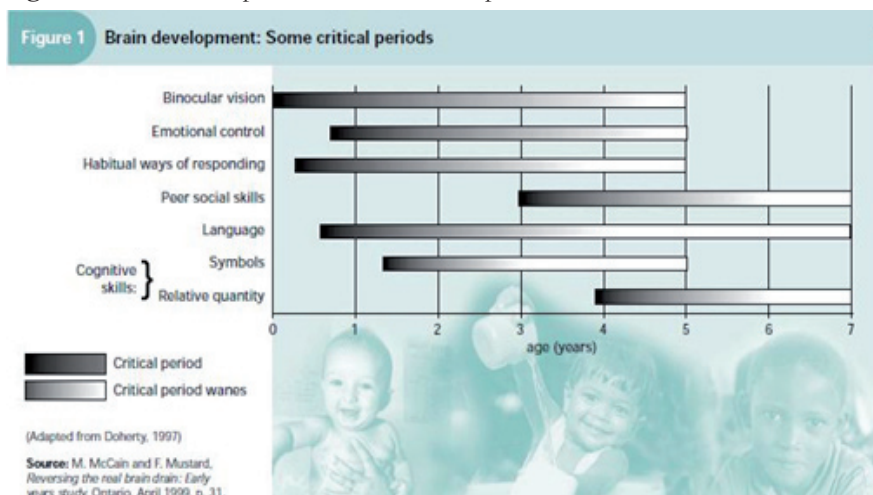




While new synapses are constantly being formed, others that are not used start to be eliminated or pruned away around the time of one's first birthday. By keeping only the connections that are frequently used, pruning actually increases efficiency of brain work. (It is also true that 'over-pruning' can occur when a child is deprived of normally expected experiences in these years.) The pruning of synapses continues throughout the childhood years as the different areas of the brain develop.

As shown in Figure 1, critical periods are stages of development for particular parts or functions of the brain, when the brain is most open to new experiences. Early childhood, therefore, is a period of time when a child's experiences have a great effect on the child's development and learning. How people around the child provide all-round care and developmentally appropriate stimulation in a safe and nurturing environment really matters.

Figure 1 Some critical periods of brain development



Source: *The State of the World's Children*, UNICEF 2001, page 17

Providing opportunities for complex perceptual and motor experiences at an early age favourably affects various learning abilities in later life and can even compensate,





at least partly, for deficits associated with early malnutrition (The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, 1996). By age six, most of these connections are made (or not, as the case may be). This means that if these sensitive periods pass by without the brain receiving the stimulation for which it is primed, opportunities for various kinds of learning may be substantially reduced.

The brain's malleability also means that there are times when negative experiences or the absence of good or appropriate stimulation are more likely to have serious and sustained effects. For example, when children do not get the care they need during developmental prime times, or if they experience starvation, abuse or neglect, their brain development may be compromised and such negative experiences may leave a lasting imprint on young minds, thereby contributing to the compromised child's developmental outcome.

The recent series on 'Child development in developing countries'¹¹ published in The Lancet (Grantham-McGregor, Cheung, Cueto, Glewwe, Richter & Strupp, 2007) states that young children (especially those in developing countries) are faced with multiple risk factors, which have a detrimental effect on all domains of development: cognitive, language, motor and social-emotional. The risk factors include poverty, malnutrition and poor health, and unstimulating home environments. The review estimates that more than 200 million children under five years of age fail to reach their potential due to such causes.

Poverty

Poverty puts young children and their families at a disadvantage in all aspects relating to the quality of life. Relating to the risk factors for poor child development, poverty is usually associated with inadequate food, poor sanitation and poor hygiene, all of which lead to increased infections and stunting (small height-for-age, which is caused by chronic undernutrition) in children. Poverty

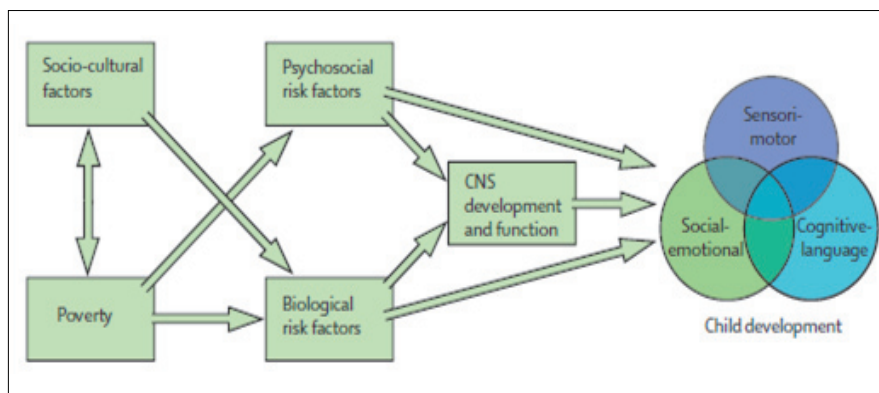
11. The Lancet 2007 'Child development in developing countries' series consists of three reviews, (1) Developmental potential in the first 5 years for children in developing countries, (2) Child development: risk factors for adverse outcomes in developing countries, and (3) Strategies to avoid the loss of developmental potential in more than 200 million children in the developing world.





is also associated with poor maternal education, increased maternal stress and depression, and inadequate stimulation in the home. As poor families are often faced with multiple risk factors simultaneously, the developmental deficits of young children will increase with the number of such risk factors. Poor development leads to poor school achievement, which is further exacerbated by inadequate schools and poor family support (due to economic stress and little knowledge and appreciation of the benefits of education). Such being the case, the vicious cycle of poverty continues. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2 Pathways from poverty to poor child development



Source: Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007

Biological factors: nutrition and health

Intra-uterine growth restriction (Maternal nutrition and health)

Intra-uterine growth restriction indicates constraints in foetal nutrition during a crucial period for brain development, particularly in developing countries, due to poor maternal nutrition and infections (Walker, Wachs, Gardner, Lozoff, Wasserman, Pollitt & Carter, 2007). Babies born to ‘at risk’ mothers (e.g. small, young, underweight and anaemic) in a state of poor nutrition run a greater risk of having a low birth weight. Many studies indicate the association between low birth weight and developmental deficits, especially in the cognitive domain, up to three years of age, and a few studies (in developed countries) report that the effects remain into adolescence (Breslau, Paneth &





Lucia, 2004) and adulthood (Strauss, 2000). Special care for pregnant mothers is vital—adequate food (quantity and quality), prevention from illness and infectious diseases, and a nurturing and stress-free environment. Such care for those ‘at risk’ mothers can break the intergenerational cycle of compromised growth and development.

Childhood under-nutrition

Stunting is caused by poor nutrition, often compounded by infectious diseases. Growth faltering begins soon after birth, 6 – 24 months being a critical period for babies who are normal at birth (and in-utero for babies born to ‘at risk’ mothers). It can continue to around 40 months, after which it levels off, but most stunted children remain stunted through to adolescence and adulthood.

Stunting is caused not only by inadequate food intake but also by infections, intestinal parasites (due to poor sanitation and hygiene), diarrhoea and illnesses that can interfere with the processes of digestion, absorption and transportation of nutrients to the cells.

Many studies have noted significant associations between early stunting and later cognitive ability, school performance and drop-out rates. Compared to non-growth-retarded children, stunting and being underweight are also associated with poor psycho-social development, including apathy, less positive affect (i.e. their emotional reactions tend to be less positive), lower levels of play, more insecure attachment during early childhood, and poorer attention and social relationships at school age (Grantham-McGregor *et al.*, 2007).

Micronutrient deficiency also contributes to a child’s compromised development. Iodine deficiency leads to congenital hypothyroidism and irreversible mental retardation, making it the most common preventable cause of mental retardation. Children’s anaemia—half of which is thought to be iron-deficiency anaemia—leads to poorer mental, motor and social-emotional development compared to children without anaemia.

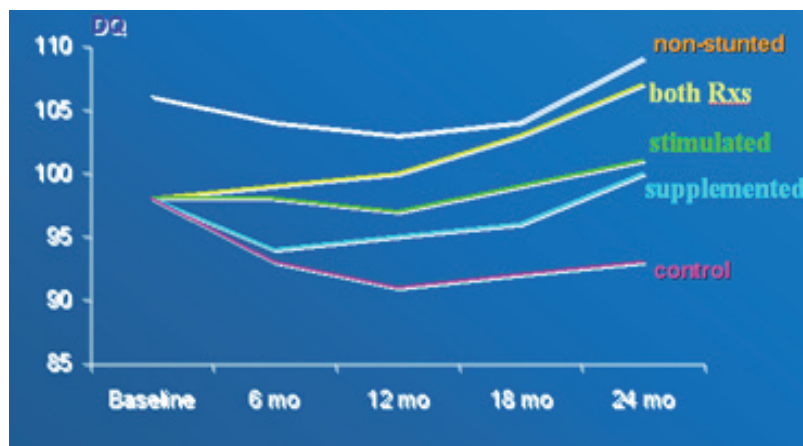




Synergistic effects by biological and psychosocial factors on child development outcomes

Scientists are accumulating a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which both biological and environmental factors act synergistically to exert a powerful influence on brain development and behavioural outcomes. There are many studies on the correlations between a child's nutrition and development outcomes in both developed and developing countries. A study from Jamaica (see Figure 3) has proven the synergistic benefits of early childhood development programmes on developmental outcomes, with supplementation and psychosocial stimulation for disadvantaged children's (stunted) promoting developmental outcomes (Grantham-McGregor *et al.* 1991).

Figure 3 Interventions with stunted children in Jamaica



Source: Grantham-McGregor *et al.*, 1991

Psychosocial factors: Quality of child-caregiver interaction

Development is affected not only by a child's nutritional and health status, but also by the kind of interaction a child develops with the people and objects in her/his environment. A secure, safe, nurturing environment encourages a child to play, explore, solve problems, talk, listen, develop skills, learn to trust, etc. All





these experiences build a strong psychosocial and biological basis for growing up as a healthy, curious, caring child. Good quality psychosocial care and education means that adults create a safe and nurturing environment, and facilitate learning by interacting with children sensitively and responsively, and by providing them with age-appropriate and stimulating materials. (It is important to note that learning materials do not need to be expensive toys.) The care-giver's emotional warmth, mood and emotional state (e.g. maternal depression, exposure to violence) are also key psychosocial factors (Walker *et. al.* 2007). These factors are discussed next.

Cognitive stimulation and learning opportunities

Studies from around the world, such as the Jamaican study, report significantly higher cognitive functioning in young children who are given supplemented cognitive stimulation or learning opportunities compared to non-stimulated groups of children. Beneficial effects reported also include non-cognitive outcomes such as better task orientation, social behaviour, self-confidence and positive affect. The Jamaican study reported the benefits of stimulation on child developmental outcomes during a two-year intervention period, but it has also proven the long-term positive effects. The follow-up to the Jamaican study found that the cohort with stimulation during the early childhood years had sustained benefits in emotional outcomes and attention after 16 years.¹²

Caregiver sensitivity and responsiveness

When a caregiver is aware of the child's needs and wants through her/his communicative signals and responds to these signals consistently and appropriately, the child develops a secure attachment with the caregiver. Such secure attachment relationships, once developed, can have a positive effect on right brain development, which processes socio-emotional functions, regulates bodily and affective states, and also controls and copes with stress-reactivity (Schoore, 2001). High stress reactivity causes cognitive disruption and high levels of emotionality (e.g. hyperactive, anxious or impulsive behaviour), which interfere with intellectual

12. Note: outcome measures studied are: anxiety, depression, self esteem, and antisocial behaviour assessed by questionnaires administered by interviewers; attention deficit, hyperactivity, and oppositional behaviour assessed by interviews with parents. The group who received supplementation only did not show significant effects.





and social functioning (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000 cited in WHO, 2005). Children who experience extreme stress in their earliest years are at greater risk than peers without this stress of developing a variety of cognitive, behavioural and emotional difficulties. Conversely, children whose mothers interact with them in consistent, loving ways will be better nourished and less apt to be sick than children who are not so attended (Zeitlin, Ghessemi & Mansour, 1990).

Caregiver mood and emotional state (maternal depression)

Caregiver mood and emotional state influence caregiver behaviour. Caregivers who are in a cheerful mood can interact with children more positively—with sensitivity and responsiveness— while depressed caregivers are less involved, less sensitive and more negative when interacting with the children in their care. Research has consistently found that reduced levels of cognitive function and higher levels of behaviour problems are reported in young children of depressed mothers (WHO, 2004).

Exposure to violence

Although there are few studies from developing countries available to date on infants and pre-school children dealing with exposure to armed conflicts and/or community violence, existing research (of South Africa and Israel) show higher levels of post-traumatic stress disorder, aggression, attention problems, and depression among children exposed to violence (WHO, 2004). This negatively affects the children's cognitive and socio-emotional competence. The negative effect of exposure to violence is likely to be increased when family cohesion or the mental health of primary caregivers is disrupted. There is a crucial need for intervention studies with younger children and their caregivers who are exposed to violence.

Promoting social equity

By providing a 'fair start' to all children, it is possible to modify distressing socio-economic and gender-related inequities. The unhealthy conditions and stress associated with poverty are accompanied by inequalities in early development and learning. These inequalities help to maintain or magnify existing economic and social inequalities. In a vicious cycle, children from families with few resources often fall quickly and progressively behind their more advantaged peers in their mental





development and in their readiness for school and life, and that gap never closes. Among many other benefits, early childhood development programmes can help reduce gender inequality. They can compensate for the priority that is given to boys in access to basic health care and schooling in some societies. Efforts to break negative models of gender socialisation that marginalise and devalue girls and affirm boys, or the reverse, need to start with the earliest socialisation of the child, well before the age of six. Fortunately, access to early childhood programmes is relatively gender-equal in a majority of countries (UNESCO, 2006).

In addition, the rights of children cannot be realised if the health and well-being of women are not addressed. Women who are sickly, hungry, oppressed and discriminated against cannot have the ability, willingness and motivation to nurture their children adequately. Children cannot flourish when women's rights are not respected. Coordinating and integrating interventions on maternal health with efforts focused on child survival, growth and development can enhance the efficacy of each intervention. Removing barriers to the rights of women and girls, and achieving gender equality is a critical component of the integrated approach to early childhood care. Interventions are also designed to increase the role of fathers in the care and protection of children.

Nations are faced with the problem of how to define and approach equity under conditions of extreme poverty, when there is also a tendency to try to shift responsibility from government to the people, including the poor. Inaction is not the answer. By failing to intervene in an opportune way to foster early childhood learning and development where conditions are difficult, governments tacitly endorse and strengthen existing inequalities. Here the idea is not only to provide a minimum package of inputs so we can point to equality of opportunity, but also to provide additional inputs where needed to 'level the playing field' socially and economically.

Economic benefits

Early childhood development programmes improve health, nutrition and educational outcomes of young children and the positive impact can be drawn both in the short term and, to some extent, the long term at individual level.





Society at large also benefits economically from its investment in early childhood development programmes through increased economic productivity over the child's lifetime, increased employment options for caregivers to earn and learn, and by the later cost savings in remedial education and health care as well as rehabilitation services and welfare.

Perry (1996) discusses the relationship between expenditure on programmes after the early years with respect to learning, behaviour problems and health throughout the life cycle against expenditure during the critical years of brain development. The most important opportunities to influence brain development are during the prenatal and infancy periods of life, when public spending on health, education and welfare for infants and expectant mothers is very low. With increasing age, health and welfare spending tends to increase. Prevention is far less expensive than treatment, and is more efficient.

Heckman (2006) argues that investing in early childhood development is based on economic efficiency: 'It is a rare public policy initiative that promotes fairness and social justice and at the same time promotes productivity in the economy and in society at large. Investing in disadvantaged young children is such a policy.'

In terms of benefits:costs ratios of early childhood programmes, the High/Scope Perry project in the USA suggests that the returns on a pre-school investment (4 – 6 year-olds) can be as high as seven-fold at primary level, and 17 times at the age of 40 (Schweinhart *et al.*, 2005). While rigorous analysis in developing countries is still limited, existing studies indicate a potentially high rate of return on investment in early childhood (UNESCO, 2006). Meyers (1998) projected the impact of pre-primary childcare interventions for 4 – 5 year-olds by estimating the cost savings through reduced waste in primary schools due to repetitions and drop-outs at Grade 1. This study finds that the use of government and community resources for early childhood initiatives would have a tremendous impact in terms of savings by reducing the level of wastage in Class One of the primary system. Both Meyers and Schweinhart *et al.* further argue that if we made even earlier interventions for 0 – 3 year-olds, this would bring higher economic benefits over time. Such prognostications encourage renewed focus and greater public investment in prenatal, perinatal and infant care.





An entry point for social mobilisation

Early childhood programming can serve as an important entry point for community and social mobilisation, promoting participation, organisation and a better quality of life for older as well as younger members of the community. This is particularly true in times of emergency. The child is an organising factor in responding to emergencies. In keeping with the principles of the *CRC*, the humanistic value of the child assumes a central pervasive position in the conceptual framework for the survival, protection and development of the child in an emergency situation.

In almost any community, children provide a rallying point for social and political actions that can help to build consensus and organisation for the common good. Although children cannot vote, politicians, particularly at local levels, are coming to appreciate the fact that children can be a focal point in building consensus and solidarity in the communities they live in. In general, parents are concerned about a better future for their children and are often willing to collaborate and sacrifice to meet that end. This mobilising potential of early childhood programmes can help to reinforce participatory decentralisation and local democracy.

An investment in early childhood programmes can be an investment in the creation of a more educated citizenry. Indeed, the form and content of most pre-school education (active learning, group interaction, etc.) lend themselves to producing those traits considered essential to democracy—more than the form and content of most primary schooling as it is presently constituted. Whereas primary schooling continues to be oriented towards an unquestioning, essentially authoritarian relationship between teacher and child, a premise for most pre-school programmes is that a child learns best by doing, exploring, questioning and problem-solving, with teachers facilitating rather than dictating the process.

Achieving international development goals

An investment in the survival and thriving of young children is fundamental to the attainment of international development goals. A holistic approach is the key to meeting the ‘imperatives for children’ of UNICEF’s Global Movement for Children—ensuring a good start in life for every child, caring for every child,





investing in children etc.—and is an essential contribution to progress towards the World Fit for Children goals and the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To achieve the MDGs of reducing poverty and ensuring primary school completion for both girls and boys, governments and civil society should consider expanding high quality, cost-effective early childhood development programmes.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is the first of the six Education For All (EFA) goals. The ECCE goal itself—expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children—is what the international community and all governments need to achieve. Investment in ECCE should also be recognised as a requisite in achieving the other EFA goals as the initial part of lifelong learning.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to show that there is overwhelming evidence from scientific studies, as well as from accumulated data relating to social and environmental factors worldwide, to convince governments that supporting and investing in ECCE is essential. The healthier the child, the healthier the nation.

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7

ECCE: assessment, monitoring and evaluation

Frances Pene

This chapter first looks at assessment of children 0 – 8 years old and then discusses monitoring and evaluation of ECCE worldwide. The content of this chapter is taken from Dr Richard Wah's presentation at the ECCE regional workshop held in Honiara, Solomon Islands, the outcome of the group discussion participants had on the assessment carried out in their countries, and Dr Visessio Pongi's PowerPoint presentation at the workshop.

Assessment of children 0 – 8 years old

Dr Richard Wah (SPBEA) focussed his presentation about assessment of children 0 – 8 years old on three key questions.

Key questions:

1. What is assessed, and for what purpose?
2. What type of assessment is used?
3. What is done with the assessment?





Question 1: What is assessed?

The first question for teacher educators, education ministries and, more specifically, ECCE providers to ask is, “What do we assess?” The answer lies in the saying: *We measure what we treasure and what we treasure, we measure*. What do ECCE stakeholders treasure? They would agree that we treasure our children and our vision for what we want them to be. The key word here is ‘vision’. Every country needs to have a clearly articulated vision of what it wants its children to become. This vision of its children’s future is the foundation on which its ECCE programme is developed. The vision is reached after wide consultation with key stakeholders, including professionals, community leaders (both traditional and modern) and NGOs. It is thus ‘owned’ by the country.

The vision should articulate targets in terms of what each child of the given country is to aspire to regarding family, community, nation and the world; it should specify the values that are treasured by the country, such as respect for one’s own culture and the cultures of others, appreciation of the environment and, in some countries, the languages to master. As an example, this is the vision for Fiji, in draft form at the time of writing:

Our children need to be nurtured in a loving and caring and inclusive environment at all times so that they will develop into healthy, happy and responsible individuals who have reverence for God.

Children’s personalities are formed and moulded through the interaction of desirable and positive family values and culture. Parents, families, teachers and the wider community are influential partners in this educational journey as children develop and learn in a variety of ways and settings.

With careful guidance, children’s awareness and appreciation of others’ cultures and traditions will be further enhanced. It is envisaged that investment in early education by families, communities and the Government will contribute to the socio-cultural, economical and political developments for our nation, Fiji.





What we teach children must lead towards a realisation of the vision. The vision, therefore, defines what we teach. In order to find out to what extent the children are learning what they are being taught, we need to engage in some form of assessment. The term assessment has been defined in an information paper put out by the Early Childhood Reading Institute as:

... the process of collecting, synthesising, and interpreting information to aid classroom decision-making. It includes information gathered about pupils, instruction and classroom climate.

Testing is one form of assessment. It usually involves a series of direct requests to children to perform, within a set period of time, specific tasks designed and administered by adults, with predetermined correct answers. By contrast, alternative forms of assessment may be completed either by adults or children, are more open-ended, and often look at performance over an extended period of time. Examples include objective observations, portfolio analyses of individual and collaborative work, and teacher and parent ratings of children's behaviour.¹³

The basic purpose of an analysis of the assessment results is improvement, with achievement of the vision at the forefront of future action. For assessment to be useful, it must be reliable, valid and appropriate to the individual child being assessed.

Reliability is achieved if the same result is obtained when the assessment is repeated. This calls for systematic methods of assessment. Validity is achieved if the assessment really does assess what it is meant to assess. The appropriateness of assessment takes into account the fact that no two children are alike, and what is a 'poor' result for one child may be seen as a 'good' result for another when the two results are identical.

13. High/Scope Information Paper on Preschool Assessment by Dr Ann S. Epstein (Director, Early Childhood Division), Dr Lawrence J. Schweinhart (President) and Dr Andrea DeBruin-Parecki (Director) of the Early Childhood Reading Institute. <http://staging.highscope.org/Assessment/assess-stmt.pdf>





Assessment needs standards—classroom standards, national standards and regional standards—against which to measure. These standards must be validated by the community before they can be used. Currently in Fiji, a group of ECCE specialists is working on the early childhood care, development and education standards for children aged 0 – 6 years old. These standards cover several domains:

physical health and well-being	cognitive development
social and emotional development	aesthetics and the arts,
living and learning together	spiritual and moral development.
language and literacy	

For each domain, the development standards, the components and the indicators are set out. For example, in the cognitive domain, one standard is ‘Children should be able to demonstrate problem-solving skills in decision-making situations’. The component is ‘Child is able to sort and categorise objects based on specific attributes and according to increasingly complex categories (colour, shape and volume)’. At age 24 – 36 months, for example, the indicator (or milestone) is the ability to ‘match pictures, to identify basic shapes and sort out more than two objects of the same kind’.

After the experts develop the draft standards, the standards need to be validated by the various stakeholders mentioned above. Only after validation can the standards and vision be ‘owned’ by the country.

At the primary school level, standardised tests are used as points against which to compare our country, our school and our children. A number of Pacific Island countries (PICs) have their own standardised tests for literacy and numeracy, given at Years 4 and 6. These are being extended to include Year 2 (to check if the ECCE programme is producing the planned results) and Year 8.

Another important area for which standardised tests are being developed for Years 4 and 8 is life-skills. Development of these instruments has started in Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Fiji will start work in this area in the near future.





Assessment not only identifies the children who need special services, it also identifies the strengths and weaknesses in the programme, the methodology used to implement it, and the teachers themselves. This information can be used to make improvements in planning and to identify needs, where these are identified by the assessment, or ensure the ongoing development of an effective programme that meets the needs and interests of all children.

Question 2: What type of assessment is used?

Current assessment practices in the Pacific Island countries, 2007¹⁴

For 0 – 3 year-olds

In most countries, this age group is assessed by health authorities to varying degrees. In Nauru, Niue, Tonga and Tokelau, there is currently only home care with informal observational assessment by caregivers and health nurses, while in other countries assessment is carried out in clinics and hospitals and includes some or all of the following: general health, reflexes, immunisation, weight, milestones (e.g. first tooth) and morbidity. Record cards may be given to the family, along with information on breastfeeding and parenting. In some countries—e.g. Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)—parents are also assessed and a profile is built up.

For 3 – 6 year-olds

At this level many children attend an early childhood centre of some kind (playgroup, kindergarten, etc). Assessment is carried out by the teacher and includes observational data, teacher's diary, running records, attendance records, portfolios of the children's work, photographs, checklists for numeracy and language, interviews with parents and children, and project work. Observations can cover physical, social, cognitive, emotional, moral, spiritual, and cultural development.

14. The information in this section is a summary of the outcome of the group work done by the workshop participants.





In the northern Pacific (RMI, FSM, Palau), children are grouped thus: 0 – 4 year-olds, 5 year-olds (in ECCE) and 6 – 13 year-olds (in primary school). In the ECCE programme, the strengths and weaknesses of five-year-olds in eight subject areas (language arts, maths/cognitive, creative arts, physical development, self help, social/emotional, science, and approaches to learning and literacy) are identified using the Pohnpei Inventory Development.

For 6 – 8 year-olds

Children of this age are in primary school in most PICs. Formative and summative assessment in the form of periodic tests of literacy, numeracy and subject content is a common practice. Other forms of assessment at this level are ‘rich tasks’, self-assessment, observation, story-telling, interviews with parents, and tests of bilingual ability in some countries. Records are kept on report cards.

In some countries, the health authorities visit schools and carry out health checks from time to time (not always systematically). Health records may be kept in the school.

Question 3: What is done with the assessment?

The assessment data must first be interpreted and analysed before they can be used. This has to be done with care, as incorrect interpretation can have disastrous results. Once it is done, the results can be shared with stakeholders. The most important outcome of assessment is that it enables stakeholders to ascertain to what extent visions or goals or objectives are being fulfilled, and to identify what future action is needed. Teachers can assess their own classroom performance and make improvements where necessary. Community leaders and stakeholders can find out if they are giving enough support to the centre/school and the teachers. Parents can find out if their children are getting quality education and, if not, why not. Aid donors can assess how well the objectives of the programme are being achieved. Government departments can use statistics to plan for the future.





Summary

Assessment is not done just for the sake of it; it must have a specific purpose, the results must be disseminated among stakeholders and the uses to which the results are put need also to be specified and known by stakeholders. Then there can be effective collaboration and coordination among them (e.g. parents, health authorities, teachers) regarding future action.

Monitoring and evaluation of ECCE

The focus of Dr Visessio Pongsi's (UNESCO) presentation was on the question of how close countries are to achieving the EFA goals. With less than a decade to go before the 2015 target, what more can be done to ensure countries meet these goals?

The Assessment, Information Systems, Monitoring and Statistics (AIMS) Unit—the Office of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) Regional Advisor for Asia-Pacific—UNESCO Bangkok, UNICEF and the Regional Thematic Working Group (TWG) on EFA are working jointly to assist countries to conduct an assessment of progress and gaps towards the EFA goals and a mid-term review of education policies and reforms aimed at expanding the provision of education across various strata and groups in society. The assessment will give special focus on the unreached groups and how to make sure they are not left out of the education system. (<http://www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=mda>).

Guidelines were developed for countries in the region undertaking the EFA assessment. They include guiding questions (see Table 1) to provide a basis for deeper reflection on the issues surrounding Goal 1 and are a guide in influencing national debate in building up to the preparation of the national report. There is also a list of proposed indicators (see Table 2) to represent core issues related to ECCE, and encourage the use of disaggregated data to identify disparities.





Table 1 Guiding questions for EFA Goal 1: Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children

Goal statement	Guiding questions
Expand	What does “expanding” mean? To capture more children? To improve facilities? To provide different types of ECCE? What is the current ECCE definition in the country? How can ECCE in the country be expanded? Which actors are responsible for expanding ECCE? How can the “expansion” of ECCE be recorded and measured?
and improve	What does “improving” mean? How is this measured? What is the current ECCE definition in the country? How can ECCE in the country be improved? Who is responsible for improving ECCE? How is the improvement of ECCE recorded and measured?
comprehensive	What does “comprehensive” mean? For whom should ECCE be available? What types of ECCE are available?
early childhood care and education,	What is the definition of early childhood in the country? What does care entail? What is the definition of education for this age group?
especially for the most vulnerable,	How is “special” attention determined and monitored? Who are the most vulnerable? Do these children have access to ECCE? How can these children have access to ECCE? If these children are participating in ECCE, how is this recorded?
disadvantaged children.	Who are the disadvantaged children? Do these children have access to ECCE? How can these children have access to ECCE? If these children are participating in ECCE, how is this recorded?

Source: *Guidelines for the Asia and Pacific Education for All Mid-Decade Assessment: Identifying and Reaching the Unreached* (Working Draft) 16 Feb. 2007.





Table 2 Policy System Indicators

1.1	Policy/System indicators
1.1.1	Existence of national, multisectoral Early Childhood policy
1.1.2	National standards for monitoring developmental readiness in early childhood and learning programmes adopted
1.1.3	Presence of early screening programmes with referral system
1.1.4	Health links in ECCE established, with visits by health professionals, diagnostics or referral
1.1.5	Careers for ECCE care providers professionalized, including pre-service and in-service training, pay parity with primary schools, university and higher education degree programmes
1.1.6	National ECCE or education policy includes provision of ECCE for vulnerable and disadvantaged children

Source: *Guidelines for the Asia and Pacific Education for All Mid-Decade Assessment: Identifying and Reaching the Unreached* (Working Draft) 16 Feb. 2007.

Summary

Greater commitment at both political and government levels is needed, to include overarching and operational policies; prioritisation of ECCE to secure greater donor support; greater utilisation of research data in policy-related decisions, quality-related standards and programmes; a holistic approach involving all stakeholders; and clear curriculum guidelines.





8

Resources for ECCE

Jennifer James

This is my recipe for ECCE resources: lots of imagination, community participation, local materials and minimum expenditure. These ingredients are all illustrated in the photographs on the next few pages.

Some of the finished items (see the photograph opposite) have been painted. The paints, too, are homemade; local flowers and leaves are squeezed with water to produce these bright colours. For example, purple paint is made with red krepton leaves, yellow paint from the leaves of the morinda plant, and orange paint is made from grated curry ginger or marigold flowers.

Bamboo cups can be cut to different sizes and painted in different colours. They can be used for cup-nesting, which illustrates sequencing from smallest to biggest. They can also have numbers painted on them so that number games can be played. For example, one cup can be hidden and the children can work out which one is missing.



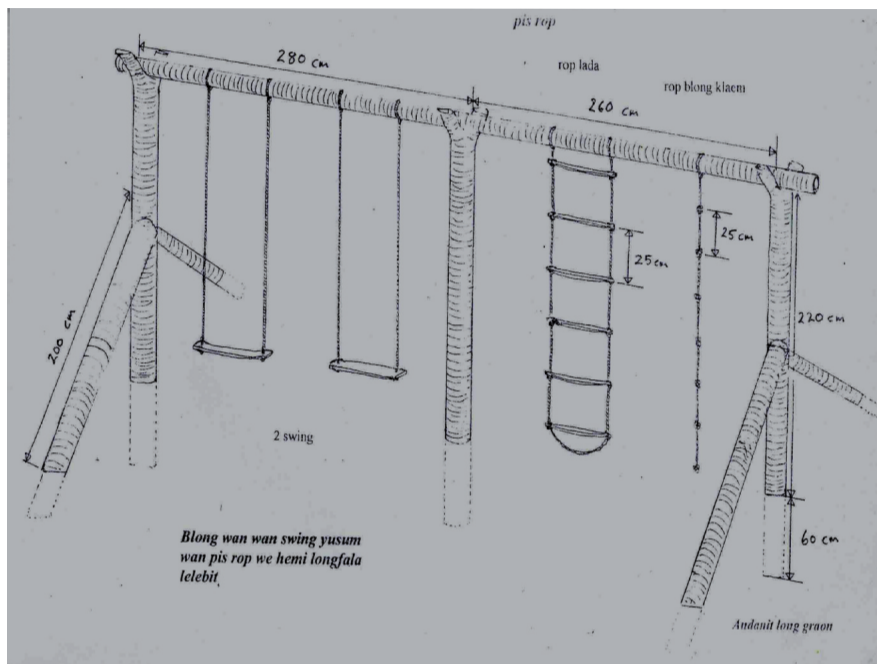


Above: A group of ECCE teachers prepares toys and teaching aids to take to their schools and, below, the complete set.





Early childhood care and education in the Pacific





From drawing board to reality: a rope ladder and swings, monkey bars and a climbing frame. A roof over the top prolongs the life of these playground structures.



Early childhood care and education in the Pacific



*Resources for creative play are everywhere:
Children make pictures in the sand with shells
and they make shapes and figures with clay of
different colours and textures.*





Blackboards belong to the children, so make them the right height.

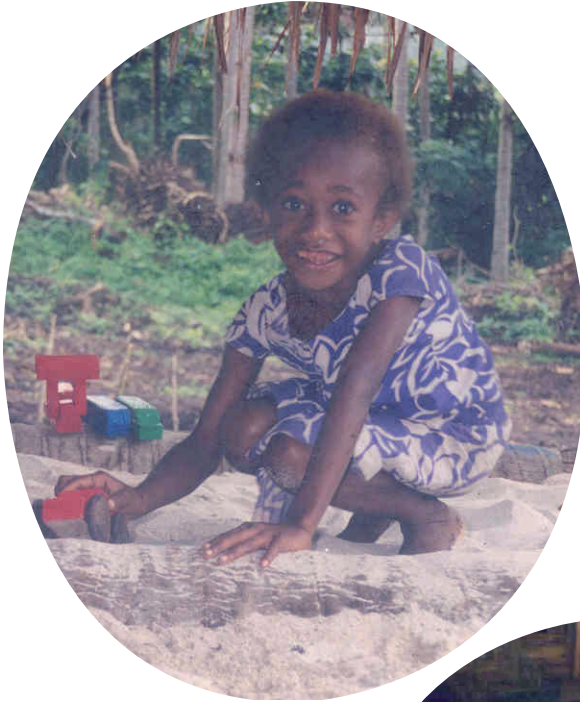


Bubbles are lots of fun, and pawpaw stalks make lovely straws.





Early childhood care and education in the Pacific



This little girl enjoys playing with trucks. They are made from cut-offs that are sandpapered and then painted and fitted with seeds for wheels.

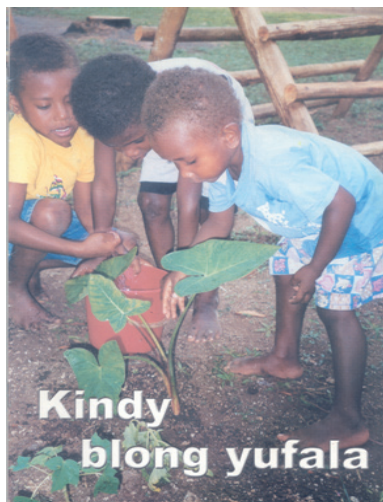


These girls are enjoying doing the things their mothers do. Brushes, cloths, pegs and line are all provided.





Water play at a cut-out canoe provides a fun way of learning about floating and sinking, pouring and filling. Behind the canoe are two sand pits, one wet and one dry,



Kindy blong yufala, shown in the picture on the left, is the title of a delightful booklet written specially for pre-schools and communities. It has information and plenty of illustrations and photographs showing what a good pre-school should be like, what activities can take place, and what skills children learn when using the toys that the teachers have made. It tells the parents and communities that children should use their vernacular, and it also has information on how communities can help. The booklet was compiled for the Pri Skul Asosiesen Blong Vanuatu (PSABV) by a volunteer, Judy Craddock.



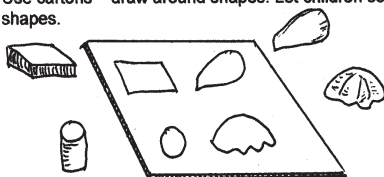


The next pages show a 'how to' booklet which was compiled by Janet Bunyan, a former President of the Pri Skul Asosiesen Blong Vanuatu, and Judy Craddock and Dianne Thorne George, who were both volunteers working with the PSABV.

Vanuatu Pre School Locally Made Games/Toys

1. Matching Games:

Use cartons – draw around shapes. Let children sort which objects go into which shapes.

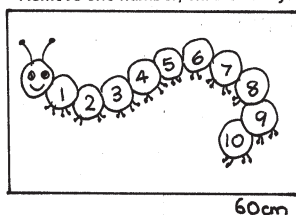


2. Number Caterpillar:

Use a large carton – 60cm x 30cm

Cut out 10 circles and on one side put numbers 1–10, on the other side put dots. Draw 11 circles on the cardboard 10 with numbers and one with a caterpillar face as on the picture below.

- Children match the numbers.
- Children count dots and place in appropriate circles
- Children close eyes, teacher move the numbers around and children have to put in correct order.
- Remove one number, children tell you what number is missing.



7.5cm



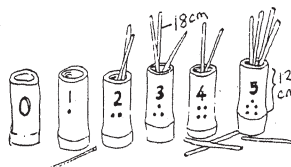
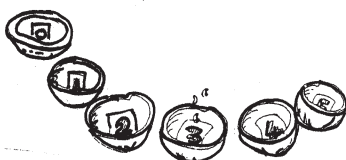
3. Bamboo and Coconut Number games:

A. Clean 10 coconut shells with sand paper and varnish. Write numbers 1–10 in the shells.

Children then put the correct number of objects (shells, seeds, cards with numbers, sticks etc) in the correct coconut shell.

B. Varnish 10 bamboo cups. Write numbers 1–10 on the outside of the bamboo, draw dots below the numbers.

Children put the correct number of sticks in the cup with the right numbers.

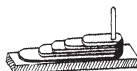




4. Bamboo Grading:

Cut a piece of timber. Make a hole on one end of the timber and glue a piece of wood (dowell) in the hole.

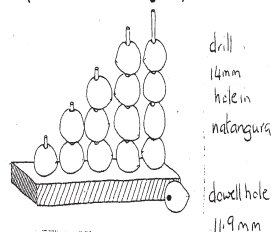
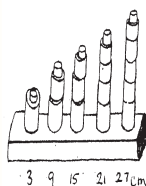
Cut 10 different size flat bamboos, sandpaper and varnish the bamboo. Make a hole on one end and children put the bamboo in sizes.



5. Counting Games:

Using timber as the base – drill 5 x 14mm holes on the base. Make sure the holes are 6cm apart

Glue 5 dowell in the holes. In one you can use small bamboos that can fit in the dowell. In another, we use natangura seed (from the roof thatching tree)



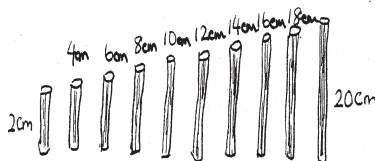
6. Shell Sizing:

Collect different sizes of sea shells and children are asked to place them in sizes of big to small.



7. Stick Sizing:

Cut different sizes of sticks and children place them in lengths from longest to shortest.



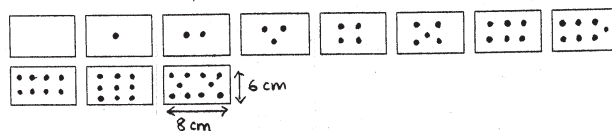
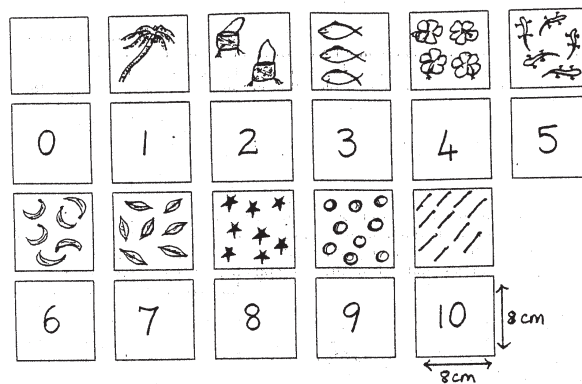
2





8. Number Matching:

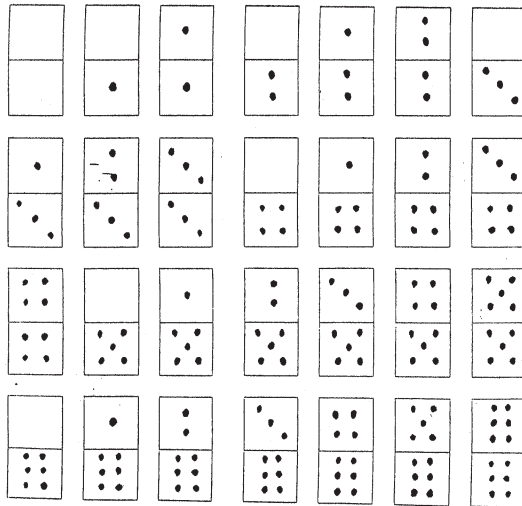
Use cardboard – cut them into 8cm x 8cm square. On one set write 0 – 10. On another set draw the correct number of object 1 – 10. On another set draw dots. See the picture below.





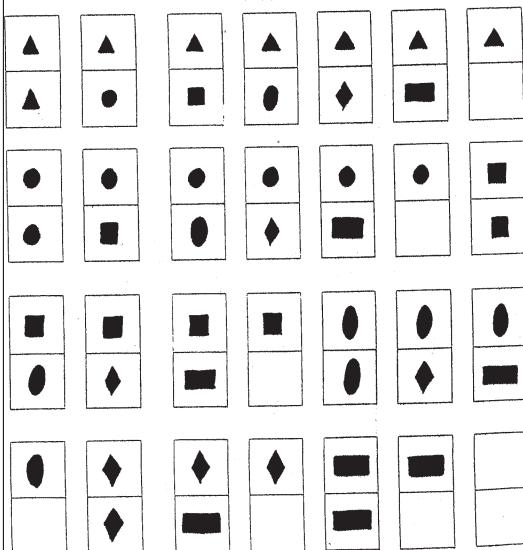
9. Domino

Use cartons, or plywood, markers and templates to make dominoes.



10. Domino Shapes:

Use cartons or plywood cut up, sandpapered and varnished.





11. Pairing of objects:

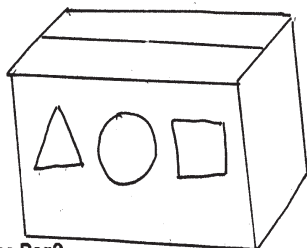
In a basket collect 2 of the same objects (about 40 – 50) eg 2 shells, 2 seeds, 2 buttons, 2 smooth pebbles etc

Children can:-

- Sort objects into pairs
- Sort objects into families or place of origin
- Sort according to a theme eg soft/hard light/heavy smooth/rough colors etc
- Use the objects to play memory games – line about 7-10 objects, children observe for a few minutes, close their eyes and teacher or a child removes one object, children work out what object is missing.
 - Line about 6 objects in a line; children close eyes, move one object around, children guess which object have been shifted.

12. Shaped Box

Cut shapes in a cardboard box, cut different colored shapes and children put the right shapes into the right windows. Call out colored shapes to make it more challenging. You can differ the sizes and ask the child to put the "smallest blue circle in the circle window."



13. What's in the Bag?

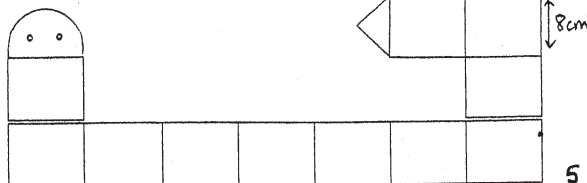
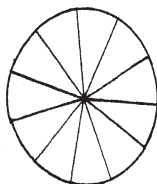
Collect several objects and place in a pillowcase or a woven basket and ask the child to put his hand into the bag and feel and describe the object and name it.

14. Colored Snake:

Make 11 squared cards 8cm x 8cm – color each card a different color – blue, green, red, yellow, white, black, pink, brown, purple, orange, grey.

Make a wheel and color it using the 11 colors.

Spin the wheel and children place the correct colored card on the squares till complete.

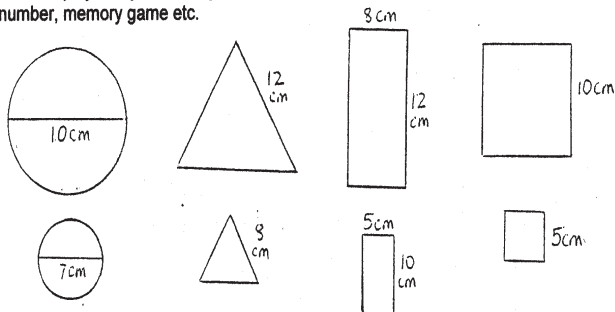




14. Shapes:

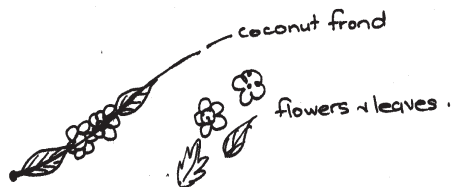
Out of cardboards, make 4 x big circles, 4 x big squares, 4 x big rectangle and 4 x big triangle. Do the same for the smaller shapes x 4 each. From each of the shapes eg big circle – color one blue, one red, one green and one yellow. Do the same for the other shapes.

You can play many different games using the shapes – to teach color, size, number, memory game etc.



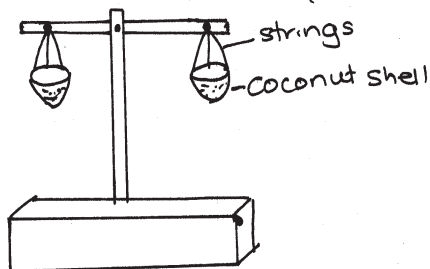
15. Threading:

Using coconut fronds as needle, provide flowers, leaves, shells, seeds and allow children to thread.



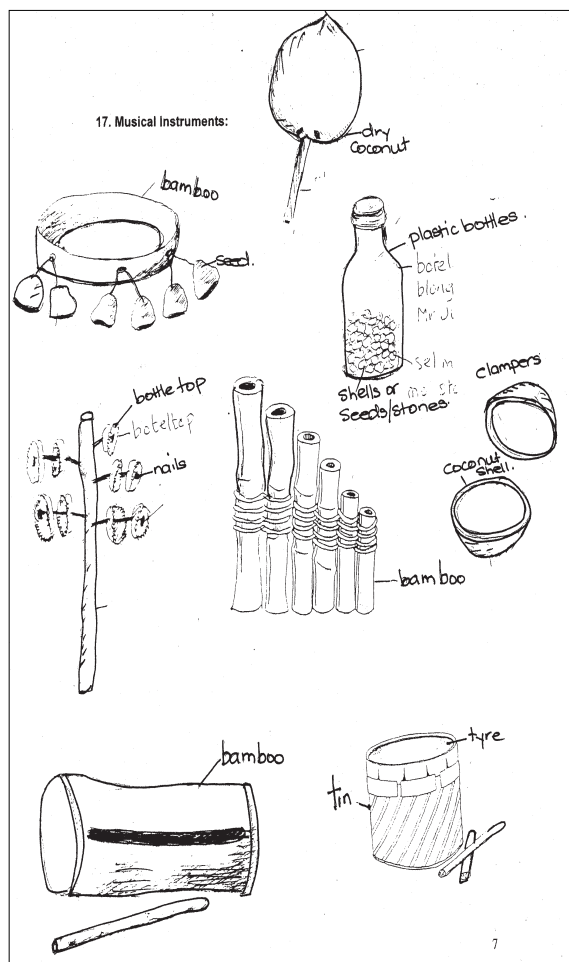
16. Scales:

Using sticks or wood and coconut shells for scales.





Early childhood care and education in the Pacific



One of the commonest complaints from ECCE teachers is the lack of resources for teaching. Such a complaint need not be heard again; this chapter is full of ideas that can be used or adapted to suit a variety of situations. In the Pacific, where our surroundings are full of natural resources and our communities are caring, we can count ourselves very fortunate. Where children are in need, and teachers and communities have the skills and imagination to invent, there can be no truer saying than **necessity is the mother of invention.**





9

Developing an early childhood curriculum with standards in mind

Glen Palmer

Introduction

This chapter discusses general issues around the use of early learning and development standards (ELDS), and describes how they are being used in Fiji as a basis for curriculum development and implementation.

Standards have entered the early childhood field, not only overseas, but also in the Pacific region. In 2006 UNICEF and Columbia University included Fiji in the 'Going Global with Early Learning and Development Standards' initiative. This project started in 2002 with six countries (Brazil, Ghana, Jordan, Paraguay, Philippines and South Africa), with the intent of helping those countries develop nationally accepted ELDS that could be used in country-determined ways. Despite being a latecomer to the project, Fiji engaged enthusiastically with it and, at the time of writing, the review and validation of national standards for young children in Fiji is well under way. This initiative has developed alongside other national projects, in particular the development of a national curriculum framework (NCF)





that encompasses kindergarten to Form 7, and also the development of curriculum guidelines for 3 – 6 year-olds.

Consciously or unconsciously, most early childhood teachers set goals for children's learning and development. Based on their understanding of children, they plan experiences with the objective of helping individual children and groups of children acquire certain knowledge, skills and behaviours. The introduction of early learning and development standards should not change this. Rather, ELDS should help teachers define their goals more specifically. They should also inform teachers, administrators, families and management about what are appropriate expectations for young children's learning and development.

Teachers who use ELDS will continue to encourage play-based, active learning, with a focus on the interests and holistic needs of children. While the standards outline destinations for learning and development, teachers determine the 'how'; that is, they decide how to help their children reach the destinations or standards.

Understanding standards

In addressing the topic of ELDS, several questions must initially be considered:

- What are Early Learning and Development Standards?
- What should be the focus of ELDS for young children?
- What are some pros and cons of using ELDS?

What are ELDS?

Standards are statements that specify an expectation for achievement (Wah, 2006). They may be developed for various purposes, e.g. teacher standards are developed to define what teachers should know and be able to do. Early learning and development standards are one type of standard. They describe widely accepted expectations for what children should know and be able to do by a certain age or period of time (e.g. by 12 months or three years of age, or by the end of pre-school). The term 'early learning and development standards' is typically used with reference to standards for children 0 to 6 years of age, although the age range





can be extended. Because development is greatly influenced by the culture and context within which a child and his/her family are situated, such standards must be developed for that context, rather than transplanted from another country or context. National standards should be statements of what the country values for its youngest citizens. While achieving complete cultural relevance may not be possible for countries with tremendous regional, linguistic, racial-ethnic, and socio-economic diversity, 'the intent should be to create standards that are applicable to all children in the country' (Wah, 2006: 10).

What should be the focus of ELDS for young children?

Gronlund (2006) emphasises the point that standards for pre-school children should be different from those for older children. Children in the pre-school years are developing skills, knowledge and values that lay the foundation for later learning and development. For example, they are learning to listen, to work with others, and to use language to express themselves. Developing these foundation skills is more important than content knowledge. While content knowledge becomes more important as children move into school, standards for Class 1 and 2 children should still address all areas of development, including social and emotional development and creativity. Fisher (2002:39) comments wisely:

Foundations have to go broad and deep before a building can go high. If the foundations of learning are to be adequate, then it may be some time before the building is actually seen. Once constructed, however, the building should go higher and be more adaptable than anything constructed with narrower, more hurried, less secure foundations.

There is a strong message here for all those involved with young children's learning and development. Providing a broad and holistic curriculum, with ample time and opportunities for meaningful learning, is necessary if young children are to develop the foundations essential for later learning and development.

What are some pros and cons of using ELDS?

There are many benefits for using ELDS; there are also potential hazards. Some of these pros and cons are identified in Table 1.





Table 1 The advantages and disadvantages of ELDS

Advantages of ELDS	Disadvantages of ELDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They provide richness to our understanding of children's development and learning.• Teachers can link standards to what they are already doing.• They can be linked to curriculum standards in the school so that there is continuity.• They help us identify next steps in children's learning and development.• They help us have realistic expectations for children.• They provide a tool whereby teachers can monitor children's learning and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resources are needed to train teachers and administrators in the use of standards. Without this, the risks noted below are likely.• The integrated approach used in early childhood could be lost if teachers just teach to standards.• There is a risk of a push-down curriculum.• Direct instruction, rather than self-directed, exploratory and play-based learning might be encouraged.• Testing and other inappropriate assessment might be used.

Source: Adapted from Gronlund, 2006.

An approach based on standards or outcomes should ensure more accountability from all those involved with the learning and development of young children. At the same time, the uniqueness of early childhood curriculum—holistic and play-based—must be preserved. Oliver and Klugman (2006) write of the potential dilemma, exploring how play and standards-driven curricula can work together. In Fiji, this too is the challenge. In providing expectations or standards for children's learning and development it is critical not to lose sight of the fact that children learn largely through play and exploration, and that their learning is integrated, not segmented into subject areas. Furthermore, the focus on learning and development must be maintained. 'Providing play, exploration, and active learning opportunities and recognising the value in daily routines and the importance of caring adults as guides and observers are still the best ways to teach young children' (Gronlund, 2006:16).

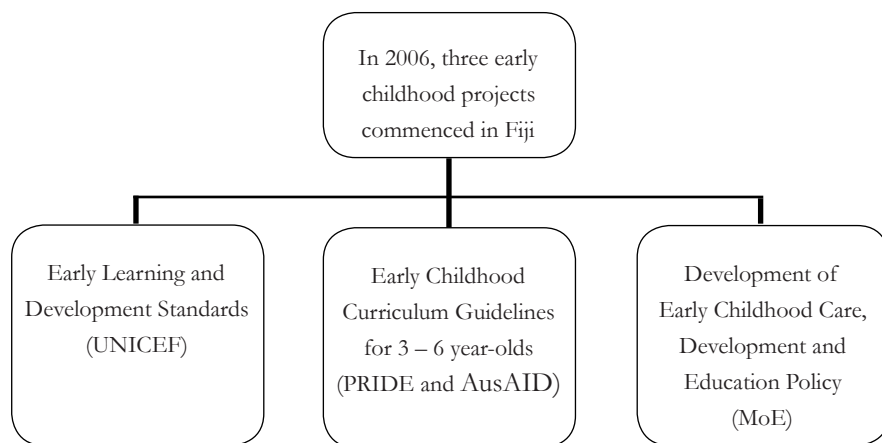




The Fiji experience

As mentioned above, the development of ELDS in Fiji has occurred alongside other national projects. In 2006, Fiji embarked on several early childhood projects (see Figure 1): firstly, the development of ELDS, supported by UNICEF; secondly, the development of an early childhood curriculum for 3 to 6 year-olds, supported by PRIDE and AusAID (under the auspices of the Fiji Education Sector Programme, FESP); and thirdly, a Ministry of Education initiative to review and update the early childhood policy. At the same time, a national curriculum framework (NCF) that addresses all levels of schooling, from kindergarten to Form 7, has been under construction.

Figure 1 ECCE projects in Fiji, 2006



Twelve months on, the three early childhood projects have become interdependent. The team drafting the curriculum guidelines has taken the standards being developed for 3-6 year-olds, extended them, and used them as a basis for an outcomes approach to the curriculum, in line with the approach being used in the NCF. This work has, in turn, fuelled development of the ELDS and the early childhood policy.





Validation of the ELDS remains a major task. At this stage, the standards have been written by a small, representative team of early childhood educators and other stakeholders. They do not yet fit the definition of standards as ‘widely accepted expectations of what children (in Fiji) should know and be able to do’. Plans are in place to validate them during 2007. A draft of the *Early Childhood Curriculum Guidelines for Fiji* is also being taken into the field for trialing and further development during the year.

Standards and the *Early Childhood Curriculum Guidelines for Fiji*

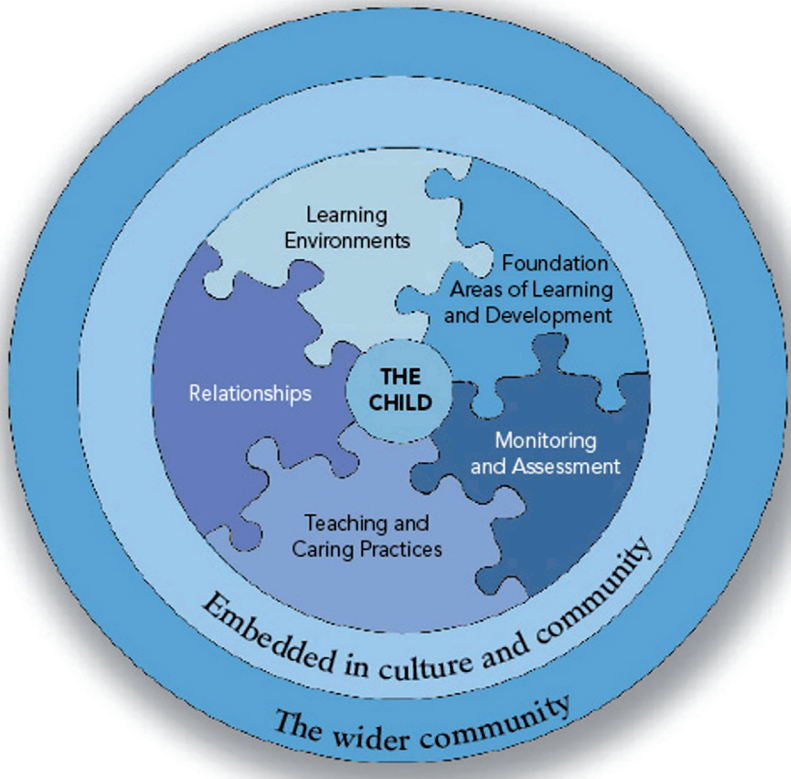
Expectations for children’s learning prior to school entry vary across families, schools and communities in Fiji. In many situations, kindergarten/pre-school children are tested on a range of academic skills and offered or denied access to a school based on their test results. With or without tests, it is common for teachers and parents to expect children to enter Class 1 competent in a narrow range of academic skills related to literacy and numeracy (e.g. writing numerals and letters, and knowing the alphabet). Expectations for children’s social and emotional readiness for school are given little consideration. On the other hand, there are many pre-school teachers who underestimate the potential of young children, and who offer very limited opportunities for meaningful, child-centred learning. For many years, senior early childhood professionals have been voicing their concerns, and advocating the development of curriculum guidelines to address these many shortcomings in the kindergarten/pre-school sector.

The development of curriculum guidelines at the same time as projects for the development of early learning and development standards and the national curriculum framework (NCF) has given the curriculum a direction that it probably would not have taken a few years ago. In line with the NCF, the *Early Childhood Curriculum Guidelines for Fiji: 3-6 years* has adopted an outcomes approach. For consistency with the NCF, the term ‘outcomes’ rather than ‘standards’ is used. However, as used in the curriculum document, the terms are synonymous. ‘Outcomes’ also refers to what children should know and be able to do. The outcomes are accompanied by descriptions of how children might demonstrate that they have met them.





Figure 2 The curriculum framework



The curriculum framework

The curriculum framework identifies five components considered essential for an effective child-centred curriculum for young children (see Figure 2). These components are:

- Learning Environments
- Relationships
- Teaching and Caring Practices
- Content (organised around six Foundation Areas of Learning and Development, FALD)
- Monitoring and Assessment.





The surrounding circles indicate the various influences on the curriculum: the children's families, their cultures and practices, as well as values, government policies and other factors in the wider community.

While kindergartens in Fiji are community responsibilities, strong partnerships between kindergartens and teachers, schools, families, communities and government/non government organisations are needed if kindergartens are to provide strong foundations for future learning .

Outcomes/standards within the curriculum framework

Outcomes have been identified for each FALD. At the time of writing, these are in draft form, as is the entire curriculum. Further development will occur, as the draft curriculum is taken to the field in a series of workshops and consultations. Draft outcomes for the FALD 'learning to know' are shown in Table 2 to demonstrate the process of using outcomes/standards to develop early childhood curriculum guidelines.

Table 2 An example of outcomes (draft)

FALD: Learning to know
STRAND: Early mathematical understanding
Children demonstrate an awareness and understanding of number. Children demonstrate an understanding of measurement, including, time, volume, temperature, money, length, area. Children apply understanding of shape and space. Children can find, repeat, extend and create patterns. Children can gather and interpret basic information, and make predictions about everyday events in their lives (e.g. the weather).
STRAND: Inquiry and investigation
Children notice, talk about and represent things in the environment. Children use various thinking skills to explore and find information on topics of interest.
STRAND: Representing and symbolic thinking
Children use actions, objects and words in fantasy or dramatic play. Children represent ideas and thinking in a variety of ways (e.g. drawing, painting, construction, music, movement, dance).





Indicators of how 3 – 6 year-old children might show they are developing each outcome are also being developed. Table 3 shows an example, using the first outcome, ‘Children demonstrate an awareness and understanding of number’. Note that there are three steps or phases identified for 3 – 6 year-olds’ development of the outcome—emerging, developing, and competent.

Table 3 Examples of indicators

Pathways of learning and development for 3-6 year-olds		
Emerging	Developing	Competent
Number: Children demonstrate an awareness and understanding of number		
The child:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• imitates numbers used by the family,• recognises similarities between two objects, and can match them,• joins in number songs and number games,• rote counts small numbers, but without understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• shows an interest in counting, and using numbers in everyday activities,• sorts objects into groups and explains why they are the same,• identifies numerals as different from letters,• responds with a number when asked a ‘how many’ question,• recognises and names up to three things without counting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• matches objects one-to-one; e.g. recognizes three objects regardless of how they are arranged,• puts groups of up to five objects in order (e.g. from shortest to longest),• sorts and classifies objects according to colour, size, texture etc.,• identifies and names numerals up to five,• uses numbers accurately in their conversations, e.g. ‘We are three in our group’,• uses language of comparison, e.g. may say which group has more or fewer objects; may say, ‘He’s got more than me; there are lots and lots of ...’,• uses ordinal numbers with some accuracy (e.g. 1st, 2nd, 3rd),• describes a sequence of events (e.g. tells the steps they took to complete an activity).





Assessment and curriculum planning with standards/outcomes in mind

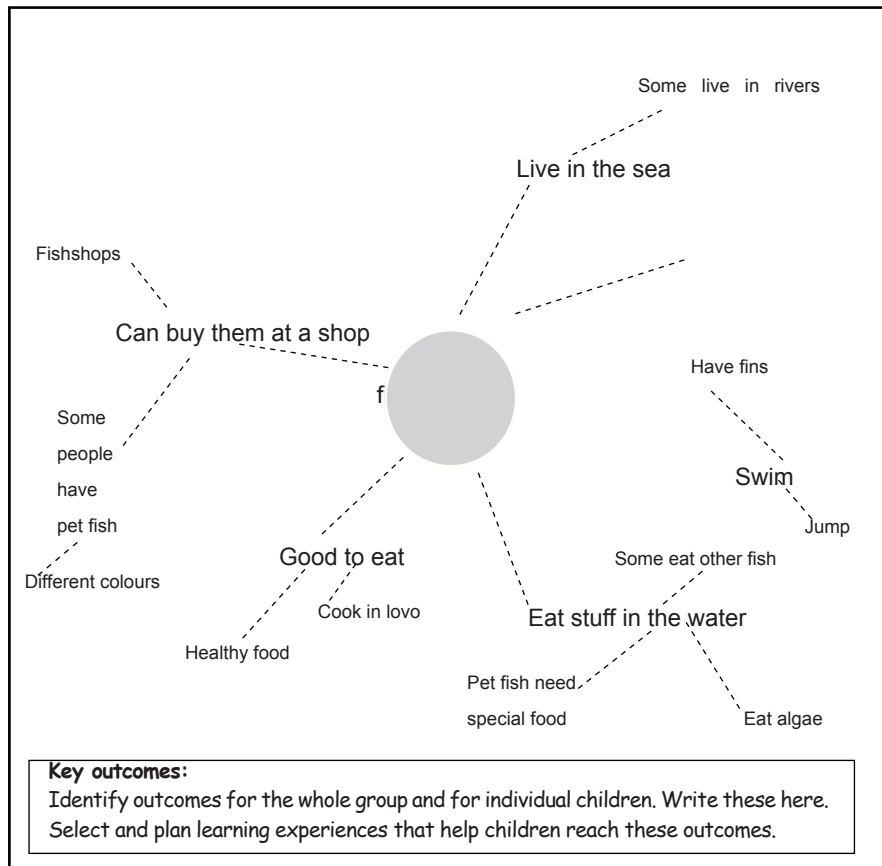
Assessment and curriculum planning should go hand in hand. Copple and Bredekamp (2006: 47) explain the connection very simply: 'Curriculum is the plan for enabling children to reach desired outcomes; assessment is the process of looking at children's progress towards those outcomes'. Outcomes/standards have the potential, therefore, to strengthen the link between monitoring/assessing young children's learning, and planning curricula that are based on their needs and interests. However, assessment approaches must be developmentally and culturally appropriate. In the early childhood years, formal testing is not recommended. It is neither appropriate nor reliable. Early childhood teachers and caregivers find out what children know and can do through observation and interactions during play and other activities, through talking to them and their families, and through collecting samples of work such as paintings and drawings. Teachers and caregivers reflect on this information and use it to plan experiences that support further learning and development. In this way, teachers can plan with specific standards in mind, as well as respond to the spontaneous happenings of the day. Teachers in Fiji will be encouraged to keep portfolios on all their children, and to share relevant information with families, administrators and other stakeholders. A child profile will be developed to accompany this process.

Incorporating standards/outcomes does not require a complete change in practice. Rather, it requires that teachers add a layer of awareness as they plan and implement the curriculum. Teachers who are familiar with the outcomes can incorporate them into their regular planning as well as respond to outcomes as they go about the daily interactions and transitions in the pre-school programme. Figure 3 shows an example of how teachers can include outcomes when planning a topic on fish. The choice of topic is a result of children's interests. Teachers would use their observations and understanding of children to identify outcomes for individual children and groups, and would write these outcomes on the plan. They then incorporate this information into their weekly and/or daily plans.





Figure 3 Developing a web from children's ideas and interests



Conclusion

The need for curriculum guidelines for pre-school is being expressed across the Pacific region. While each country must determine the approach most suited to its needs, Fiji has embarked on an outcomes approach within a holistic early childhood framework. This direction was largely determined by Fiji's inclusion in the 'Going Global with Early Learning and Development Standards' initiative, and the inclusion of kindergarten in the national curriculum framework currently being developed for Fiji.





A representative group of teachers, senior early childhood professionals and other stakeholders has developed a draft of the curriculum guidelines. The draft will be taken to the field for further development and consultation in 2007. Including outcomes has the potential to enhance and enrich the pre-school curriculum in Fiji, and to give direction and purpose to those involved with young children. However, outcomes must be used wisely, and in ways that positively support children's learning, development and well-being. The uniqueness of an early childhood curriculum—holistic and play-based—must be preserved, whatever the curriculum approach adopted. As mentioned earlier, “Providing play, exploration, and active learning opportunities and recognising the value in daily routines and the importance of caring adults as guides and observers are still the best ways to teach young children” (Gronlund, 2006: 16).

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10

Teacher education in ECCE

Desma Hughes, Ufemia Camaitoga and Jessie Fuamatu

In this chapter, we describe the early childhood teacher education programmes in the institutions where we teach: the University of the South Pacific (USP), Lautoka Teachers' College and Fulton College. While these institutions are situated in Fiji, USP also has campuses in the 12 Pacific Island countries that make up the University. The USP programme is, therefore, a regional one.

The University of the South Pacific

Desma Hughes

Early childhood teacher training began at USP in 1982 with the Pacific Preschool Teachers Certificate programme offered through the Continuing Education Section. The certificate was developed through the collaborative efforts of the Pacific Preschool Council, Continuing Education and the Institute of Education of USP. The programme consisted of three modules which could be studied over three semesters through distance education. This qualification was initially aimed at further developing early childhood education teachers' knowledge and skills in working with young children and their families in the region.





Over a number of years, many teachers from all the USP member countries, but especially Fiji, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, were awarded the certificate. At its Conference in 1985 at USP, the Pacific Preschool Council discussed the possibility of an advanced course to be offered after the certificate programme, in response to requests from the certificate graduates. Funding to write courses and provide ECCE books for a Diploma in Early Childhood Education through the distance mode was provided by UNICEF. Several writers were involved in this and, in 1994, USP offered the Diploma in ECE for the first time. In 1996 Ms Anne Glover was seconded from the University of South Australia for a year to reorganise as well as revise some units of the Diploma programme. There were only six students in the first intake, but numbers grew steadily and, in 1998, a permanent ECE Coordinator took up the lecturer's position. Over 100 students have now completed the ECE Diploma.

Early childhood education is a specialist area as this is where the foundation is laid for the child's later development and learning. Additionally, parent and family involvement is an integral part of any early childhood programme as they are viewed as partners in their children's education. The period of early childhood (birth to eight years of age) is a time when children are still developing and are vulnerable, so the focus of an early childhood curriculum should be holistic, caring, and developmentally as well as culturally appropriate. If children's development is well rounded in the five areas (emotional, social, intellectual, physical and language), they are more likely to succeed in school. On the other hand, if children's development is poor in these areas, they are likely to fall behind. Too often in the Pacific the value of early childhood education is underestimated and not seen as crucial to a child's later achievements.

The philosophy of teaching and learning in early childhood education is very different from other teaching areas in that it uses a *play-based approach*, with a focus on individuality and the uniqueness of each child, rather than seeing children as a fairly homogenous group. ECCE uses a broad base of knowledge which includes health, nutrition, holistic development, developmental psychology, leadership, art, craft, music, movement, language, working with families, and early intervention.





Since the introduction of better teacher training programmes in recent years, communities have begun to see the value of ECCE programmes and teacher training. In urban areas, where extended family members are often absent and cannot look after children, preschool enrolments have burgeoned. This increase and the establishment of new centres (pre-schools, kindergartens and day-care centres) have led to a rising demand for teachers.

In addition, as a result of the *Education for All* programme, many Pacific Island governments are focussing on the ECE sector and have made early childhood education a priority, persuaded by the growing amount of research evidence showing that quality in early childhood education gives children a stronger foundation for formal education.

As a consequence, changes have occurred in the delivery of early childhood education. For example, in the Marshall Islands, kindergarten classes are now overseen by the Ministry of Education and are part of the formal education system. The RMI has also prioritised ECCE teacher training and their USP Centre in Majuro has made ECCE a priority. To assist this, AusAID gave scholarships to ten students to enrol in the ECCE degree programme.

The Cook Islands will start a Diploma in ECE training programme with USP in 2008. This training will most likely lead students into the degree in ECE. In Fiji, early childhood centres are already regulated by the Ministry of Education and they too are upgrading the minimum level of training for ECCE teachers. The Fiji Ministry of Education has pledged their support for the USP ECE degree. In Vanuatu, the Ministry of Education is beginning to regulate preschool education and it is expected that all teachers will have a qualification or will have upgraded existing qualifications by 2010.

Another boost to numbers in the ECCE teacher training programmes results from funding agencies (e.g. AusAID and NZAID) which now provide scholarships to ECE students who in the past were self- or privately-funded. This has begun to impact on and increase numbers of students enrolling and completing ECCE programmes and will enable students to complete at a faster rate.





Early childhood education includes classes 1 and 2 in primary education. In many Pacific countries, certificated primary trained teachers who teach these classes in primary school find it difficult to work with 7 and 8 year-old children. To prepare themselves better, many have enrolled in the ECE Diploma programme. This will have a follow through effect into the degree programme since the level of study is related to salary scales.

In addition, regional teacher education institutions such as Lautoka Teachers' College, Solomon Islands College of Higher Education and Kiribati Teachers' College have, or will shortly have, ECCE teacher training at the certificate or advanced certificate level and are encouraging their students to move into the diploma and degree programmes.

The USP degree programme

As senior lecturer in the School of Education at USP, I recently carried out a research project into the needs of ECE teachers. I interviewed and surveyed USP Diploma in ECE graduates. I found that 89% of the graduates indicated that they wished to do further studies in early childhood education. Many of them were already teachers in preschool and primary school, or were working in ministries of education as advisors or conducting special projects in the field to assist other early childhood education teachers. They believed that they were not adequately prepared for such positions by the certificate and diploma programmes. Many expressed a desire to do postgraduate study and carry out research in ECCE, which is sadly lacking in the Pacific context. As a consequence of this expressed desire and of the increasing numbers of centres, USP developed a bachelor's degree in ECE. An Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee, consisting of representatives from most of the larger nations of the Pacific, met several times to discuss possible courses for the degree, based on perceived needs of existing teachers, and new courses were written, many of them by myself. The new courses studied in the degree are related to young children's management and understanding of behaviour; language and literacy development; an inquiry approach to maths, science and the environment; art, craft, music, and movement; developing social competence and emotional health; play; health safety and nutrition; and early intervention (early special education).





Eight courses from the Diploma in ECE or the Advanced Certificate in ECE from Lautoka Teachers' College can be cross-credited towards the new BED.

Within the diploma there is a practicum. The practicum is a structured course with set tasks. It consists of a compulsory five-day workshop with the lecturer and a minimum 10-week placement in an approved ECCE centre. The student teacher is expected to demonstrate an ability to relate previously studied theoretical material to its application in set tasks such as child observations; planning individual and whole class programmes; planning, implementation and evaluation of programme plans; parent talks; administrative tasks and so on. By the completion of the practicum the student should be able to take responsibility for teaching and leadership/management tasks in an ECCE setting. In the degree programme, students perform practical activities and a short practicum may be included in the future.

Early childhood education is based on the context of the child. For example, a child who lives by the sea will experience many activities related to the sea. Most of the courses emphasise the context of the child and the family. The ECCE degree programme will be unique to the Pacific context—another priority area in the USP Strategic Plan.

The future of early childhood education rests with people who value it and make a commitment to this special branch of education—the families, teachers, early childhood workers, caregivers, ECCE leaders, ECCE senior guidance officers in ministries of education and teacher trainers. Already, teachers show a huge commitment by studying for few incentives, paying for their own studies, and teaching long hours for very low wages. They are shown little appreciation by many community members. It is hoped that the wider community will see the improved performance in primary school among children who have had quality early childhood education, and become advocates, putting pressure on governments to increase funding to ECCE, especially teacher training, teaching resources and books. Early childhood education in many countries only improves when the families join with the teachers to push for better conditions, funding and appreciation for this 'poor cousin' in education.





Lautoka Teachers' College

Ufemia Camaitoga

The first Early Childhood Education (ECE) certificate programme at Lautoka Teachers' College (LTC) was offered in 1999. In that year, 15 in-service students from rural communities were enrolled into the one year on-campus programme. In 2003, a comprehensive review of LTC's teacher-education programmes was conducted, beginning with ECE. The review was funded by AusAID and Dr Glen Palmer was the ECE consultant. She consulted extensively with key stakeholders during the review and recommended that the ECE courses be upgraded to what is currently the Advanced Certificate in Early Childhood Education (ACECE) with some modifications to the structure and pedagogies of the first certificate programme.

Based on the review, Dr Glen Palmer, Biu Cava and I designed and developed twelve courses for the ACECE programme: Semester One courses are: child development, communication and study skills, early childhood learning environment, early language and literacy, language study (Fijian/Hindi/Tamil/Urdu/Rotuman) and music, movement and drama. Semester Two courses are: art for young children, management/leadership/advocacy, programming and planning, working with parents and families, foundations of maths and science, and health and nutrition.

Professional practice is built into each semester, totalling six weeks in the year. The establishment of a campus playgroup to support students' observational research and training in collaboration with the parents paved the way for participatory action research.

ACECE students attend lectures with the pre-service diplomates in the following courses: child development, communication and study skills, language study. Both music and art are specialised areas so the diploma lecturers' expertise is utilised, offering personal strands, whilst the professional strand is taken care of by the ECE lecturers. Assessment tasks are also shared to ensure articulation into the diploma programme.





Eight of the ACECE courses are cross-credited to the Bachelor in Education, EC (in-service) at USP.

Where to from here?

In the past three years, Dr Glen Palmer recommended in her report that the ACECE could articulate into the LTC Diploma in Primary Education programme, and we hope the College will respond positively to a new direction in what Fiji can call its own innovation in teacher-education. The issue of a growing lack of concern in teaching infant classes could be filled by early childhood graduates seeing the diploma programme has not articulated early childhood pedagogies with a strong focus on transition to primary school. The question of monitoring and evaluating graduates and practising teachers is of grave concern too. To do this, negotiations could begin with the Ministry of Education and Public Service Commission in allocating ten places from the pre-service programme for selected early childhood trainees to upskill to the first year in the diploma programme. This, I believe is the way forward for ECCD teacher education in Fiji.

Fulton College

Jessie Fuamatu

Fulton College provides a teacher training Primary Education course for many of the teachers in the Pacific. At present it is undergoing changes in staff and as a result new challenges have presented opportunities to develop our focus in the area of ECCE. Currently ECCE features in several courses in the Primary Diploma programme. These include the Learning and Teaching, Human Development, Philosophy on Christian Education, and Special Needs courses.

These courses provide students with knowledge and skills that build on quality foundations to enhance rich learning experiences in the early years. This quality in ECCE contributes directly to the success of children in primary school. The learning and teaching courses emphasise the importance of developing this quality learning experience through the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. This is all part of preparing children not only for primary schooling but also





lifelong learning. Early childhood education will continue to feature prominently within the Primary programme and address the importance of the early years from birth to eight years of age.

We plan to offer some specialist courses in the area of early childhood education. Students will be provided with evidence from research on the significant benefits for children in the early years. These course will focus on the importance of nurturing children's mental, physical, social, and spiritual development. This ties in very closely with the principles and philosophy of Christian education and the special character of our institution.

Fulton College as a training institution offers not only Primary Education, Business, and IT courses; we also offer a Theology Diploma and B.A degree programme. Many of the men who study in these programmes at Fulton are married students and their wives are left at home with young children. The women decided to meet regularly as a group to prepare themselves for the roles they are expected to carry out when their husbands graduate. They started up a play group which meets once a month, with plans to increase the time when a more appropriate venue is established. This group was formed by the women of the College community and the purpose was to provide support for the mothers and allow children across campus to interact with one another. The women were keen to access information on the development of young children and the importance of play in the early years. This interest has created opportunities to share valuable information on healthy practices, and physical and cognitive development of young children.

One of our visionary educational goals is to explore the possibility of delivering a Certificate in ECCE and, later, developing this towards a Diploma and finally a Bachelor of Education course. These stages of development are the result of interest expressed by the women from the community group and the plans of the education staff on campus.

As an educational institution, Fulton College is committed to making a difference in people's lives in the Pacific. We believe that early childhood education is a critical link to providing a strong foundation for children and it can bring communities





11

The way forward for ECCE in Pacific Island countries

Ufemia Camaitoga

Research has provided substantial evidence on the multiple socio-economic benefits that early childhood care and education (ECCE) have on a country. It seems, however, that these benefits are still not enough to convince government leaders to prioritise ECCE, despite the fact that Pacific Island countries (PICs) are well aware of the recent focus on ECCE in international conventions such as the UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Millennium Development Goals, the UNESCO World Declaration on Education for All and the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

While some PICs have put in place mandatory laws and policies which articulate some strategic measures (e.g. banning of corporal punishment in Fiji, and child protection in Vanuatu, Fiji and Samoa), there remains much to do in terms of access to early childhood education for under-privileged or at risk children in squatter, disadvantaged and rural communities; providing equipment for centres; paying early childhood teachers' salaries; and improving their work conditions.





These shortcomings show that ECCE is not given the priority it rightly deserves, bearing in mind that '[t]he satisfaction of these [basic learning] needs empowers individuals in any society and confers upon them a *responsibility* to respect and build upon their collective and cultural, linguistic and spiritual heritage to promote the education of others' (EFA Jomtien Declaration Article 1, emphasis added).

Pacific Island leaders—traditional and government—need to develop a better understanding of leadership in ECCE. If we are the mandated parents (natural or surrogate); if we are the mandated government and leaders in our villages or communities; if we are the chosen ones to speak for as well as advocate for young children and their families, we are obliged to provide the best living conditions and environments for them, irrespective of their race, colour or creed. It is everyone's responsibility; we do not have a choice. We are talking about our children, their future and their country's future. We are talking about 'Supporting learning from 0 – 8, Creating the future' for PICs.

The Preamble of the 1989 *Convention on the Rights of the Child* defines the family as the 'fundamental group' and the 'natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children'. PIC governments are obliged to support and facilitate these care-giving environments. In Pacific Island societies, taking care of and providing education for some other children within one's own immediate family clan, wider family unit and even tribe is acceptable and demonstrates love, respect and the reciprocity values which are part of our heritage. It can be appropriately said that we do prioritise our children in the Pacific islands; children have a special place in our cultures and this is evident in each Pacific Island's celebration of children in unique ways from the birth of a first born, first birthdays, children's Sundays and through to puberty. Culturally, children are already seen as special and they are our responsibility in terms of education.

I draw wisdom from my late father's words, '*E lakovata na qaravi itavi kei na vanua, lotu kei na matanitu*' meaning, you have a duty to serve the land, the church and the government equally. For me, this suggests that children are the responsibility of the *vanua* (family, tribe and community), the church (through the priest, *talatala*,





pastor, church elders and congregation), and the government at the political level (laws, policies) if we ‘measure what we treasure, we treasure what we measure’—the young child in the Pacific islands. I also draw from Nelson Mandela’s wisdom: ‘It takes the whole village to raise a child’.

Sadly, we are neither listening nor learning to be proactive about ECCE issues in a challenging modern world. There needs to be greater commitment by all stakeholders as we cannot continue to depend on donors to meet our commitments. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory¹⁵ has long been in existence within our Pacific island communities. For instance a Pacific child grows up with conventions, traditional beliefs, values and a culture which define his/her ecology. Networking and support systems need to be put in place in light of this knowledge in order to maximise a child’s learning and development from the early years.

Political will and commitment

Given all the current data and research on the impact of early brain-wiring from 0 – 3 years, it is imperative that governments, within their resources and in partnership with NGOs, explore what this means for them as policy-makers, caregivers, practitioners, front-line workers, traditional leaders and so on. Considering the limited resources, there is a strong call for a cross-sectoral approach to pave the way for ECCE in the Pacific Islands.

In a holistic ECCE approach, policies and programmes that safeguard a child’s right to health, nutrition, cognitive and psycho-social development and protection should be clearly articulated and aligned to mandatory government documents. A requirement of the holistic approach to ECCE is protecting and promoting women’s rights; it is the first step in securing gains for young

15. Bronfenbrenner (1979) posited that child development cannot be explained by a single concept, but rather by a complex system – the microsystem, the mesosystem, the ecosystem, the macrosystem, the chronosystem. His ecological model theorises that a child does not exist alone but in a given context represented by layers or systems. Bronfenbrenner, U. 1979. *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.





children. This ought to be articulated in countries' corporate and strategic plans and translation of funds into the annual budget of key government ministries and departments: health, education, social welfare, women and culture, information, the judiciary, regional development, the environment and local government.

Visionary and dynamic leadership

Passion and **power** are two concepts associated with the 2007 ECCE Honiara workshop and its theme of *Supporting learning from 0 – 8: creating the future*. In their wisdom, the organisers brought in participants representing governments and NGOs who have **passion** for young children and their families to share and explore best practices, and therefore are mandated or have the **power** to make some firm decisions, thus moving ECCE forward in their own countries. As critical friend to the workshop, my conceptual findings can be summed up in three Vs—voice, visibility and value-added. To move ECCE forward in Pacific Island countries, I strongly believe the workshop participants must speak up for young children (have a **voice**) in all forums, be **visible**, and make a commitment to give value to young children's lives and future (**value-added**).

Inspiration for change

The workshop partners and the Solomon Island secretariat gave ECCE advocates and practitioners the opportunity to exchange ideas and information and, as a result, the workshop was a source of inspiration on many fronts. It confirmed what the Solomon Islands Minister for Education, the Honourable Derek Sikua, said in his opening address: that this spirit of cooperation and support among the organisers of the workshop is a classical example of the Paris Declaration which calls for donor harmonisation.

Participants were made aware of PRIDE's¹⁶ Resource Centre and Pacific Archive of Digital Data for Learning and Education (PADDLE), and the SPBEA¹⁷ web

16. Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education

17. South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment





pages which are actively gathering and synthesising information from within the region in order to improve access to relevant data and documents. Furthermore, it was noted that the Pacific Island Forum Ministers for Education would meet in Auckland in late 2007 and the four recommendations from the workshop would be presented to them by PRIDE and SPBEA.

Global and regional perspectives

Globally, there has been steady progress towards achieving the goals in the *Declaration on Education for All* since 1990, especially towards universal primary education (UPE) and gender parity amongst the poorest countries, but the pace is too slow for the goals to be met in the remaining years to 2015.

Maki Hayashikawa (UNESCO, Bangkok) in her keynote address provided data from the *EEA Global Monitoring Report 2007* (see Chapter 5) and gave the workshop participants many insights into the position of ECCE at both the global and regional level. The scarcity of data for monitoring the childhood care component in the Pacific is of great concern as it limits its inclusion in global, regional and national policies and planning. Dr Visessio Pongki (UNESCO) in his presentation added that there needed to be greater utilisation of the research data that is available in ECCE policy decisions. Regular provision of data and information to international, regional and national fora is essential for moving ECCE forward, and child development research findings, which are often not widely disseminated, could be an immediate area for PICs to concentrate on. There is a lot of observational research that could be used effectively for a variety of purposes.

Strengthening documentation of ECCE practices and action research for Pacific Island countries ought to be a collaborative effort by stakeholders. Adi Davila Toganivalu in her address (see Chapter 3) emphasised the importance of knowing and documenting our ECCE history, our present and plans for our future as leaders, practitioners and caregivers so that we can continue to empower one another in determining our children's future in the Pacific.

Establishing and building up a database for ECCE in-country is crucial for national planning purposes. However, the success of gathering authentic, reliable and



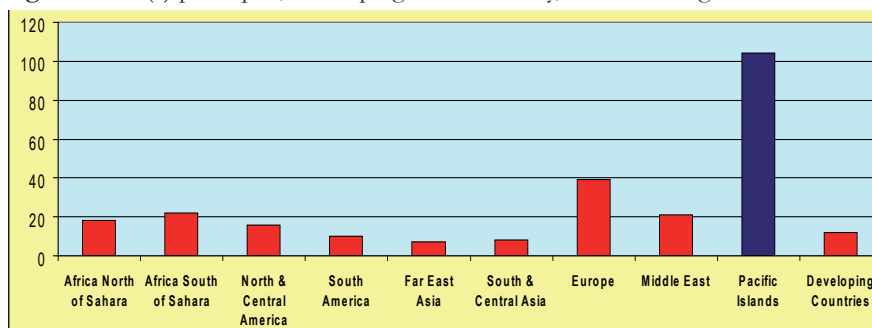


timely data for monitoring and evaluation hinges on a well-defined ECCE unit with resources. Support must be drawn from government and traditional leaders and a proactive stance could be taken by them to ensure this is in place.

Pacific voices

Adi Davila Toganivalu spoke about the Pacific Pre-school Council (PPC) and its functions. The workshop participants were in favour of reactivating it; it has not met since 1995. Being an affiliate to the World Forum Foundations, the PPC currently enjoys privileges such as sending fully or partially sponsored participants to international workshops and conferences. Fiji has been an active participant and has carried the voice of the Pacific, but needs vary from country to country. Common sense tells us that we should make use of the existing PPC set-up, rather than re-invent the wheel, in order to address local or regional issues and present a united ‘voice’ for children. Countries could use this machinery to organise themselves and learn from one another. The *malua* fever, the waiting or delaying attitude, must be shelved if we intend to move ECCE forward.

Figure 1 Aid (\$) per capita, developing countries only, 2002-3 average



Source: OECD & World Bank Indicators

As Dr Visessio Pongi pointed out in his presentation at the workshop, statistically, the Pacific is the biggest recipient of donor funds in the world (see Figure 1). However, some of this assistance proved to be of little use because the donor projects were not ‘owned’ by the people who they were intended to assist. We





need to learn from this and ensure stakeholders have a voice in the decision-making process in all phases of a project: the design phase, the implementation, the monitoring and the evaluation phase.

Assessment

The assessment of 0 – 3 years old is carried out by health authorities in most PICs. They monitor growth and development with a focus on appropriate care and health practices. Current brain research has revealed the importance of early stimulation, balanced nutrition and appropriate care for 0 – 3 year-olds as vital for intelligence and a springboard for later learning and development. Unaisi Vasu Tuivaga, in her summing up of the panel discussion on this topic, made it clear that practitioners need more training and guidance in order to improve assessment of this age-group—yet another challenge. Added to this is the growing focus on monitoring and evaluation that goes with the recent shift to outcomes-based assessment. How do practitioners, caregivers and families grapple with pedagogies that centre on local and global transmission of ECCE knowledge, skills and attitudes in a rapidly growing world?

A curriculum for the future

The fact that we are creating a future for 0 – 8 year olds means that ECCE curriculum guidelines need to provide a framework that will be relevant in the future. This requires reconceptualising childhood for Pacific Island countries. Factors that need to be considered are our Pacific values and what we want our children to know and be able to do. The guidelines must be culturally relevant and also be based on child development principles and early learning development standards. Glen Palmer (Chapter 9) in her description of Fiji's example, explains the process of simultaneously developing the curriculum guidelines and early learning standards. How and where they merge is a decision for the stakeholders but what is important is that both are widely disseminated for consultation and validation with the users and beneficiaries.

Being involved in the decision-making process concerning children's care and education is a new direction for many practitioners, parents and caregivers. For this reason, any curriculum must give clear directions to policy/decision-makers,





parents, families, practitioners and caregivers. In other words, it must be user-friendly and readable at all levels, so that the essential process of draft → review → draft → review is successful.

Strategies for stakeholders to consider for moving ECCE forward in the Pacific

1. Make a clear overarching policy covering ECCE in general as well as operational policies covering implementation.
2. Make a commitment to reactivate the Pacific Pre-school Council and renew membership as this is an ideal forum for the Pacific voice for young children. UNESCO could be approached to support its activities.
3. Revisit EFA, CRC and MDG goals as a focal point for effective policy and programming decisions.
4. Strengthen ECCE issues in teacher training for pre-service and in-service programmes. These issues include special needs, inclusivity, children's rights, gender balance and social cohesion, culture-based and evidence-based practices.
5. Establish and strengthen ECCE data bases in countries to support policy making and programme development.
6. Establish cross-sectoral partnerships with key government ministries and NGOs that work with young children and their families so there is a holistic approach to care and education, thus utilising maximum benefit from the resources available.
7. Strengthen the use of the mother-tongue as a spring board for acquiring a second language.
8. Establish a regional networking system via email for sharing of information.
9. Encourage the use of local materials and resources.

The publication of this book is a landmark in the history of ECCE, gathering as it does the status quo of ECCE in the Pacific; the global, regional and local perspectives; modern knowledge and thinking regarding many ECCE issues; and the thoughts and recommendations of experts in the field. It can be thought of as the voice of the ECCE community in the Pacific, our contribution to the effort to push ECCE forward so that it gets the priority it rightfully deserves.





Appendix A: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

COOK ISLANDS

Ms Upokoina Tamarua
Ministry of Education
P.O. Box 3211
Avarua, Rarotonga
Tel.: (682) 25030
email: itamarua@education.gov.ck

Ms Stephanie Louise Puirī
C/- Blackrock Pre-school
P.O. Box 3211
Avarua, Rarotonga
Tel.: (682) 26456
Fax : (682) 26456
email: brockece@oyster.co.ck

FIJI

Mr Laisenia Seru
Ministry of Education
Marela House,
Private Mail Bag
Suva
email: laisenia.seru@govnet.gov.fj

Ms Purnima D. Chandra
P.O. Box 3924
Lautoka
Tel.: (679) 666 0739/666 6610
email: purnima_kevin@yahoo.com

Ms Unaisi Vasu Tuivaga
P.O. Box 10334
Laulala Beach Estate
Suva
Tel.: (679) 339 5171/323 2488
Fax : (679) 323 1417
email : tuivaga_v@usp.ac.fj

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

Mr Shelten Neth
Chief, ECE Division
P.O. Box 1030
Pohnpei 96941
Tel.: (691) 320 2705/920 7551
Fax: (691) 320 5363
email: ecechie@mail.fm

KIRIBATI

Ms Bwenata Kienene
Ministry of Education
Bikenibeu
Tarawa
Tel.: (686) 28091
Fax: (686) 28222

Ms Elenoa Titaake
Ministry of Education
Bikenibeu
Tarawa
Tel.: (686) 26434 Mob: (686) 94231





REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

Ms Daisy Alik-Momotaro
Executive Director, WUTMI
P.O. Box 195
Majuro, MH 96960
Tel.: (692) 625 4296/5290
Fax: (692) 625 4296
email: wutmi@ntamar,
alík_momotaro@yahoo.com

REPUBLIC OF NAURU

Ms Sarina Tamakin
C.A.S.E.
Education Head Office
Yaren District
email: case@cenpac.net.nr

Ms Mary Tebouwa
Yaren Primary School
Education Office
email: mary_tebouwa@yahoo.com

Ms Madonna Dongobir
Anetan Infant School
A/T.I.C.
C/- Education Office
Yaren District
email: dondi_md@yahoo.com

NIUE

Ms Janet Tasmania
Deputy Director, Ministry of Education
Alofi
Tel.: (683) 4070
email: janet-tasmania@mail.nu
email: educ.deputy.jt@mail.gov.nu

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Ms Maria Kopkop
Kopkop College
Box 5079
Boroko, NCD
Tel.: (675) 326 1822
email: kopcol@dalston.com.pg

SAMOA

Ms Utumoa Oloapu
ECE Coordinator
Ministry of Education, Sports &
Culture
P.O. Box 9215
Apia
Tel.: (685) 27220/751 5606/24614
Fax: (685) 20004

Ms Silafaga Apisaloma-Malaga
ECE Coordinator for NGOs
P.O. Box 2595
Apia
Tel.: (685) 2595
email: silafaga@ipasifica.net





Early childhood care and education in the Pacific

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Ms Bernadine Ha'amori
ECE Coordinator
Ministry of Education & Human
Resources Development
P.O. Box G28
Honiara
Tel.: (677) 28804/3
Fax: (677) 22042/28805
email: bhaamori@hotmail.com

Ms Emily Siriki
ECE Assistant
(Address as above)
email: esirikipita@hotmail.com

Ms Raewyn Magu
Education Office
Gizo
Western Province

Mr Dudley Siufimae
Education Office
P.O. Box 36
Auki
Malaita Province

Ms Crispin Dora
Education Division
P.O. Box 40
Makira Province

Ms Agatha Siota
Honiara City Council
Education Division
P.O. Box 324
Honiara

Mr Commins Lelea
Education Division
P.O. Box 4
Buala
Isabel Province

Ms Niulyn Basi
Perch Christian School
P.O. Box 1995
Honiara
Tel.: (677) 24889

Ms Rosemary Kafa
Nutrition Unit
Ministry of Health & Medical Services
P.O. Box 345
Honiara
email: kafarosemary@yahoo.com

Ms Wryne Bennett
UNICEF Solomon Islands
P.O. Box 1786
Honiara
email: cfsbuala@unicef.org.sb
wmbennett2002@yahoo.com





Mr Commins Kema-Keza
Save the Children
P.O. Box 1149
Honiara
email: cap@savethechildren.org.sb

Ms Joanna Daiwo
SICHE
P.O. Box R113
Honiara
email: jodaiwo@solomon.com.sb

Mr Marthin Popot
SICHE
P.O. Box R113
Honiara

Mr Joseph Manurapu
School of Education (SICHE)
P.O. Box R113
Honiara

Mr Benedict Esibaea
Ministry of Education
P.O. Box G28
Honiara
Tel.: (677) 28803

Mr Moala Bana
Development Planning
P.O. Box G30
Honiara
email: moalab2@yahoo.com

Ms Laiza Keniwaia
Education Division
Quadalcanal Province
P.O. Box GC7
Honiara
Tel.: (677) 28042

Mr Sam Obadiah
Curriculum Development Centre
P.O. Box G27
Honiara
email: s_obadiah@cdc.edu.sb

TOKELAU

Ms Rosa Maria Tuia
Department of Education
Atafu
Tel.: (690) 2137
email: rosa_tuia@yahoo.co.nz

TONGA

Ms Latai Tuimana
ECE Officer, Ministry of Education
Nuku'alofa
Tel.: (676) 23511
email: tongapreschool@yahoo.co

Ms Ene'io Fekau
Tonga Preschool Association
P.O. Box 2931
Nuku'alofa
email: tongapreschool@yahoo.co





Early childhood care and education in the Pacific

TUVALU

Ms Teimana Avaniatele
Ministry of Education & Sports
Vaiaku
Funafuti
Tel.: (688) 20414
email: teimaena@yahoo.com

Ms Sunema Makatui
Pre-school Council
Vaiaku, Funafuti
Tel.: (688) 90623

Ms Maliesi Kamuta Latasi
Ministry of Education & Sports
Vaiaku, Funafuti
Tel.: (688) 90952/20952
email: m_latasi@yahoo.com

VANUATU

Ms Jennifer James
National Preschool
Ministry of Education
P.O. Box 674
Port Vila
Tel.: (678) 22309/26408
email: jjames@vanuatu.gov.vu

Ms Sembu Mermer
P.O. Box 2007
Port Vila
Tel. : (678) 25542/42471
email: sembu_m@yahoo.com

PARTNERS

Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL)

Mr Canisius Filibert
Pacific Resources for Education and Learning
(PREL)
900 Fort St. Mall, Suite 300
Honolulu, HI96813
Tel.: (808) 441 1343
Fax: (808) 441 1385
email: filiberc@prel.org

Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE) Project

Dr Priscilla Puamau
Team Leader
PRIDE Project
University of the South Pacific
Suva
Tel.: (679) 323 2786
email: puamau_p@usp.ac.fj

Ms Ufemia Camaitoga
Lautoka Teachers' College
Lautoka
Fiji
Mob.: (679) 929 3410
email: camaitoga@yahoo.com





Adi Davila Toganivalu
P.O. Box 220
Nausori
Tel.: (679) 347 8556
Mob.: (679) 927 3655
email: datoganivalu@connect.com.fj

Ms Frances Pene
Institute of Education
University of the South Pacific
Suva
Tel. : (679) 323 2821
email: pene_f@usp.ac.fj

UNESCO

Dr Visessio Pongi
Director
UNESCO Cluster Office for the Pacific
P.O. Box 615
Apia, Samoa
Tel.: (685) 24276
Fax: (685) 26593/22253
email: vise@unesco.org.ws

Ms Maki Hayashikawa
Programme Specialist
Gender & Quality Basic Ed.
Tel.: (662) 391 0577
Fax: (662) 391 0866
email: m.hayashikawa@unescobkk.org

Asia-Pacific Programme of Education For All (APPEAL)

UNESCO Bangkok
THAILAND

SPBEA

Ms Anaseini Raivoce
Director, SPBEA
P.O. Box 2083
Government Buildings
26 McGregor Road
Suva
Tel.: (679) 331 5600/330 2141
Fax: (679) 330 2898/330 3633
email: araivoce@spbea.org.fj

Dr Richard Wah
email: rwah@spbea.org.fj
Senior Professional Officer
(As above)

UNICEF

Ms Emmanuelle Abrioux
Education Specialist
UNICEF Regional Office
Bangkok
THAILAND





Early childhood care and education in the Pacific

SECRETARIAT

Mr Aseri Yalangono
Director, Secondary Schools
Ministry of Education
Honiara
Tel.: (677) 28804
Fax: (677) 22042/28805
email: yalangono@gmail.com
yalangono@solomon.com.sb
Mob.: (677) 88484

Ms Bernadine Ha'amoori
(address above)

Ms Emily Siriki
(address above)

Ms Ema Ho'ota
Tel. : (677) 28804
email: e_furai@yahoo.com.au

SPBEA

Ms Roshni Mala

UNESCO

Ms Tosi Mata'utia
UNESCO Apia
Tel.: (685) 24276
Fax: (685) 22253/26593
email: tosi.matautia@gmail.com
tosimatautia@unesco.org.ws



APPENDIX B: Participants, Partners and Secretariat



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