



Ministry of Education

POLICY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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1. POLICY OBJECTIVE

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to provide clear direction to any organisation or party involved in Early Childhood Education (Kindergarten and Day-care) in Fiji in relation to access to quality Early Childhood Programs.

2. POLICY

- 2.1. Kindergartens in Fiji will provide developmentally appropriate, high quality Early Childhood programs to children turning 5 by 1st July. Kindergartens in Fiji will provide access to children younger than 5 if class size permits.
- 2.2. Early Childhood Education must recognise and affirm the cultural knowledge, language and values of all children in Fiji.
- 2.3. Communities must be supported by The Ministry of Education (henceforth called 'the Ministry') to establish and participate in Early Childhood Education in their local communities.
- 2.4. Management committees are responsible for establishing kindergartens and employing kindergarten teachers.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1. Introduction

Early Childhood Education experiences aim to promote the total development of the child: the social, emotional, physical, spiritual and cognitive skills. Such a holistic approach is essential in ensuring the child's all-round development. At the same time, kindergarten experiences equip young children with the skills for successful formal schooling, thus facilitating their smooth transition from kindergarten to primary school.

3.2. Rationale

It is in the first years of life that the fundamental organisation and functional capabilities of the brain are founded as young children interact with and make sense of their world. Research indicates that, of all educational investments, ECE achieves the highest rates of social return both in developing and industrialised countries. Kindergarten offers children a "head start" for their primary schooling, which positively influences their later performance in school. Those children who have been exposed to an ECE programme are more successful in their schooling than those who have not (UNESCO 1995). ECE is one way of providing opportunities for the less privileged child, thus helping to eliminate the inequalities in educational opportunities that are inherent in Fiji today (the rural/low income family).

3.3. Definitions

3.3.1. **Early Childhood Education** - At present in Fiji Early Childhood Education [ECE] is synonymous with kindergarten [5 year olds]. However internationally the term ECE is used to describe the education of the child from birth to 8 years of age.

3.3.2. **Kindergarten** – provides a half-day program 5 days per week for children 3–5½ years. Some kindergartens with low enrolment offer a full-day program. Kindergartens are established by villages or communities. Some kindergartens are attached to schools and located on their premises.

3.3.3. **Pre-school** – a term often used synonymously with kindergarten or generally used to describe experiences for children below school age.

- 3.3.4. **Early Childhood Centre** – a general term that includes Kindergartens, Day-care and Playgroup.
- 3.3.5. **Playcentre** – trained mothers and mother helpers, run the informal free-play sessions. Parent participation is essential and is usually held once a week or once a month.
- 3.3.6. **Playgroup** – provides play experiences for young children whilst parents attend meetings, classes etc.
- 3.3.7. **Supervisor/ Teacher-in –Charge/ Director**– the person responsible for the teaching programme and general administration of the centre.

4. RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND OTHER LINKS

4.1. Relevant Policies

Establishment of Educational Institutions
Staffing
Excursions

4.2. Relevant Legislation or Authority

Education for All (EFA 2000)
Education Commission Report (2000)
Education Act 1978
Public Service Act, 1999 Part 2; Section 6 (1) – (14)
Public Service Code of Conduct
Social Justice Act 2001
Compulsory Education Act 2000
General Orders

5. PROCEDURES

5.1. Enrolment

- 5.1.1. Kindergarten will provide access for children turning five where facilities and class size permits.
- 5.1.2. Kindergartens will provide access to children younger than five if class size permits, with facilities and preference for the oldest children.

5.2. Staff

- 5.2.1. Kindergarten Management Committees will ensure that staff currently teaching in Kindergarten, meet the standards set out in the *Staffing Policy* .
- 5.2.2. Kindergarten Management follow the Procedures in the *Staffing Policy* when employing Kindergarten Staff.

5.3. Physical Environment

- 5.3.1. All parties wanting to establish kindergartens will do so through a formal application process as set out in the *Establishment of Educational Institutions*

Policy. The Ministry of Education (henceforth called ‘the Ministry’) will oversee this process.

5.3.2. Kindergarten Management must ensure that buildings, grounds and equipment, (indoor and outdoor), is safe and developmentally appropriate for kindergarten aged students.

5.4. Programs

5.4.1. Qualified/Trained Kindergarten teachers must deliver Kindergarten Programs that are developmentally appropriate.

5.4.2. Kindergarten Management Committees are responsible for funding all operations of Kindergartens.

5.4.3. Recognised kindergarten in rural and disadvantage centres receive kindergarten teachers’ salary grants from Ministry of Education.

- ◆ Cat 1 - \$3,500 annual salary
- ◆ Cat 2 - \$1,800 annual salary
- ◆ Cat 3 - \$ 900 annual salary

5.4.4. Kindergarten Management Committees will have to apply to Principal Education Officer [Development] through their Senior Education Officer in their District for Building Grants.

5.5. Funding

5.5.1. Kindergarten management committees are responsible for funding to establish kindergartens and the recurrent funding for the operations of the kindergarten.

5.6. Monitoring and Evaluation

5.6.1. The monitoring and evaluation of kindergartens is the responsibility of the Director Primary or delegate.

5.6.2. Closing of kindergartens – refer to “Establishment of Educational Institutions Policy”.

6. GUIDELINES

6.1. Staff

6.1.1. Kindergarten Management and teachers should work collaboratively to ensure the focus of all decisions is based on what is best for the child.

6.2. Physical Environment

6.2.1. Kindergartens should be welcoming for students, parents, visitors and communities.

6.2.2. The environment should be safe including the grounds and buildings.

6.2.3. The environment should be print rich, stimulating and spacious.

6.2.4. The physical environment should be colourful, and attractive that is conducive to learning.

6.2.5. The environment should be well planned so its accident free.

6.3. Programmes

- 6.3.1. The most powerful way young children learn is through “PLAY”.
- 6.3.2. Play provides an ideal opportunity for children to demonstrate and to test their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- 6.3.3. Play promotes the development of physical, emotional, social intellectual and language skills.
- 6.3.4. Play provides opportunities for talking, listening and concentrating.
- 6.3.5. Play provides the foundation for later learning skills.
- 6.3.6. Play provides opportunities for sharing, waiting his/her turn and taking pleasure in the company of the other children and adults.

7. EFFECTIVE DATE

1 January 2006

8. REVIEW DATE

1 January 2007

9. KEY SEARCH WORDS

Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Development, Play Group, Pre-School, Early Childhood Centre, Kindergarten, Playgroup, Playcentre

10. APPROVED BY CEO

SIGNATURE

DATE