



Early Childhood Care and Education: Progress and Challenges

The current issue of the Newsletter focuses on “Early Childhood Care and Education: Issues and Challenges”. The articles have been written by various experts and researchers working in this area in the context of different member-countries in Asia Pacific region. These essays cover Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Malaysia, South Korea, Pakistan and Vietnam.

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All countries across the world are now paying increasing attention on Early Childhood Care and Education that has a considerable impact on overall and holistic development of children at the formative stage of their lives. In view of the immense impact of ECCE on human as well as societal development, more and more initiatives are being taken to provide formal ECCE programmes of reasonable quality in many countries, including those located in Asia Pacific region. The target 4.2 of Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims to ‘By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.’

The first article talks about the educational reform in Australia which includes a National Quality Agenda and Early Years Learning Framework for providing quality ECCE programme to ensure the best start of life for all children.

There are two articles on Bangladesh, both have discussed about different policy initiatives taken by government for providing ECCE for holistic development of children in a joyful environment. Both articles have mentioned about government and NGO collaboration while throwing some lights on emerging challenges in carrying out different activities for ECCE. The subsequent article has focused on China’s experience in provisioning of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education to all children for which

the country has to overcome many challenges, including regional inequality and lack of adequate resources.

Three articles are based on the status of ECCE in India. The first article discusses different initiatives undertaken by the Government of India ever since National Policy on Education has emphasised on provisioning of pre-school education to all children of 3-6 years' old. It has been suggested that the provisioning of ECCE needs to be considered from right perspective of children by extending RTE Act, 2009 to ECCE as well which would make ECCE fundamental right for 0-6 years' old children. The second article has mainly focused on quality of ECCE programme and suggested for rigorous monitoring of ECCE programme to improve its quality and standard. The major discussion point of the third article has been different initiatives taken by private agencies and suggested that a regulatory body needs to be put in place for maintaining the quality of pre-school education. All three articles referred recently introduced Samagra Siksha Abhiyan which has envisaged provisioning of education from pre-school to higher secondary level. There are two articles based on Malaysian experience of conducting ECCE programme - the first article has described different initiatives taken by the Ministry of Education, and the second one has suggested for developing and implementing a national plan for providing a quality ECCE programme.

The experience of Malaysia is followed by two articles narrating Pakistan's experience of educating and caring young children of below six years. Both the authors have discussed briefly the major policy initiatives of government, and the current national curriculum that have been introduced in the country with considerable impact on quality of ECCE programme. The next article has focused on different policies and activities conducted by South Korea and mentioned about nuri curriculum implemented across the country. This article has been followed by the write-up narrating the situation of ECCE in Vietnam.

All the articles included in this issue have provided a detailed understanding about the existing policies and practices in different countries for implementation of Early Childhood Care and Education programme. It is evident that, all countries have developed their own policy framework and guidelines to ensure access of quality ECCE programme to all children of eligible age group. However, all these countries are also facing various challenges while translating these policies into action.

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Demonstrating Growth to Ensure all Children have the Best Start in Life

Australia has undertaken reform in its Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector and made significant progress in the last decade. Achievements include the introduction of a National Quality Agenda – a partnership between the Commonwealth and State Governments – that has produced a national early childhood curriculum framework (Early Years Learning Framework). This is a National Quality Standard against which ECEC programs are monitored and rated, and funded to provide universal access to up to 15 hours per week of pre-primary education of one year before school.

This reform has resulted in positive growth. Today, more than 92 per cent of children attend a pre-primary program (usually at age 4) in the year before school, and more than 94 per cent of those children receive at least 15 hours per week. The proportion of children reported as developmentally vulnerable on a domain of learning, and development has been more or less stable since 2009. The most significant remaining challenge for the reform agenda, however, is to deliver on the promise that ‘by 2020, all children have the best start in life.

New research shows that Australian ECEC programs, in general, score low on some measures of quality. Educators need tools to locate themselves on a continuum of quality that captures their use of feedback, introduction of new concepts, and modeling of oral language. Such tools can help educators improve quality in ways that are empirically known to boost children’s learning and development. By using measures that describe what quality practice looks like, from low to high, educators can set realistic goals by focusing on incremental, but continuous quality improvement. This is vital, because many children are already well behind their peers when they attend ECEC programs, and this gap widens as they enter school. Educators need to be

able to demonstrate that all children, particularly the children from vulnerable backgrounds, are benefiting from attending ECEC programs. When educators can locate children’s current learning and development on progressions of social and emotional, self-regulation, and cognitive skills, they can support children to achieve the next set of skills on their journey of development and learning.

Ultimately, the biggest challenge for the Australian ECEC sector is to demonstrate its impact by targeting specific high-quality practice to the learning and developmental needs of individual children so that all children get the best start in life. This would be a compelling evidence of a truly effective ECEC sector.

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The next issue of ANTRIEP Newsletter (July-December, 2018) will focus on the theme “Science Education in Schools: Major Focus on STEM”

Early Childhood Care and Education in Bangladesh: Prioritise the Action to Achieve SDG 4

Early Childhood Care and Education, widely known as ECCE, is increasingly receiving importance all over the world. Many studies have observed that early childhood programmes as a mechanism to reduce inequality derived from poverty, gender, ethnicity or caste, promote social justice. Bangladesh is not an exception in terms of realising the potential of early year initiatives.

In Bangladesh, ECCE activities have been institutionalised during the past two decades by the government. Bangladesh ECD Network is also supporting and encouraging organisations, agencies and partners to generate commitment to and investment in child development. Likewise, The National Education Policy, 2010, sets the goal and objective of pre-primary education for holistic development of children through joyful environment. In 2011, the Government of Bangladesh has formulated a pre-primary curriculum and, after two years, it introduced the ECCD policy. This policy framework is closely aligned with ‘Operational Framework for Pre-Primary Education’ which was developed in 2011. These two documents serve as noteworthy guidelines for the implementation of early education programmes and provide a common standard for all ECCE initiatives; be it the government, or the NGOs.

Along with the policy level progress, Bangladesh has made significant advancement in terms of rapid increase in number of institutions and enrolment of children, and capacity development of teachers at pre-primary level. In 2016, 38.4% of government and 36.1% of non-government schools had provision for early childhood education. Though different span of pre-primary school exists, majority of the children are availing one year programme. The pre-primary net enrolment rate of four-five years’ old children has increased by over four

times from 9.3% in 1998 to 40.4% in 2013. Age-wise, it was 29% for four-year old and 52.5% of five-year old children. Gender equity in enrolment was also reported. BRAC is a pioneer NGO in adopting an innovative ECD model. It has introduced play-based curriculum with child-friendly environment, and effective involvement of parents. Since 1997, over six million children received pre-primary course from BRAC; of these, over 60% are girls.

Bangladesh witnesses considerable rural-urban disparity in pre-school enrolment in favour of urban children. Admission of primary-aged children in pre-primary education is also a matter of concern. In addition, rapid expansion of private institutions has jeopardised equity. ECCE is the first formal socialisation agent for the children which has huge potentiality in achieving SDGs. ECCE is, therefore, a central component of the new global development framework. Bangladesh needs to realise the potentiality of this and act accordingly.

Considering ECD as a priority issue, Bangladesh should keep enough budgetary provision, create more public opportunities for the marginalised, prepare teachers accordingly, and collaborate with other related sectors such as health, nutrition, poverty, etc.

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ECCD in Bangladesh: Progress and Challenges

The Government of Bangladesh, as a signatory of Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Education For All (EFA), SDGs and other world declarations, attaches high importance to ECCD. The government has adopted a number of policies such as National Children Policy, 2011; Comprehensive ECCD Policy, 2013; and Operational Framework of ECCD, etc. In continuum of these initiatives, 16 ministries jointly developed ECCD Operational and Implementation Plan in 2016. Alongside, the government has also introduced one year Pre-Primary class with special emphasis to address disparity issues. Apart from this initiative, a large number of NGOs and INGOs have been working on ECCD and Pre-Primary Education for young children. The Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) has been playing a significant role for promoting ECCD as well.

Major progresses in the field of ECCD are:

- Operational Framework for Pre-Primary Education (PPE) was approved in 2008. The government has also initiated and approved the pre-primary curriculum, GO-NGO collaboration guideline, Pre-primary Education (PPE) Expansion Plan, Early Learning Standard (ELDS), etc.
- Government Primary Schools are the main channels to deliver the PPE. However, projects of other ministries, NGO schools/centres and private schools also deliver PPE.
- Currently, 232 NGOs are implementing ECD programme covering a total of 9,10,227 children (Ref: Directory of BEN).
- Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) of PPE rose from 23% in 2009 (MICS, 2009) to 88.8% in 2016 (Assessment of PPE, 2016).

- 56.6% children are enrolled in Government Primary Schools (GPS) and Non-Registered Primary Schools (NRPS).
- 43.4% children are enrolled in NGO and private schools

As a strong commitment of the government, PPE curriculum with teaching-learning packages has been developed. PPE has been included in the Diploma in Education (Dep-in-Ed) programme.

Despite these efforts, appropriate financial allocation for ECCD activities, massive campaign for rapid expansion of ECCD and strong regional co-operation are still urgent needs of the time. The country is facing many challenges for developing and expanding ECCD services for children under pre-primary age group (0 to 5 years) which include making ECCE services inclusive, provisioning of mother tongue-based teaching- learning facilities, establishing coordination mechanism, introducing monitoring system of institutional, community and family-based ECCD programme and so on. It is also required to implement GO-NGO collaboration guideline for ensuring NGO participation in Primary Education Development Programme-4 (PEDP 4) and making pre-school services universal with quality Parenting Programme.

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New Policy and Practice for Pre-school Education in China

The Incheon Declaration for Education, 2030 stresses the importance of pre-school education and “encourage the provision of at least one year of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education and that all children have access to quality early childhood development, care and education.” Motivated by Incheon Declaration in achieving the right to pre-school education for all, Chinese Government commits to develop pre-school education, including development goal and task, the path of institutional innovation and development strategy.

Furthermore, the National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan, 2010-2020 clearly states that nationality will support pre-school education in the next ten years. Chinese Government, in order to achieve the goal set by Education Reform and Development Plan, has implemented two Three-Year Pre school Education and Action Plans, and the Ministry of Education, to continue its mandated role, has set up a special high-level leading group for promoting, conducting and supervising preschool education and action plans.

After acknowledging the efforts made, 13th Five-Year Plan for National Education Development points out that three-year of gross enrollment rate in pre-school education has reached 75% in 2015, which successfully informed the proposed pre-school education goal of Education Reform and Development Plan in advance. Besides, this plan still commits to speed up the development of pre-school education, continue to expand the inclusive pre-school education resources, ease the shortage of pre-schools, develop early education for 0-3 years’ old children and promote pre-school education and care quality for all.

Having taken stock of progress made towards the pre-school education goals since 2011 and the lessons

learned, as well as having examined the remaining challenges and deliberated on the proposed 2020 Education Reform and Development Plan, four ministries and commissions, including the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance, determined to establish the third Three-Year Pre-school Education and Action Plans (2017-2020). This action plan reaffirms and refines pre-school education goal that three-year of gross enrollment rate in pre-school education reaches 85% and coverage rate of inclusive kindergarten reaches 80%.

However, on future priorities and strategies for pre-school education achievement, we recognise with great concern for three problems that need to be addressed, including the shortage of inclusive pre-school education resources, the large regional disparities in education quality and the insufficient pre-school education teachers in rural area, which limit and restrain the further development of pre-school education.

Towards 2035, the development of Chinese pre-school education should not only stress on improving gross enrollment rate and coverage rate, but also universalisation of pre-school education along with other strategies for improving quality. This would require professional development of teachers, provisioning of better internal and external environment for pre-school education and establishment of comprehensive national monitoring and evaluation systems in order to generate equitable quality pre-school education.

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Early Childhood Care and Education in India

Early Childhood Care and Education in India has a pivotal role in Indian Education System as it serves the most crucial stage of small children within the age group of 0-6 years who preferably need proper nutrition and health for their appropriate physical and psychological growth. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme, under the supervision of Ministry of Women and Children Development (WCD) since 1975, is providing basic services, including early education to small children (3-6 years) before entering the formal schooling. Under this programme, Anganwadis/Balwadis are functioning across the country for implementing ICDS which was first introduced in the V Five Year Plan on experimental basis under the supervision of the government.

The importance of ECCE was also recognised by Kothari Commission (1964-66) report wherein a new educational structure integrated with ‘three years of pre-schooling’ was recommended. Later, during the VII Plan (1985-90), under the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, ECCE was again recognised by accentuating to the social, mental, physical, moral and emotional development of children. The policy has also assured the integration of ECCE with ICDS programme through day-care centres for strengthening primary education as well. Recently, the ECCE was recognised under Section 11 of Right to Education Act, 2009 which asks the concerned government to make necessary arrangement for free pre-school education by preparing children below six years for elementary education. Subsequently, under XII Five Year Plan (2012-17), ECCE was once again acknowledged as an important part of educational structure. The plan recommended for facilitating every primary school to have a pre-primary section with a vision to prepare small children for primary education within the environment of formal schooling under the supervision of HRD Ministry. During this period, the National Policy on ECE (2013) also came

into light endorsing the equal right for each child of below six years of age to quality pre-school education. Notwithstanding the long standing and popular demand for extending the RTE Act, 2009 to ECCE, it has not been made part of RTE Act yet. However, ECCE has also been part of centrally sponsored schemes like District Primary Education Programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and also the latest integrated scheme called ‘Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan’.

As the data reveal, over the years, progress has been observed in provisioning of access to pre-school education through Anganwadi centres as well as formal schools in India. While, at the end of the IX Five Year Plan (2011-12), the number of Anganwadis providing pre-schooling was around 5.1 lakh with 1.66 million beneficiaries, these figures have increased to 12.53 lakh Anganwadis and 36.5 million beneficiaries by the end of XII Plan (2016-17). Apart from the Anganwadi centres, there are many government primary schools providing pre-school education separately. As per the U-DISE 2016-17, at present, around 23.8% primary schools have pre-primary sections where 11.3% children (of total children enrolled in primary sections/schools) have been enrolled in pre-primary sections. Nagaland has the highest proportion (96.3%) of pre-primary classes within the primary government schools and 46.3% of total enrolment accounts for enrolment in pre-primary grades. The States/UTs like Chandigarh, West Bengal, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry have more than 90% government schools with pre-primary classes. An attempt has been made in 2018 by Himachal Pradesh State Government to provide pre-primary education facilities within 3400 government primary schools located in 12 different districts with the motive to increase the enrolment of government elementary schools. In addition, there are many private schools that are providing pre-school education across the country, particularly in urban areas.

Though, many initiatives have already been taken to improve the access situation, many challenges are yet to be addressed for provisioning of quality pre-schooling facilities for all children in the age group of 3-6 years. Regular monitoring of pre-school education should also be made mandatory to maintain its quality and effectiveness. More attention is required to be paid on availability of suitable infrastructure, play materials and other equipments in these centres and schools while proper training of teachers to be conducted to facilitate teaching-learning process. Further, the convergence and cooperation of both ministries i.e. Ministry of Human Resource Development and Ministry of Women and Child Development which are committed to early childhood care and education need to be given priority

to improve the present status of ECCE which is now part of the new scheme of 'Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan'. Eventually, efforts need to be made to extend RTE Act to pre-school education to address the rights of all children in the age group of 3-6 years to the formal pre-school education of good quality.

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Early Childhood Care and Education in India: Success and Challenges

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) provision in India began at the early phase of the twentieth century. The formation of the Nutan Bal Shikshan Sangh in 1926 helped to raise awareness about Maria Montessori method of teaching. Annie Besant and Rabindranath Tagore also played major roles in the development of ECCE in the early part of the twentieth century. The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) Report, more popularly known as Sergeant Report (1944), recommended for setting up of separate schools in urban areas where sufficient children were available in the short radius attached to a primary school. As per data, apart from the government-run schools or ECCE centres, a large chunk of ECCE services in urban areas are in the private domain, involving individual providers, educational institutions as well as non-governmental organisations.

In 2010, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 was enacted. At the implementation level, the successive Five Year Plans ushered in major changes in the understanding and appreciation of ECCE from 'child welfare' to 'development' and then to 'rights of the child'.

Further, 'Education For All' Global Monitoring Reports (EFA GMR) 2005 has recognised that ECCE is globally a crucial element for improving school preparedness and psycho-social development of children. In the World Education Forum 2015, the central role of education in sustainable development has been clearly reaffirmed. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 has also suggested that "All girls and boys complete affordable and high quality early childhood development programmes, and primary and secondary education to prepare them for

the challenges of modern life and decent livelihoods". (SDSN, 2014: An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development).

The Government of India approved the National ECCE Policy and, inter alia, notified the National Curriculum Framework and Quality Standards for ECCE in 2013. Currently, the Union Budget, 2018-19, has proposed to treat school education holistically without segmentation from pre-nursery to Class XII. The Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan extending from pre-school to Class XII has envisaged for a holistic education system. In addition, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) as the nodal department for ECCE and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme, is covering around 38 million children through a network of almost 1.4 million Anganwadi centres became the delivery vehicle. ICDS includes delivery of an integrated package of services such as supplementary nutrition, immunisation, health check-up, pre-school education, referral services and nutrition & health education. The delivery of pre-school education is also carried out by community-based child development support through Accredited Social Health Activists; and the Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme. There has been visible improvement in enrolment at pre-primary, primary level and retention in primary grades but not without substantial disparity across and within Indian States on quality.

MWCD has developed 08 Quality Standards as it recognises the synergistic and interdependent relationship between health, nutrition, psycho-social, emotional and educational needs of the child. Given the multi-sectoral nature of early childhood care and education, linkages and coordination are needed among various Ministries and Departments both vertically i.e. national to local level, and horizontally, in line Departments. The weak implementation of policy provisions and flagship programmes including RTE Act, National ECCE Policy and ICDS lacking inter-sectoral and inter-Ministerial convergence are leaving children without adequate services. Basic facilities for organising ECCE such as infrastructure, health facility, competent and child-friendly teachers, their orientation and training, curriculum as well as assessment, monitoring and supervision of ECCE activities continue to pose challenges. The quality standards tend to get compromised at various levels. Therefore, documentation and adoption of good practices in ECCE, research-based intervention and making ECCE mandatory in all primary schools, and rigorous monitoring would be essential for achieving the goals of quality ECCE by 2030 of Incheon Declaration adopted by World Education Forum 2015.

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Early Childhood Education by Private Sector in India: Initiatives and Concerns

India has the largest child population in the world. It has 60 million children in the pre-school age group i.e. between the age of three and six years. Provision for children in the pre-school years is conducted in a range of settings by the private, public and voluntary sectors. The pre-school / child care market in India is forecasted

to grow at a CAGR of around 23% during the period of 2017-22. Therefore, there is a great opportunity for entrepreneurs to tap the potential market. Growing urbanisation, increasing proportion of working women coupled with drift towards nuclear family structure, affordability, rising aspirations for quality education

and also preparation of children for admission in reputed schools are factors motivating the steady growth in pre-schools, particularly managed by the private providers. Despite having policy direction for ECCE, in India, pre-schools are not under the official formal educational system at present. Virtual absence of public policy restrictions, absence of legal requirements (such as registration, licensing), easy way to exit, recession proof industry, low capital requirement are also enabling factors for private entrepreneurs to operate pre-schools for profit.

There is diversity of private providers i.e. unorganised neighbourhood pre-schools and organised pre-schools (stand alone) and also in private schools having pre-school sections. Fees charged by the private pre-schools depend on the spending power of the local area in which they operate. Under the organised private pre-school segment, K12 private schools are starting their own pre-schools to tap the early childhood market and also pre-school brands are coming up with their pre-school chains. Each pre-school brand maintains its own unique curriculum which remains inexplicit. They attract parents by the virtue of their brand value that claim for having better inputs in terms of various aspects such as scientifically designed, research backed and outcome oriented course structure, play material, pedagogy, infrastructure, and teacher training. Key models of branded pre-schools are: company-owned and franchisee i.e. some brands are expanding by establishing their own company unit while some are expanding by franchising in which the franchisor receives royalty and one-time license/franchise fees. Although the private provisioning for the pre-schools is expanding at a phenomenal pace, the practices adopted in these schools are based, in general, on a content that is downward extension of primary school curriculum.

A number of initiatives have been taken for provisioning of good quality pre-school education. The recently

introduced integrated scheme, the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan envisages at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education from pre-school to senior secondary stage in accordance with the sustainable goals for education. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has developed policy and quality standards for early childhood care and education to provide a framework for assessing the implementation of the ECCE programmes across the country. NCERT has developed “Guidelines for Pre-school Education” and a “Curriculum for Pre-school Education” to provide good quality pre-school education to children. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR), based on the National ECCE Policy 2013, has developed regulatory guidelines for private pre-schools with an objective of bringing inclusiveness and uniformity in all private educational institutions imparting pre-school education and preventing violation of child rights against children in the age group of 3 to 6 years. Despite these initiatives, a major area of concern is that the private providers are largely unregulated. So, there is a need to have a regulatory body for maintenance of the quality of pre-school education.

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Progress and Challenges of Pre-school Education in Malaysia

Early childhood education in Malaysia has expanded significantly since its independence in 1957. The service is provided by both public and private sectors that have shown significant increase in terms of quantity and quality over the period. In the earlier years, early childhood education providers were Kemajuan Masyarakat (KEMAS), run by the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development; and JPNIN pre-schools, operated by the Department of National Unity and Integration. In 1992, Ministry of Education (MoE) joined the ranks, piloted its pre-school in the form of annex to the existing primary school. In 2003, the MoE, Malaysia officially launched its pre-school education and has been appointed as the focal ministry overseeing the running of pre-school education in the country. Currently, out of 7,774 primary schools, 6,105 offer pre-school education, representing 78.5% of the total number of primary schools in the country. Similarly, the number of KEMAS and JPNIN pre-school classes has also increased, albeit at a smaller scale.

Besides the aforesaid public establishments, pre-school education is also being offered by private sector and Non-Governmental Organisations. The enrolment in private pre-schools outnumbered public pre-schools. The MoE targets to achieve universal enrolment in pre-school education by 2020. To ensure the standard and quality of education throughout the country, all pre-schools are required to use the National Pre-school Curriculum as stipulated in the National Education Act' 1996. The curriculum emphasises on communication skills, literacy and numeracy skills as well as social skills to prepare children for formal primary education.

Various endeavours by the MoE have produced remarkable results in children's access to pre-school education. Among others, the MoE has embarked on the following efforts to expand access: 1) increasing

the number of pre-school classes, 2) providing private pre-school launching grants, 3) promoting private pre-school registration, 4) providing private pre-school fee assistance, 5) enhancing the delivery of teaching and learning in pre-schools, 6) increasing the number of pre-schools for children with special needs and inclusive education, and 7) up-skilling of pre-school teachers. In implementing the said initiatives, the MoE encountered challenges in the areas of human resource, finance and expertise to: 1) monitor the quality of pre-school programmes and teachers, 2) raise the competencies of pre-school teachers to the minimum qualification of a Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), 3) monitor and validate pre-school physical facilities and safety, and 4) ensure classroom instruction prepares children to participate in formal education that emphasises on literacy and numeracy.

Human capital development requires sustainable strategic planning that should start from pre-school stage. Various efforts taken by the MoE to provide equal access to quality pre-school education can be achieved through the integration of established pre-school curriculum, effective classroom instruction and constant initiatives to draw pre-school-aged children to the classroom.

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Sustainable Early Childhood Care and Education in Malaysia

In recent years, ECCE has gained tremendous importance as it has contributed to breaking the cycle of poverty and also offers an entry point and platform for improving social equity and inclusion. Due to the rapid neural connections, brain development and growth that take place at the formative age of the children, it has been experienced that those children who participate in quality ECCE, exhibit tremendous gains in their overall social, cognitive and intellectual development.

It is to note that, the United States of America has set a national goal for narrowing of the achievement gap between lower-income and middle-class students, and that between racial and ethnic groups. This is a key purpose of the 'No Child Left Behind' Act of USA, which relies primarily on the assessment to promote changes within schools to accomplish that goal. However, prevalence of out-of-school factors (OSFs) plays a powerful role in bridging existing achievement gaps. These OSFs also include extended learning opportunities, such as pre-school, after school, and summer school programmes that can help to mitigate the problem of out-of-school children particularly some groups of children such as ethnic minorities, migrant children, children with disabilities and, most importantly, girls in South and South-east Asia. Slow progress has been especially noted in the expansion of early childhood care and education in many countries and also in reducing the number of out-of-school children, and in improving the quality of education.

Most of the countries, including Malaysia, are increasingly paying attention to improve their ECCE programme as it is very important and basic factor of development of human capital resources. In April 2000, at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, the international community reaffirmed its commitment to achieve 'Education For All (EFA)' by 2015 and ECCE has been one of the important sectors for achieving EFA goals. In view of its importance, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 has also stressed on provisioning of quality ECCE programme for all children of eligible age group across the globe. In view of the above, it is widely acknowledged that all countries, including Malaysia, should have a national action plan for the promotion of the 0-6 integrated ECCE system. The national action plan aimed at favouring the implementation of the 0-6 ECCE integrated system in the target three-year periods. The plan focuses on three main areas of intervention:

- New buildings, restoration and upgrading of the existing buildings belonging to the public administrations;
- Financing parts of managing costs for running ECCE services; and
- Continuous Professional Development of ECCE staff.

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Early Childhood Education in Pakistan

Early Childhood Education (ECE) mainly relates to early learning of young children. ECE consists of activities and experiences that are intended to affect developmental changes in children prior to their entry into a formal class, grade or primary school. ECE is an integral and a coordinated approach for child development that is followed in most of the developed

countries, whereas the developing countries, due to financial constraints and lack of awareness, are not able to fully or partly promote ECD or even ECE.

According to Pakistan Education Statistics 2016-17, total enrolment of pre-primary education (Katchi Class and un-admitted children) was 9.784 million. Of these,

4.799 million enrolled in the private sector. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) was 84%, for male it was 89%, and for female it was 78% with 0.87 GPI. Majority of the children enrolled in ECE are below 5 years of age. There are neither separate educational institutions (nor classrooms) for ECE, or specific teachers for ECE in public sector schools; however, in private sector, there are 442 institutions exclusively offering pre-primary education with a total of 2636 teachers.

The National Education Policy of 1998-2010, first time in the history of the country, envisaged to institutionalise and integrate 'Katchi Class' as ECE in all public sector schools but this could not be implemented so far. The National Plan of Action was prepared to achieve 'Education For All' Goals and ECE was the priority areas. Later on, funding for ECE was reflected in Education Sector Reform Programme (ESR) launched by the Federal Government and the financial resources were provided to provinces/regions for this purpose.

The National Education Policy, 2009 recognises the importance of Early Childhood Education, and proposed the following policy actions:

Policy Action-1: Improvement in quality of ECE shall be based on a concept of holistic development of the child that provides a stimulating, interactive environment, including play, rather than focusing on regimes that require rote learning and rigid achievement standards.

Policy Action-2: ECE age group shall be recognised as comprising 3 to 5 years. At least one year pre-primary education shall be provided by the State and universal access to ECE shall be ensured within the next ten years.

Policy Action-3: Provision of ECE shall be attached to primary schools, which shall be provided with additional budget, teachers and assistants for this purpose.

Policy Action-4: For ECE teachers, a two-year specialised training to deal with young children shall be a necessary requirement

Policy Action-5: This training shall be on the basis of ECE revised National Curriculum. The curriculum and support material for ECE shall take account of the cultural diversity of particular area.

The provisions under education policy (2009) regarding ECE have not been implemented in letter and spirit in all provinces/regions. Hence, provincial/regional Education Departments have started ECE classes in public schools in accordance with their own consideration. For example, no additional teachers were provided for ECE classes; already available teachers were given one or two weeks' ECE Training. ECE teachers' training programmes were organised either in collaboration with NGOs or financial assistance of International Donor Agencies in public sector in all provinces/regions. Two-year specialised training to teachers, as recommended in the policy, could not be provided to the ECE teachers yet. As per policy provision, no additional budget has been provided for recruiting specified ECE teachers and other support for ECE classes i.e. learning material and AV aids, etc. With the help of donor agencies all provinces have included ECE in their education sector development plans, and some learning materials have been provided in ECE classrooms in almost all provinces/regions.

Thus, it is understandable that, attention is being paid on provisioning of ECE across the country and there is a clear national policy, standards, curriculum and teacher training packages for pre-primary/ECE. In public sector schools, pre-primary is a part of primary school, and a prescribed syllabus is followed while private sector follows child-centred teaching methodology. The government has approved national curriculum which is being implemented in selected schools, mostly supported by donors. The government needs to provide adequate finance for proper implementation and progress of ECCE.

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Early Childhood Care and Education: Progress and Challenges in Pakistan

Pakistan is signatory to a number of global policies for early childhood care and education. However, public policy in ECE has been inconsistent. During 1970s, ECE was formally organised as Katchi (pre-primary) Classes in primary schools, and officially discontinued during 1980s due to lack of interest and attention. Within the private sector, ECE operated largely on a commercial basis, catering to the elite. Thus, most of the young children in Pakistan had a poor start to education. The 1990 Education For All World Conference was an important step in Pakistan's renewed commitment to ECE. Various policy documents have since emerged with commitments, and recommended policy actions related to expanding facilities for pre-primary classes, teacher training, provision of learning resources, and interactive, stimulating play-based classes. The Education Sector Reform (2000-03) was historic; as, for the first time, the federal government nominally allocated ECE funds for innovative programmes.

Pakistan's National Curriculum for Early Childhood Education was introduced in 2002. The curriculum, revised in 2007 and 2017, is available in English, Urdu and Sindhi (Ministry of Education, 2007; 2017). The devolution of education to provinces in 2010 with the 18th constitutional amendment led to provincial governments to meet their obligations to educate and take care of the young children. Free and compulsory education by the State for children 5-16 years' old is guaranteed by the Right to Education (RTE) Article 25A of the 18th constitutional amendment. Since 2010, Provincial Education Sector Plans, developed in collaboration with international donors, reflect provision to promote ECE. In 2017, the Sindh Early Childhood Care and Education Policy was also launched (Mozaffar, 2015). A Sindh curriculum for ECE is also being developed.

Pakistan has recently committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in which Target 4.2 states that, by 2030, countries should 'ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education'. Various ECE programmes have been implemented in Pakistan in the public and private

sectors. ECE teacher training programmes and resource development are also receiving growing attention within private sector initiatives as well. Research in ECE is also gradually growing. Nevertheless, ECE remains a key issue in Pakistan.

Given Pakistan's trajectory in education so far, the outlook for achieving ECE targets in the SDGs seems challenging for the majority, putting the country's progress at risk. Of the 8.61 million children of age 3-5 years, the net enrolment constitutes 23.7%. It is noteworthy that, the dropout rates are high between Katchi and Class one within the public sector – 35% dropout for boys and 39% for girls even at this stage. Investing early in young children's care and education is crucial for their optimal development. While Pakistan's policy commitments to ECE have led to a number of valuable contributions by the government, civil society, international organisations, and academia, accelerated efforts are required to meet SDG targets. The Nurturing Care Framework developed by WHO, UNICEF, the World Bank and other key partners, provides a valuable roadmap which countries like Pakistan can follow to ensure attainment of the SDGs. Greater synergy through an integrated, multi-sectoral approach involving efforts by stakeholders at all levels, including the government, civil society, academia, community, schools and home, is required to design, plan and implement quality early childhood education programmes. Capacity development of teachers, material development, knowledge production, and child-friendly classrooms, where learning can happen through caring, cutting-edge and contextually relevant approaches are critical to the progress of ECE in Pakistan. With political will and commitment, this can be achieved at a large scale to meet the early care and educational needs of all young children in Pakistan.

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The Status of Early Childhood Education in South Korea

The Nuri Curriculum, a centralised curriculum for early childhood education, was initiated by the Government of South Korea to provide quality education across socio-economic classes and to improve the problem of low birth rate, by partially increasing expenses on child care. The importance of early childhood development has also contributed to the development and implementation of the Nuri Curriculum. Currently, more than 90% of 3-5 year olds who attend pre-schools, or day-care centres and kindergartens are financially supported through the Nuri Curriculum. The Nuri Curriculum aims to develop children's character and good behaviour. Its contents consist of five core areas such as physical education/health, communication, social relations, arts, and inquiry of nature.

The Nuri Curriculum has integrated two separate early childhood curriculum: the kindergarten curriculum and the standard pre-school curriculum. As the Nuri Curriculum offers the common core curriculum, it helps to enhance the quality of early childhood education and guarantee the equitable and leveled starting point in life. For the last 5 years, regardless of where they go, kindergarten or pre-school, all 3-5-year olds have received universal early childhood education, which contributes

to effectively alleviating discrepancies that occur depending on regions and income levels.

Although, the Nuri Curriculum has been considered the very first attempt to integrate early childhood education and care which has been on prime focus for the last 20 years, the follow-up policy is yet to be implemented. A variety of issues, such as a great deal of financial burden to support the programme, absence of any primary responsible governmental entity, and a managing teacher qualification system, makes it difficult to have the follow-up of the policy implemented. The new administration has proposed the alleviation of quality discrepancies between kindergarten and pre-schools or day-care centres through the standardisation of teachers, curricular programmes and educational facilities, as one of the important national objectives. Greater attention should be laid on the improvement of teacher quality, better treatment of teachers, professional development of teachers, and the reformation of teacher qualification system on priority basis.

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Development of ECCE in Vietnam

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is the first level of the national education system in Vietnam, whose primary aim is to take care and educate children from 3 months to 6 years of age. ECE institutions include: nursery/ children's group (3 months-3 years), kindergarten (3 years-6 years) and pre-school (3 months-6 years). According to the 2017 statistics, there are approximately 10 million children under the age of 6, of which, the

rate of children being looked after and educated in ECE institutions is about 28%, enrollment rate at kindergarten age is over 90%, and that of 5-year-old children is nearly 99%.

In Vietnam, the current ECE curriculum is implemented in most ECE institutions throughout the country. The goal of universalisation of ECE for 5-year-old

children has already been completed in early 2017. Major focus of ECE programme has been on 5-year-old children particularly in difficult areas, borderlands, high mountains, and islands, ethnic minority children, orphans, children with disabilities, or children living in poor households. Ethnic minority kindergartners are taught supplementary Vietnamese lessons. School Milk Program is implemented in all ECE institutions. In addition, the network of schools and classrooms has developed in size and scale, enhancing the quality of child care and education for meeting the increasing demand for education of pre-school children. The country has about 15,000 ECE institutions, of which, 84% are public schools and each commune/ward has its own kindergarten. Facilities and equipment, school building, classrooms have improved significantly, gradually removing makeshift and borrowed classrooms. At present, the percentage of education managers and ECE teachers with the required standard qualifications (Intermediate Pedagogy degree or above) is about 99%, of which, nearly 65% have got Pedagogical College degrees or higher. The kindergarten teachers/classrooms ratio in the country is now 1.7 (the regulatory ratio is 2.2).

The major challenge of ECCE programme in Vietnam includes persistence of inequality in support policy for access to quality care and education for children between nursery and kindergarten, and between public and non-public ECE institutions. Many ethnic

minority children have not been ensured the necessary Vietnamese language proficiency to acquire knowledge at primary school. Moreover, there is not enough state budget to ensure the facilities and equipment to meet the demand. As a result, the number of children/classes exceeds the regulatory number (over 40 children per class) affecting the safety of children and the quality of the ECE curriculum. Teacher shortages are prevalent in most localities and the quality of ECE teachers does not meet the requirements of providing care and education to children. Child abuse, assault, exploitation, trafficking, neglect persist as an unresolved and complicated situation.

Information on children at pre-school age and ECCE development has not been regularly updated. There is a lack of systems and mechanisms for collecting information, monitoring and reporting to the Government on child care and comprehensive development at the local level. Monitoring, implementation of early childhood care, education, development and protection in a number of private ECE institutions and children groups are still limited.

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News from ANTRIEP Member-Institutions (January-June, 2018)

Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)

Australia

- A collaboration between the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), UNICEF and Ministries of Education in participating countries, SEA-PLM was designed to provide culturally relevant assessment tools to measure the learning achievement of primary students across the region.
- ACER India is working with partners across South Asia to ensure inclusive and quality education for all. The organization is also working in capacity development to support student learning assessments.
- The Commonwealth Department of Education and Training commissioned the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) to review the Learner Engagement Scale (LES), a key measure of student experience.

Aga Khan University (AKU-IED) Institute for Educational Development,

Pakistan

- AKU's Institute for Educational Development in East Africa (IED, EA) partnered with SOS Children's Villages Tanzania, provided training to 43 teachers on alternative approaches in promoting interactive learning and teaching in early years education.
- AKU conducted a Teaching and Learning Enhancement Workshop (TLEW), to support novice and experienced faculty members to develop increased competence and confidence as facilitators of learning as well as provide them with resources to be more reflective about their teaching.
- An online Continuing Professional Education Programme related to Understanding and Supporting Play has been organized during April 13-22, 2018 under Institute for Educational Development, Karachi, AKU.

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)

Bangladesh

- BRAC organised a series of programmes during 'The Global Week of Action on Road Safety' from 21-27 May, 2018.
- BRAC and Institute of Informatics and Development (IID) conducted a survey to identify the people's priority areas in the next national budget and review the progress of implementation of the budget of the outgoing fiscal of 2017-18.
- A Discussion Meet was organised at the BRAC Centre on 26 April, 2018 based on a study on 'Obstacles for Women's Participation in the Information and Communication Sector'.
- The BRAC Migration Media Award was held on 18 April, 2018 at the BRAC Centre. BRAC recognised the contributions made by journalists in protecting the rights of migrants and their families.

Bangladesh Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)

Bangladesh

- A three-day TOT course on Activity-based Teaching Learning was held on 3-5 June, 2018 at NGO Forum Training Centre.
- CAMPE launched a pioneering report based on Education Watch 2017 on Ethics and Values in School: Capturing the Spirit of Education in a ceremony held in May, 2018.
- A National Consultation on Social Tolerance and Peaceful Co-existence for Promoting Pluralism was held on 14 March, 2018, organised by CAMPE under the support of CFLI.

International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP)

Paris, France

- IIEP-UNESCO published four new Policy Briefs on Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Education.
- IIEP-UNESCO participated in the Pan-African High-Level Conference on Education (PACE 2018), took place in Kenya from 25-27 April, 2018, to strengthen the partnerships in education and accelerate the implementation of SDG 4 and the Education 2030 Agenda and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-25) at the country level.
- A study visit to Nouvelle Aquitaine region in the South West region of France was made from

25 February - 2 March, 2018 by Educational Planners taking training under Advanced Training Programme at IIEP, Paris.

- The Ministry of National Education in Senegal together with UNESCO Dakar and IIEP-UNESCO hosted a Workshop on 31 January, 2018 on Education Financing.

Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI)

Korea

- Dr. Sang-Jin Ban, a Professor of Chonbuk National University, was appointed as the new President of Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) on 30 March, 2018.

National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration

New Delhi, India

- 34th International Diploma in Educational Planning and Administration (IDEPA) was organised from 2 February 2-30 April, 2018 at NIEPA, New Delhi.
- A Training Programme on Planning and Monitoring of School Education Outcomes for Major States was organised during June, 2018 at NIEPA, New Delhi.
- A National Workshop on Policy and Planning of Inclusive Education with Focus on CWSN was conducted on 3-7 July, 2018 at NIEPA, New Delhi.

- India Higher Education Report (IHER) 2019 First Peer Review Meeting on Governance and Management of Higher Education in India was organized by CPRHE on 4 May, 2018 at NIEPA New Delhi
- A National Level Sharing Workshop on Lessons Learnt from the Action Research and the Model for Planning for Secondary Education at the District Level was organized during 4-6 June, 2018 NIEPA, New Delhi.
- A Research Methodology Workshop on Higher Education: Success and Social Mobility - A Case of Coaching Schemes for SC/ST/OBC and Minorities in Universities and Colleges was conducted during 12-13 June, 2018 at NIEPA, New Delhi.

SEAMEO-INNOTECH

Philippines

- SEAMEO-INNOTECH was visited by the Association of District Mathematics Coordinators and the District Mathematics Teacher Association of Region I (MATARI) from the Department of Education (DepEd), Division of Ilocos Sur as part of their Capacity Team Building Activity.
- SEAMEO-INNOTECH in partnership with UNESCO, KOICA and the Department of Education, facilitated Life Skills Training Workshop during June, 2018 for Alternative Learning System (ALS) mobile teachers and district supervisors from Tacloban and Leyte.
- On 4 May 2018, SEAMEO-INNOTECH sealed its partnership with the Teachers' Council of Thailand (TCT) by signing a Memorandum of Understanding

(MOU) for better cooperation between the two institutions in various programmes and projects that would serve the interest of both parties.

- A Training Programme for Strengthening ICT Support in Bangladesh Schools was organised by SEAMEO-INNOTECH under the sponsorship of the Bangladesh Ministry of Education.
- A Programme on Integrating Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in School Management was organised to train Bangladeshi Head Teachers and Madrasah Superintendents during 3-10 April, 2018.
- SEAMEO-INNOTECH conducted its 15th International Conference during 6-8 March, 2018 which focused on the theme: "Thriving in the Margins: Inclusive Education Re-imagined." The conference was attended by more than 200 participants representing 16 countries around the globe.

Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences (VNIES)

Vietnam

- An International Conference on Education Plan and Strategy in the context of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 was organized from 5-7 February, 2018 by International Cooperation Department, VNIES.

News from ANTRIEP Member-Institutions (January-June, 2018)

1. Academy of Educational Planning and Management (AEPAM), Ministry of Education, Taleemi Chowk, G-8/1, P.O. Box 1566, ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (<http://aepam.edu.pk>)
2. Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 19 Prospect Hill Road, Private Bag-55, Camberwell, Melbourne, VICTORIA-3124, Australia (www.acer.edu.au)
3. Balitbang Dikbud Centre for Policy Research (Puslit Penelitian), Office for Educational and Culture Research and Development (Balitbang Dikb), Ministry of Education and Culture, Jalan Jenderal Sudirman, Senayan, JAKARTA-12041, Indonesia.
4. Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), 75, Mohakhali Commercial Area, DHAKA-1212, Bangladesh (www.brac.net)
5. Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), 5/14, Humayun Road, Mohammadpur, DHAKA-1207, Bangladesh (www.campebd.org)
6. Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Development Research (CMDR), D. B. Rodda Road, Jubilee Circle, DHARWARD-380001, Karnataka (INDIA) (www.cmdr.co.in)
7. Centre for Education Leadership Development (CELD), National Institute of Education (NIE), Meepe Junction, PADUKKA, Sri Lanka (www.nie.lk)
8. Institute Aminuddin Baki (National Institute of Educational Management), Ministry of Education, Sri Layang 69000, Genting Highland, PAHANG, Malaysia
9. International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), 7-9 rue Eugene-Delacroix, 75116 PARIS, France (www.iiep.unesco.org)
10. Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI), 92-6 Umyeon-Dong, Seocho-Gu, SEOUL 137-791 Korea (www.kedi.re.kr)
11. National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM), Dhanmodi, DHAKA-1205, Bangladesh (www.naem.gov.bd)
12. National Centre for Educational Development (NCED), Sanothimi, BHAKTAPUR-2050, Nepal (www.nced.gov.np)
13. National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), 17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi-110016 (INDIA) (www.ncert.nic.in)
14. National Institute of Education (NIE), 123, Preah Norodom Blvd, PHOM PENH, Cambodia (www.nie.edu.kh)
15. National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), 17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi-110016, (INDIA) (www.nuepa.org)
16. Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, Tribhuvan University, P.O. Box 2161, Balkhu, KATHMANDU, Nepal (www.cerid.org)
17. Shanghai Institute of Human Resource Development (SIHRD), 21 North Cha Ling North Road, SHANGHAI-200032, China
18. South-East Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology, SEAMEO- INNOTECH P.O. Box 207, Commonwealth Avenue, U.P. Diliman, Quezon City 1101, Philippines (www.seameo-innotech.org)
19. State Institute of Educational Management & Training (SIEMAT), 25 P.C. Banerjee Road, Allenganj, ALLAHABAD, Uttar Pradesh (INDIA)
20. The Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan (AKES,P) House Nos.3 & 4, F-17/B, Block VII, KDA Scheme 5, Clifton, KARACHI-75600, Pakistan (www.akdn.org/akes)
21. The Aga Khan University - Institute for Educational Development, (AKU-IED), 1-5/B-VII, F. B. Area Karimabad, P.O. Box No.13688, KARACHI-75950, Pakistan (<http://www.aku.edu>)
22. Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences (VNIES), 101, Tran Hung Dao-Hoan Kiem, HANOI, Vietnam (www.vnrv.vnies.edu.in)

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