



ARNEC
Asia-Pacific Regional Network
for Early Childhood



Quality Assurance in Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) in Southeast Asia



**Quality Assurance in Early Childhood
Care and Development (ECCD)
in Southeast Asia**

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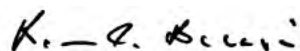
FOREWORD

SEAMEO INNOTECH has prioritized Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) in Southeast Asia as one of its programmatic areas to support universalization of ECCD in the region. As part of its research agenda, the Center has completed an investigation of the ECCD quality assurance policies, mechanisms and models being implemented by SEAMEO member countries. Out of the 11 SEAMEO member countries, ten participated in the study. Data collected from these countries were analyzed to generate a regional ECCD quality assurance profile. SEAMEO INNOTECH is now pleased to share these findings in this latest publication.

The current publication discusses the content and depth of these ECCD policies, mechanisms and models as well as issues and challenges that still need to be addressed by SEAMEO member countries.

One major finding of the study shows that although there are ECCD policies and standards already in place in most SEAMEO member states, there is an absence of explicit ECCD quality assurance frameworks that could serve as an anchor for a holistic ECCD program. Because of this absence, most ECCD policies and standards in Southeast Asia are limited to qualifications of pre-school heads and teachers, early learning curricula, and requirements of physical facilities.

It is hoped that this publication will support SEAMEO member countries in their efforts to act on strengthening their ECCD policies and standards and formulating a comprehensive and holistic ECCD quality assurance framework that would consider the varied needs of pre-school children.



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ACRONYMS

ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (Philippines)
ARNEC	Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood
BAN-PAUD	Badan Akreditasi Nasional PAUD (ECE National Accreditation Body)
BCCT	Beyond center and circle time
BEE	Bureau of Elementary Education
BET	Bureau of Educational Testing
BND	Brunei Dollar
BPSDMP-PMP	Badan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia Pendidikan dan Mutu Pendidikan (Human Resources Development and Quality Assurance for Education Body)
BSN	Badan Standar Nasional (National Standardization Agency)
DA	Discipline-affective
DC	Discipline-cognitive
DCW	Day Care Workers
DECS	Department of Education, Culture and Sports
DepEd	Department of Education
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECED	Early childhood education and development
EFA	Education for All
EQ	Emotional quotient
EQA	External Quality Assurance
FGD	Focus group discussion
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
ICT	Information and Communications Technology

ILO	Intended learning outcome
INGO	International nongovernment organization
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
JPNIN	Jabatan Perpaduan Negara Dan Integrasi Nasional (Department of National Unity and Integration)
KAAK	Kursus Asas Awal Kanak-kanak (Basic Early Childhood Course)
KEMAS	Kemajuan Masyarakat (Ministry of Rural and Regional Development)
KT	Key trainer
LET	Licensure Examination for Teachers
MCYS	Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MOE	Ministry of Education
MoEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
MONE	Ministry of National Education (Indonesia)
MOWA	Ministry of Women Affairs
MRRD	Ministry of Rural and Regional Development
MWFCD	Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development
NELF	National Early Learning Framework
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NPC	National Preschool Curriculum (Malaysia)
NPCS	National Preschool Curriculum Standards
NPSC	National Preschool Standard Curriculum (Malaysia)
OBEC	Office of the Basic Education Commission
ONEC	Office of the National Education Commission
ONESQA	Office of the National Education Standards and Quality Assessment
PDR	People's Democratic Republic
PERPADUAN	Portal Rasmi Jabatan Perpaduan Negara Dan Integrasi Nasional (Indonesia)
PES	Private Education Section
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education

Phil-IRI	Philippine Informal Reading Inventory
PIPP	Education Development Master Plan 2006–2010 (Malaysia)
PTM	Persatuan Tadika Malaysia (Malaysian Association of Kindergarten)
RSU	Research Studies Unit
SEAMEC	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Council
SEAMEO INNOTECH	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology
SGM	Standard Guru Malaysia (Standards of Malaysian Teacher)
SIREP	SEAMEO INNOTECH Regional Education Program
SKPM	Standardidi Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia-Sekolah (Quality Standards for Education in Malaysia-School)
SReA	School Readiness Assessment
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UP	University of the Philippines
USD	US Dollar

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The expansion and improvement of comprehensive early childhood care and development (ECCD) programs and services, particularly among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, is among the fundamental components of Education For All (EFA). As an inalienable right and an indispensable foundation for lifelong learning, ECCD is recognized in Southeast Asia by governments, private sector and non-government organizations as a range of programs and services for children from 0 to 6 years old, or 0 to 8 years old as in the case of Timor-Leste.

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH) has committed to advancing ECCD in the region as one of its programmatic priorities in its 8th Five-Year Development Plan (2011-2016). Accordingly, a number of research and development initiatives in ECCD have been undertaken by the Center. One of these initiatives is the conduct of a research project on Quality Assurance in Early Childhood Care and Development in Southeast Asia in 2011. Funded by the SEAMEO INNOTECH Regional Education Program (SIREP), in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC), this regional study generally aimed to examine the ECCD quality assurance policies, mechanisms and models in the SEA region by gathering important information on ECCD quality assurance policies in the different countries; the ECCD policies and standards; the development and implementation of early learning development framework being used as a quality assurance tool; the ECCD teacher qualification standards and its implementation; and issues and challenges on quality assurance of ECCD programs and services.

Two major activities of the project were conducted. First was a research workshop of Regional ECCD expert conducted at SEAMEO INNOTECH from 24-28 October 2011 which formed part of the methodology used in the study. Participants from ten countries of Southeast Asia (i.e., Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam) who took part in the research forum also participated in the workshop. Second was the conduct of case studies of three countries: Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines to gather additional data relevant to the aforementioned objectives.

Quality Assurance Framework in ECCD in SEA

There has been a documented increase worldwide in the number of children participating in pre-primary education. In Southeast Asia, access to ECCD has been given increasing importance, with some countries registering a relatively low ECCD center-to-child ratio. This growing access does not guarantee, however, that quality ECCD services are being delivered as evidenced by high teacher-to-pupil ratio in many government-run ECCD centers in the region.

Among the SEAMEO countries examined, no country has yet drawn up an official document that specifically focuses on a quality assurance framework for ECCD. However, all countries have ECCD-related policies enshrined in national plans of action, national policies in education, and laws on children, which contain specific provisions on ECCD. Many countries such as Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines have crafted legislation that specifically pertain to ECCD, and have set ECCD standards and government regulations for ECCD services.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC) advocates for holistic and inclusive ECD. It supports the partners and members in the assessment and review of national early childhood policies, frameworks and implementation. In December 2012, ARNEC published its White Paper containing a desk review of learning and development goals of children during early childhood year in Asia Pacific. It also developed a series of six booklets on Quality Early Childhood Matters: Making a Critical Investment for a Country's Future, which highlights a need for particular advocacy within the Asia-Pacific region by introducing one of the five key advocacy messages that is evidence-based, regionally contextualized and prioritized based on diverse sources of information.

Similarly, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is committed in securing safe, rights-based, quality education for each and every child, irrespective of his or her circumstances. UNICEF supports researches on quality of education and child-friendly schooling.

For UNICEF, quality education is education that works for every child and enables all children to achieve their full potential. With this, UNICEF worked to create a rights-based, comprehensive educational model founded on the concept of child-friendly schools, one that embraces a multi-dimensional concept of quality and addresses the total needs of the child as a learner.⁴

⁴ www.unicef.org

Standards and Quality Assurance in ECCD

The different countries in the region have created standards that cover the different aspects of ECCD; however, standards tend to be more established in the area of preschool teachers, early learning curriculum, and physical structure and facilities. Fewer countries have established standards in program implementation and learning assessment.

ECCD Learning and Assessment

Countries have developed learning frameworks for ECCD by setting learning standards and competencies that encompass different ECCD developmental domains. Such learning frameworks provide the recommended learning areas or curricula content, learning standards or competencies, and assessment for ECCD programs. Some countries such as Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia have their learning content and standards embedded in their early learning frameworks. Other countries like Myanmar and Timor-Leste have their frameworks spelled out in their curriculum and syllabus but have no official learning standards to speak of.

A variety of authentic assessment tools to measure and monitor children's learning and development progress is used in the region. This includes checklists, observations, and the running record. The least used method is the anecdotal record.

ECCD Content/ Learning Areas

All countries seek to cover similar developmental domains such as socio-emotional, cognitive, language/communication, and physical/health. The similarities in domains covered do not preclude the fact that there are differences in the focus of the learning content (e.g., coverage of cognitive learning areas). To date, no standards have been identified for ECCD learning approaches; instead, the approach is commonly adopted as part of the principles of the curriculum in ECCD.

ECCD Physical Facilities, Resources and Environment

Although only a few countries like Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and the Philippines have official documents that set the standards for ECCD center's physical space and facilities, resources and environment, most of the countries in the region do have specific requirements and conditions set for ECCD centers. Some have indicated the specifications for the floor area of the whole center, the rooms and the facilities. Not many countries, however, have stipulated a required measure of minimum physical space per child. Generally, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the quality of

physical facilities, resources and environment are also not well-entrenched because not all governments possess the legal authority to regulate ECCD centers through regulation or licensing. Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and the Philippines, however, do not reflect this trend.

ECCD Human Resources

The qualification standards required of ECCD personnel vary across the type of personnel as well as across countries in the region. For instance, the standards for childcare center/preschool principal, administrator or supervisor have not been uniformly established in all countries. Nevertheless, education, training, character and professional competence, particularly managerial skills and teaching experience, are the more common requirements for principals/ administrators/ supervisors of an ECCD institution.

Care for children aged 0 to 4 is the major responsibility of the day care workers, childcare center minders or caregivers. In Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam, high educational attainment is not usually a requirement for these childcare center personnel, although training/certification is.

The standards applied to ECCD teachers tend to be more stringent than those to caregivers or day care workers (DCWs), with the level of educational attainment figuring more significantly as a requirement.

The working condition of ECCD teachers is a primary factor affecting the performance of educators and caregivers. While a few countries impose a 40-hour per week work schedule, many others like Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand require teachers to work for less than 30 hours weekly. Compensation standards vary depending on economic status of a country, with the more developed countries offering better compensation packages for ECCD teachers.

Most countries in the region implement a professional development program for teachers, including preschool educators. Some countries, in their bid to ensure that ECCD personnel are performing according to standards, have also developed instruments to assess their performance and a scheme for personnel performance monitoring and evaluation.

Program Management

There has been no official issuance that pertains to ECCD program management in countries in Southeast Asia, although there are pockets of provisions stated in ECCD-related official documents in some countries in the region. Few countries have clear standards on areas of program management such as standard staffing and program evaluation.

Regulation and Accreditation of ECCD Standards in Southeast Asia

The most common form of government regulation in ECCD is the issuance of guidelines for the establishment of ECCD centers, their licensing, and program monitoring and evaluation. To make sure that ECCD service providers follow the state regulations on ECCD, some governments give rewards to those who are able to achieve quality, and penalizes those that violate the regulation (e.g., with reprimand, or fines). The usual form of incentives for compliance with the standards is the provision of funding such as what was done in Indonesia. Other forms include recognizing quality preschools and establishing referral institutions.

Accreditation is needed for ECCD centers to achieve a certain recognized status or to be qualified for licensing. All countries in the region claim that their government exercises regulatory actions over ECCD centers and/or services, as well as provides accreditation for ECCD centers that meet the standards set. Majority of child care centers in Southeast Asia are accredited by community or social service ministries, while preschool centers are accredited through the education ministry.

Stakeholders' Involvement in ECCD Quality Assurance

In Southeast Asia, the task of providing quality ECCD is characterized as a collaborative nature among stakeholders. Countries agree that the education ministry, while assuming a primary role, needs other ministries/ departments or stakeholders to accomplish the huge task. Majority of the countries believe that, in particular, the health ministry and the social/ community development department play a significant role as well in the implementation of ECCD programs and services.

Generally, parents and families are usually involved in ECCD, particularly as resource persons or provider of needed resources in the ECCD center. Other ways that parents assist in providing quality ECCD are in co-managing ECCD centers through committee membership; stimulating or reinforcing the learning and development at home; and monitoring and reporting children's activity at home.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Southeast Asian region, still grappling with issues of access and universalization of ECCD, nevertheless takes on the massive task of

addressing quality and quality assurance in ECCD. Given the inherent subjectivity and relativity of the concept of quality, the countries' efforts to establish frameworks, policies and standards that would ensure context-driven quality have become imperative. The different countries in the region have shown variation in their progress toward developing systems for quality assurance in ECCD. Proper enforcement of these policies, standards and indicators also need to be given more attention.

Several issues have been identified that serve as roadblocks in the achievement of quality in ECCD. These include: 1) enforcement of quality standards in ECCE; 2) problems in standardization and certification of ECCD personnel; 3) limitations of regulators or assessors; 4) lack of harmonization of ECCD programs and services; and 5) lack of support for systematic evaluation and assessment.

A few recommendations that emerged from the study are as follows:

- Advocate for evidence-based and culturally relevant frameworks, standards and practices for quality assurance.
- Develop more appropriate supports that would ensure that the standards have the desired beneficial effects on young children.
- Expand government regulation and accreditation.
- Strengthen and improve the cooperative ties between the state and the stakeholders of ECCD programs and services.
- Adopt more relevant and effective ECCD policies that address the total needs of the children as a learner.
- Strengthen the capacity and certification of ECCD personnel.
- Enhance leadership and assessment skills of ECCD regulators and assessors.
- Undertake initiatives to harmonize ECCD regulators and program implementors within a common framework.
- Conduct systematic evaluation and assessment of ECCD programs.

I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The **Convention on the Rights of the Child** recognizes education and development of children as a right. How this right to education and development should be dispensed was extensively tackled during the World Education Forum that targeted education for all and specifically the expansion and improvement of comprehensive early childhood care and education (ECCE), especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

ECCE is also considered as a contributing factor to the **Millennium Development Goal (MDG)** of reducing poverty, and the key to achieving MDG Goal 2, which is to achieve universal primary education by ensuring that, by 2015, all boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

During the **2010 World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education: Building the Wealth of Nations**, participating nations adopted a broad and holistic concept of ECCE as the provision of care, education, health, nutrition, and protection of children aged zero to eight years of age. ECCE is therefore a right and an indispensable foundation for lifelong learning.

The growing recognition of education as a right and the increased awareness of the importance of ECCE both to human and economic development, as well as the eventual upsurge in the ECCE programs and services in many regions including Southeast Asia, paved the way for more opportunities for children to develop their full potentials.

Leveraging on the value of early childhood education to the region, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Council (SEAMEC) supported the promotion of early childhood care and other initiatives to guarantee opportunities for quality education in the region during its 45th Annual Conference held in Cebu, Philippines, from 26 to 29 January 2010. The Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH) in turn committed to support and undertake policy research related to early childhood care and education by conducting a regional policy forum.

In its 8th Five-Year Development Plan (2011-2016), SEAMEO INNOTECH has likewise identified Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as a new priority programmatic area in pursuit of the overarching strategic goal of improving equitable access to quality education. In line with this, SEAMEO INNOTECH and DepEd organized a regional consultation forum entitled Early Learning Frameworks, Policies and Programs held on 28-30 March 2011 at SEAMEO INNOTECH, Philippines. The regional forum brought together 17 participants from 9 member countries, namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. The forum highlighted the need to have a close collaboration and sharing of what each country is doing and would be doing in early childhood care and development. The forum likewise underscored the need to establish ECCE quality standards, define ECCE quality assurance frameworks, and develop monitoring tools.

In support of the 8th Fiscal Year Development Plan of SEAMEO INNOTECH, the Research Studies Unit (RSU), through the SEAMEO INNOTECH Regional Education Program (SIREP), embarked on a research project on **Quality Assurance in Early Childhood Care and Development in Southeast Asia**. This research project aimed to explore quality assurance mechanisms and strategies for early childhood care and education in SEAMEO member countries. By doing so, it is expected that the region will be able to come out with regional benchmarks that will guide the quality of ECCD to be fostered in the Southeast Asian region.

OBJECTIVES

The overall purpose of this research is to examine the ECCD quality assurance policies, mechanisms, and models in the eleven SEAMEO member countries.

Specifically, the study aimed to gather important information on the following:

- 1) ECCD quality assurance policies in the Southeast Asian countries;
- 2) The Southeast Asian ECCD policies and standards;
- 3) The development and implementation of early learning development frameworks being used as a quality assurance tool;
- 4) ECCD teacher qualification standards and their implementation; and
- 5) Issues and challenges on quality assurance of ECCD programs and services.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Over the 15 years since the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand, was approved, educational quality has gained prominence within the EFA initiative, as follows:

Goal VI: *“Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measureable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills.”*

Quality is also mentioned specifically in two other goals framed in Dakar:

Goal II: *All children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory education of high quality.*

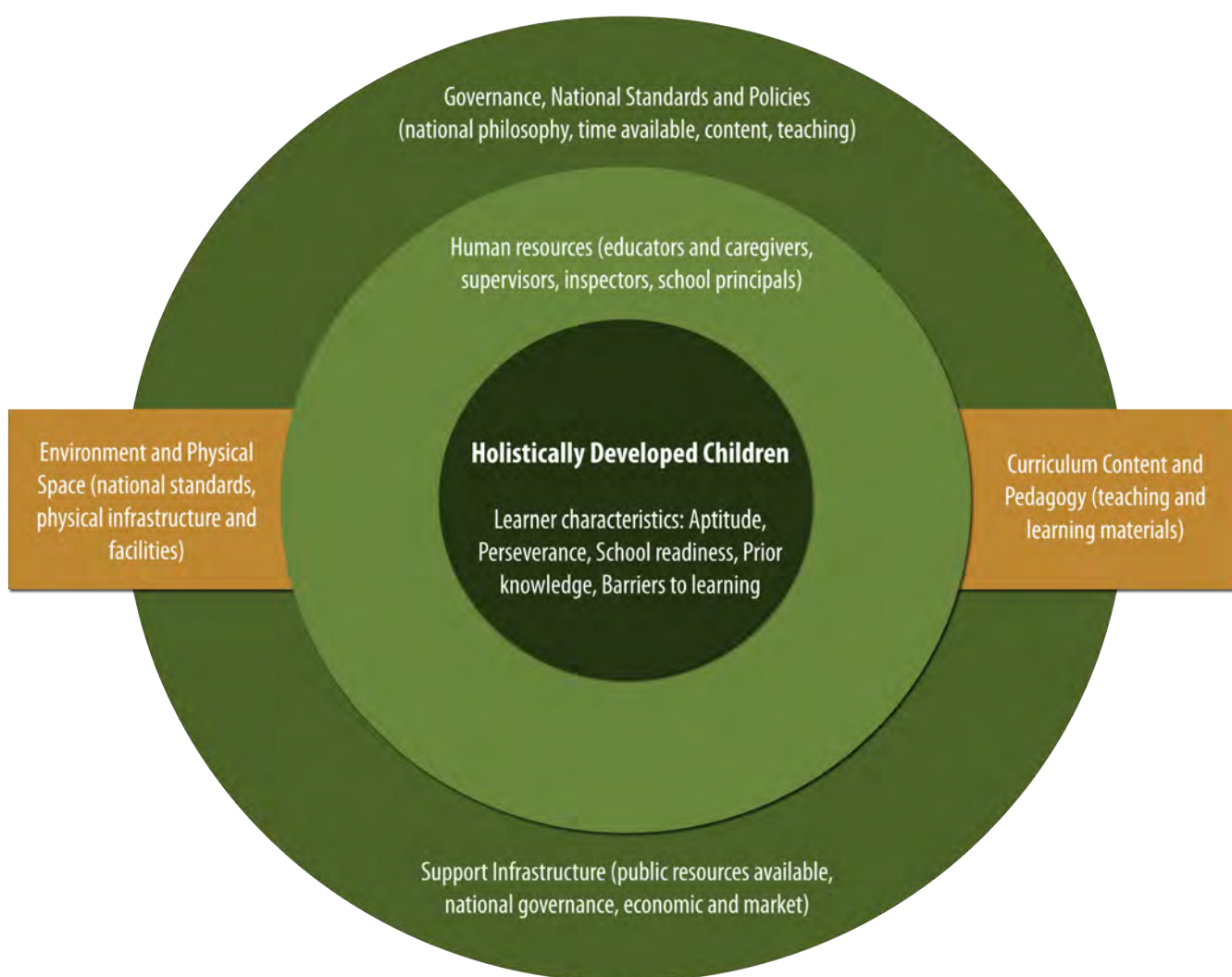
Goal V: *Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieve general equity in education by 2015, with focus on ensuring girls’ full equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.*

Quality in EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR 2005). Educational quality within EFA came with the publication of GMR 2005, which notes that:

“Although there is no single definition of quality, two principles characterize most attempts to define quality in education. The first identifies learner’s cognitive development as the major explicit objective of all educational systems. The second emphasizes education’s role in promoting values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and in nurturing creative and emotional development. The achievement of these objectives is more difficult to assess and compare across countries.”

The SIREP ECCD research on Early Childhood Care and Development Quality Assurance Systems sets out a framework that is comprehensive in that the quality of education in ECCD encompasses the teaching and learning process and outcomes in ways that are influenced both by context and by a range of quality of educational inputs available.

Figure 1. A Framework for Understanding ECCD Quality in Southeast Asia



SOURCE: Research Studies Unit, SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2010

The SIREP ECCD Quality research adheres to the GMR 2005 principles of educational quality, drawing on studies that relate to a wide range of variables from learning outcomes to economic development outcomes.

Specifically, the following indicators were explored during the three-day forum and workshop by the SIREP ECCD country researchers:

1. Educators and Caregivers

- 1.1 Qualifications (formal education, work experience, in-service training, examinations, competencies, characteristics/disposition)
- 1.2 Professional Development Programs and Compensation
- 1.3. Supervision and Performance Assessment

2. Environment and Physical Space

- 2.1. Safety standards
 - 2.1.1 Rooms and play area are located on the ground level
 - 2.1.2 Facilities and play equipment are safe.
 - 2.1.3 There are no toxic materials around.
 - 2.1.4 There are emergency procedures.
 - 2.1.5 First-aid kit and provider are available.
- 2.2 Health requirements
 - 2.2.1. Children develop healthy habits such as frequent hand-washing.
 - 2.2.2. Healthy lifestyle is promoted.
 - 2.2.3. Facilities and toys and other materials are sanitized regularly.
 - 2.2.4. Staff and children are immunized.
- 2.3. Physical space and facilities specification
 - 2.3.1. Size allocation per space/corner such as classroom, playground, toilet, wash area, dining area
 - 2.3.2. Arrangement of spaces and furnishing such as tables and chairs
 - 2.3.3. Maintenance of facilities and equipment
- 2.4 Developmentally stimulating environment
 - 2.4.1 Children feel secure and free from fear.
 - 2.4.2 There is a healthy and stable adult-child relationship.
 - 2.4.3 Peer interaction is developmentally beneficial.

3. Curriculum Content and Pedagogy

- 3.1. Curriculum Content
- 3.2. Pedagogical Methods
- 3.3. Organization and Scheduling of Activities
 - 3.3.1. Establishment of rules and regulations
 - 3.3.2 Setting of time period
 - 3.3.3. Planning the weekly and daily activities

- 3.4. Learning Materials
 - 3.4.1 Toys are educational, fun and stimulating.
 - 3.4.2 There are appropriate books, educational media and technologies
- 3.5. Assessment of Children's Progress

4. Program Management and Leadership

- 4.1. Staffing and Personnel Management
- 4.2. Program Monitoring and Evaluation
 - 4.2.1. Regular monitoring is conducted to ensure compliance to the set standard.
 - 4.2.2 Regular evaluation is conducted to assess the level of quality.

5. Partnership with Parents and Communities

- 5.1. Program policies promoting partnership
- 5.2 Opportunities for participation

These related variables emerged from the review of literature conducted for this research undertaking. The literature review involved an analysis of papers presented during the Regional Consultation Forum on Early Learning Frameworks, Policies and Programs organized by SEAMEO INNOTECH, in cooperation with the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Council, in March 2011, as well as documents and studies conducted by government agencies, international non-government organizations, and bilateral institutions; international conference proceedings; and studies published in online journals that relate to quality assurance mechanisms and strategies for early childhood education in Southeast Asia. These materials were published during the period 2000-2011.

METHODOLOGY

The study primarily employed policy review and survey research in determining the ECCD quality assurance standards in Southeast Asia. With the Ministries of Education of SEAMEO member countries nominating one ECCD official/ researcher each, ten representatives of ten countries participated in the regional forum and in the survey. The ten countries which sent representatives were Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and

Vietnam. Singapore was unable to participate in the project. All participants, except the one from Vietnam, worked in their respective Ministries. The Ministries were guided by several criteria in choosing their representatives, such as expertise in ECCD and proficiency in English.

The researchers were tasked to conduct a country survey on ECCD Quality Assurance, which ran from February to June 2011. This involved using a 30-item survey tool that aimed to gather information on the following: 1) ECCD quality assurance policies, legislation and laws; 2) governance structure/ systems on ECCD; 3) national policies developed by MOEs and Ministries responsible for early childhood education that support accessible quality ECCD; and 4) remaining issues and challenges on ECCD. The responses were tallied and cluster analyzed to get regional trends.

A regional research forum and study visit was also held from 24-28 October 2011 at SEAMEO INNOTECH to examine further the quality assurance mechanisms and strategies among the SEAMEO member countries. Survey responses and country papers were presented at this experts' meeting. The final report then relied on an analysis of the survey findings, data from the regional forum and experts' meeting, secondary data and other major literature on the area.

Finally, a case study of quality assurance in the Southeast Asian countries, namely: Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines was conducted to collect information on quality assurance policies, programmes and practices. This ARNEC-funded case study pinned down the elements of quality at the systems level including the implementation of a nationally prescribed curriculum, monitoring and evaluation; assessment systems were also demonstrated and analyzed.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study explored the various ECCD quality assurance policies, mechanisms and strategies that have been adopted in the Southeast Asian region. However, the absence of Singapore in the study has slightly reduced the breadth of the comparisons. The comparisons, particularly of national figures, also need to be undertaken with caution on account of the differences in the coverage and target age range of ECCD within the region. A few countries have also left some aspects unanswered, such as in the areas of qualification standards for ECCD personnel, salary of ECCD personnel, performance assessment, and regulatory procedures. These missing information might have affected the range of comparisons as well.

II. OVERVIEW OF ECCD IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The subsequent chapters present the key results that emerged from the analysis of all information gathered, from the survey, policy forum, study visit and secondary document analysis.

In Southeast Asia, the governments, private sector and non-government organizations are offering a wide range of ECCD programs and services, particularly for children from zero to six years old, with the exception of Timor-Leste where ECCD services are for those aged zero to eight. Specifically, care is provided for children from birth to six years old, and education for children three to six years old. Table 1 illustrates this point, with most countries adopting the 0-6 age range for ECCD (e.g., Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam) while a few limit it to 0-5 (e.g., Brunei Darussalam, Myanmar and Thailand). Terminologies used for the different ECCD services tend to vary across age range and countries as well, but the more common ones used for the 0-3 range are daycare, child care center, crèche and nursery, while those for 3-6 are known as either preschool or kindergarten.

Table 1. Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Terminologies

Countries	Coverage of ECCD and Target Age Range
Brunei Darussalam	ECCE (0-5 years): government preschools (5 years), private child care centers (birth to 3 years) and private preschools (3-5 years)
Cambodia	ECE (conception-6 years): formal preschool (3-6 years), private preschool, community preschool, home-based education program (0-6)
Indonesia	ECE (0-6 years): kindergarten (4-6), Rauhatul Athfal (4-6), playgroup (3-6), childcare services (3 mos.-6 years)
Lao PDR	ECCD (0-6 years): crèches (2 mos.-3 years), kindergarten/Grade 0 (3-5)
Malaysia	ECCE (0-6 years): childcare centers (0-4), preschools (4-6)
Myanmar	ECCE (0-5 years): preschool (3-5), child rearing and daycare (under 3 years)
Philippines	ECCD (0-6 years): kindergarten (5), daycare (0-4), home-based ECCD (0-3)
Singapore	ECCD (0-6 years): including kindergartens (4-6) and child care centers (0-6)
Thailand	ECCD (0-5 years)
Timor-Leste	ECD (0-8 years): kindergarten, preschools, community-based ECE, home-based, playgroups, care centers
Vietnam	ECCE (0-6 years): childcare/daycare, creches, nurseries (infancy-3 years), state-run kindergarten (4-5 years), preprimary schools (3 mos.-6 years)

Source: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011). Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia, and Early Childhood Care and Education Regional Report: Asia and the Pacific (2011)

ECCD CENTER-TO-CHILD RATIO

There is a worldwide increase in the number of children participating in pre-primary education (UNESCO, 2006). This is evident in countries around the region, with smaller populations like Brunei Darussalam registering 12,000 children with ECCD experience while a bigger population like Indonesia has almost 9 million children attending ECCD centers. Southeast Asian countries also reported establishing thousands of public and private ECCD centers, with the exception of Brunei Darussalam with just 293 and Timor-Leste, a relatively new republic, with just around 50 centers servicing 10,000 children over the last decade.

Access to ECCD has likewise been the focus of countries in the Southeast Asian region. Table 2 shows Vietnam, Indonesia and Cambodia have the highest ECCD-to-child ratio (over 60) per class while Thailand and Malaysia have the lowest (less than 30).

Table 2. Number of ECCD Centers, ECCD Enrolment, and Center-to-Child Ratio in Southeast Asian Countries

Countries	Total Number of ECCD Centers for 0-6 years old	Total Number of Enrolment in ECCD Centers for 0-6 years old	Center-to-Child Ratio
Brunei Darussalam	293	12,870	1:44
Cambodia	2,348	234,455	1:100
Indonesia	140,348	9,419,849	1:67
Lao PDR	2,922	134,530	1:46
Malaysia	24,617	707,672	1:29
Myanmar	10,885 *	371,325 *	1:34
Philippines	66,605	2,632,964	1:40
Thailand	59,959 •	137,549 •	1:2
Timor-Leste	180	10,605	1:59
Vietnam	12,908	3,599,663	1:279

Legend: * 0-3 plus 3-5 || • 0-4

Source: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011) Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia

ECCD TEACHER-TO-PUPIL RATIO

The establishment of ECCD centers and the enactment of provisions on ECCD resources that make childcare and kindergarten accessible do not necessarily guarantee the delivery of quality ECCD services. Teacher-to-pupil ratio, for instance, is a quality indicator that leaves much to be desired. The figures in Table 3 show that teacher-to-pupil ratio in Southeast Asian countries could be as high as 1:48 in government-run ECCD centers. While private ECCD centers offer a more ideal ratio, there are other factors that have implications on quality such as teacher qualification.

Table 3. Public and Private Teacher-to-Pupil Ratio (2010)

Countries	Number of government teachers for 0-6 years old	Enrolment in government ECCD Centers for 0-6 years old	Teacher-to-Pupil Ratio 0-6 (GOV'T)	Number of private teachers for 0-6 years old	Enrolment in private ECCD Centers for 0-6 years old	Teacher-to-Pupil Ratio 0-6 (PRIVATE)
Brunei Darussalam	204 ♣	3,440 ♣	1:16	571	9,430	1:16
Cambodia	3711	103,315	1:27	1,688	20,719	1:12
Indonesia	NA	NA	NA	NA	5,292,113	NA
Lao PDR	2,247	108,219	1:48	1,764	26,311	1:15
Malaysia	17,713 ♣	378,892 ♣	1:21	18,361	328,804	1:18
Myanmar	4,908 *	108,265 *	1:22	9,708 *	155,907 ^	1:16
Philippines	30,123 ♣	1,183,536 ♣	1:39		470,000 ♣	NA
Thailand	38,735 •	92,818 •	1:2	49,585 •	25,250 •	NA
Timor-Leste	238 •	180 •		40 •		NA
Vietnam	133,404	2,336,213	1:18	77,821	1,263,450	1:16

Legend: * 0-3 plus 3-5 || ♣ 5-6 || • 0-4 || ^ 3-5 || NA - Not Applicable

Source: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011) Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia

SUMMARY

In Southeast Asia, ECCD covers mainly the 0-6 age range, except for Timor-Leste which covers children ages 0-8. Access to ECCD has been increasing, if uneven, across the countries in the region with some registering a low ECCD center-to-child ratio while others remain to be high. Increasing access, however, does not necessarily translate to quality ECCD services. Teacher-to-pupil ratio, especially in public ECCD centers, is still quite high in some countries in the region.

III.

QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK ON ECCD IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Generally, ECCD is part of the overall education legislation such as education acts or as part of a broad legislative framework for children adopted by a country. Promotion of ECCD has also been made part of Southeast Asian countries' national Education for All plans, indicating that the focus is on expanding ECCD services to provide increased access and particularly reaching the marginalized children.

However, recognizing that access to education is not the same as quality education, Southeast Asian countries have been spurred to carry out efforts that would improve the quality of early childhood education. In many countries in the region, significant work has been achieved toward the development of a quality assurance framework in ECCD. Malaysia and Indonesia, for example, have accomplished much in this area.

Indonesia

Indonesia's **Framework of Indonesia ECE Development 2011-2025** contains the following: 1) the importance of early childhood education (ECE); 2) policies and strategies; 3) program activity and funding; 4) national action on ECE; and 5) control and quality assurance. This quality assurance framework is embedded within the quality assurance of the whole education system and government's authority to regulate ECCD institutions. Indonesia's National Standardization Agency (Badan Standar Nasional or BSN) provides guidance and serves as a national coordinating body for standardization.

The effort to provide standardization in Indonesia led to the development of the **National Educational Standards** that cover development achievement, teachers/educators, content, process and assessment, and management and funding. There are standards on teacher qualification and certification, as well as educational quality assurance. Specific to ECCD is the **Regulation of National Education Minister No. 58 Year 2009 Regarding the Standards on Early Childhood Education**. These standards have become the legal basis to start quality administration through phased ECE accreditation and certification.

Malaysia

In Malaysia, the **Childcare Centers Act of 1984**, amended in 2007, focuses on quality ECCD by requiring the registration of childcare centers and by directing them to employ quality personnel who have earned a basic childcare certificate. The **Education Act of 1996**, amended in 2002 and 2010, requires the registration of preschools; prescribes and regulates the use of the National Preschool Curriculum; and specifies learning hours, assessment and inspection. It stipulates that the Ministry of Education is fully responsible for developing curriculum, implementation of preschool program, inspection and management of preschools, and monitoring the private preschools. Malaysia also executes the **National Education Policy of 2004** with the following provisions on ECCD:

- To enforce the usage of the National Preschool Curriculum in all educational institutions, except in expatriate preschools;
- To enhance the monitoring and enforcement mechanism of preschool programs conducted by all governmental, non-governmental and private agencies;
- To produce sufficient well-trained teachers and training facilities to fulfill the preschool education needs; and
- To ensure the implementation and supply of preschool facilities in line with the policy and objective of the National Preschool Curriculum.

In terms of quality assurance, Malaysia established what was known as **High Quality Education Standards (STKP)** in 2001, renamed as **Quality Standards for Education in Malaysia – School (Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia-Sekolah, SKPM)** in 2003. The targets for SKPM are specifically the government or government-aided schools which provide education programs from preschool to pre-university. SKPM has three main components, namely, (i) standard statements (SKPM1-PS); (ii) instruments to measure school achievements based on the standards (SKPM2-IPS); and (iii) school improvement program (SKPM3-RPS).

Brunei Darussalam and the Philippines also have specific regulations and legislations that pertain to ensuring quality ECCD, while Thailand has quality assurance for the whole educational system, including early childhood education.

Brunei Darussalam

In Brunei Darussalam, the **Child Care Centers Order of 2006** and its implementing regulations, the **Child Care Centers Regulations of 2006**,

regulate the registration, supervision, and inspection of child care centers, to ensure that the well-being, health, and safety of every child under three years old in child care centers are given the utmost priority. On the other hand, **Education Order of 2003** and **Education Regulation of 2004** cover the registration, supervision, and inspection of educational institutions for children three years old and above. These orders and regulations check for the appropriateness of the curriculum, qualifications of working staff and teachers, suitability of premises, and efficiency of management of the ECCD institutions.

Philippines

The Philippines has the **Early Childhood Care and Development Act of 2000** which institutionalized a national system for ECCD that is comprehensive, integrative and sustainable, involving multi-sectoral and inter-agency collaboration. It has outlined the ECCD system framework and components which specifically address quality assurance for ECCD programs and services in the following areas: 1) ECCD curriculum; 2) parent education and involvement, advocacy and mobilization of communities; 3) human resource development program; 4) ECCD management; and 5) capability standards and accreditation.

An outcome of the ECCD Act is the **National Early Learning Framework (NELF)** which was deemed necessary in order to achieve greater cohesiveness among the diverse early learning programs implemented by public and private agencies. This ensures quality early childhood program towards the holistic development of the young child (0-6), including his/her readiness to formal schooling. The standards included in the NELF would be used in future ECCD quality assurance and accreditation initiatives.

Thailand

Thailand has quality assurance for the whole education system, including preschool. There are two policies related to quality assurance in Thailand. One is the **National Education Act of 1999** which gave birth to the Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) and the External Quality Assurance (EQA) which is the responsibility of a newly established public organization, the Office of the National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA). The other policy is the **Early Childhood/ Basic Education Standards of 2005** which set standards for quality learning of students, quality of instruction for teachers, educational administration and management for principals, and learning community development for schools.

The rest of the countries in Southeast Asia have policies that relate to ECCD in general, but not to quality assurance in particular. However, these countries carry out activities related directly or indirectly to quality assurance through the use of monitoring and evaluation tools, such as those done in Cambodia and Myanmar.

- Cambodia's policies on quality ECCD are contained in its **Education Strategic Plan 2009-2013 Sub-program 1.1** for the 1) improvement of the quality of teaching and learning at all levels nationwide; 2) guidelines on efficient and effective management of early child education formulated in 2010; 3) curriculum for three- and four-year-old children's education based on learning standards revised in 2011; and 4) principles for providing merit-based incentives for teachers of public preschools, community ECE, home-based ECE, and home-based ECE network groups formulated in 2012. The **National Policy for Early Childhood Care and Development** and its implementing guidelines, the **National Action Plan for Early Childhood Care and Development**, defined the necessary care and holistic development for children under six years old. Cambodia is developing a national quality assurance framework.
- The revised version of the **National Education Law 2008** of Lao PDR specifies the content of early childhood education. The country drafted the **National Holistic Early Childhood Development Policy** for all young children in order to provide access to quality education and protection and the social conditions allowing good quality of life so that they become model citizens of the future.
- The policy on ECCD in Myanmar is contained in the **Child Law of 1993**. The law cites the curriculum development and guidelines for caring children under three years old, and for improving community-based ECCE program.
- In Timor-Leste, the **National Education Act (2008)** mandates the expansion of preschools and promotes the participation of families and the local communities in ECCD. On the other hand, the **National Education Policy 2007-2012** subscribes to the importance of preschool for children as the first cycle of basic education. Currently, the ECE Policy Framework is being drafted.
- In Vietnam, the only policy that tackles ECCD is the **National Education Law of 2009** which defines ECE as the fundamental stage within the national education system, but not a compulsory or a prerequisite one for entry in primary school.

Preschools in Vietnam follow the national standards set by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). According to the **National Standards in Kindergarten**, preschools must meet five criteria: 1) organization and management of teachers and staff, 2) quality care and education, 3) school size, 4) facilities and equipment, and 5) participation of stakeholders in education. National standard preschools are divided into two levels -- level 1 and level 2 -- depending on the standards achieved by the school. ECCD service providers who do not follow the standards will be sanctioned according to the education law and the state law.

SUMMARY

All countries in Southeast Asia have ECCD-related policies ranging from national plans of action to national policies in education to laws pertaining to children. Although these macrocosmic policies generally cover education and children, they contain specific provisions on ECCD, providing a landscape of a country's goals and expected actions for very young children and their development. At this time, no country has yet drawn up an official document that specifically discusses a quality assurance framework for ECCD. However, many countries such as Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines have crafted legislations that specifically pertain to ECCD. These legislations set ECCD standards and mandate government regulation of ECCD services. As the different countries have shown, varying levels of development exist with regard to coming up with a quality assurance framework specific to ECCD.

IV. STANDARDS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ECCD

Quality assurance is a construct and a practice whose goal is to enhance quality through the application of standards and benchmarks against which evidence of performance is going to be gauged (Ishimine, et al, 2009). It is needed in order to determine or verify whether programs and services meet public expectations. In the area of ECCD, such quality assessment and improvement requires putting in place quality standards in ECCD, developing suitable ECCD personnel, and streamlining regulatory arrangements, among many others.

Countries in Southeast Asia have set standards on ECCD curriculum, learning framework and teachers, as well as on the learning environment such as those on physical structure and facilities. Some countries prepared standards on program and administrative requirements. Table 4 summarizes the existing standards that each Southeast Asian country has established.

Table 4. Set Standards in Various Aspects of ECCD in Southeast Asian Countries

Countries	Early Learning Curriculum	Early Learning Assessment	Teacher	Physical Structure/ Facilities	Program Implementation	Monitoring and Evaluation	Others
Brunei Darussalam	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Cambodia	✓		✓			✓	
Indonesia	✓	✓	✓	✓			Process Management, Funding
Lao PDR	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Malaysia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Myanmar			✓	✓	✓		Behavior changes
Philippines	✓		✓	✓		✓	Service providers
Thailand	✓		✓		✓	✓	Teaching and learning
Timor-Leste	✓		✓				
Vietnam			✓	✓			Manager, school, development
Total	8	3	10	7	5	6	

Sources: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011). Regional Consultation Forum on Early Learning Frameworks, Policies, and Programs; and SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011). Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia, 24-28 October 2011, Quezon City, Philippines.

All the surveyed countries (100%) provide standards for preschool teachers. Other standards which majority of the countries have shown to possess include those on the early learning curriculum (80%) and on the physical structure and facilities for ECCD centers (70%). Fewer countries have established standards on program implementation (50%) and learning assessment (30%) More than half of the countries examined (60%) have monitoring and evaluation mechanism specified for quality assurance of ECCD services.

A QUALITY ASSURANCE ON ECCD LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Ensuring the quality of learning demands a framework that will spell out the learning areas or content, the learning standards or competencies, and the assessment. Setting the benchmark for learning are the various curricular and learning standards adopted by the different countries in Southeast Asia.

ECCD Learning Framework

Table 5. Early Learning Frameworks in Southeast Asia

Countries	Early Learning Curriculum	Description of Early Learning Standards/ Competencies
Brunei Darussalam	The 21 st Century National Education System: Curriculum and Assessment Framework and Guidelines for Preschools (for children ages 5 years old)	Embedded in the 21 st Century National Education System: Curriculum and Assessment Framework and Guidelines for Preschools
Cambodia	National Curriculum and Standards (for children ages 3-5)	Early Learning Development Standards (for children 0-6 years old)
Indonesia	Standard of Achievement Level of Development for Children	Standard of Achievement Level of Development for children 0 to <12 months; 12 to 24 months; 2 to <4 years and 4 to ≤ 6 years
Lao PDR	Preschool Education and Pre-primary Education Curriculum	School Readiness Competencies (for 5- to 6-year-old children)

Countries	Early Learning Curriculum	Description of Early Learning Standards/ Competencies
Malaysia	National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum for children 0-4 years old 2011 National Preschool Curriculum Standard (NPCS) for 4- to 6-year-old children	National Preschool Curriculum Standard 2010
Myanmar	Pre-primary School Curriculum Preschool Syllabus	Learning goals are specified in the curriculum
Philippines	Universal Kindergarten Curriculum	Standards and competencies for 5-year-old Filipino children
Thailand	Curriculum for Pre-Primary Education for 3- to 5-year-old children developed by the Ministry of Education	Early Childhood Behavioral Competencies for 0-3 and 3-5 years old
Timor-Leste	2004 Preschool ECE Curriculum	<i>Note: Not indicated</i>
Vietnam	National Early Childhood Education and Care Curriculum Program for Education and Care of crèches (3-36 months) Program for Education and Care of Kindergarten (3-6 years old)	Learning standards for 5-year-old children

Sources: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011). Regional Consultation Forum on Early Learning Frameworks, Policies, and Programs; and SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011). Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia, 24-28 October 2011, Quezon City, Philippines.

- The learning content and standards for young children in Brunei Darussalam are embedded in the **21st Century National Education System: Curriculum and Assessment Framework and Guidelines for Preschools**. The curriculum focuses on the importance of developing the 21st century skills involving the ICT basic skills, problem-solving skills, creativity, and innovation. It covers the following: 1) scheme of work; 2) contents of the five learning areas; 3) formative assessment guidelines emphasizing observations; 4) learning outcomes indicators; 5) pedagogical approaches; and 6) classroom learning centers' organization.
- Cambodia's learning content and standards are indicated in the **National Curriculum and Standards (for Children 3-5 years old)**. Tools are being developed to monitor the quality and effectiveness of teaching and pupil learning.
- Indonesia has its **Standard of Children Development Achievement Level of Development for Children**, for children 0 to <12 months;

12-24 months; 2 to <4 years and 4 to ≤ 6 years. The Indonesian government provides the standard of children development achievement level, and allows autonomy for each education unit to develop the curriculum or lesson plan in each institution.

- Lao PDR's **Preschool Education and Pre-primary Education Curriculum** contains five domains of a child's development such as physical, hygiene and safety, emotional, physiological and social. The **School Readiness Competencies** for 5-6 years old children are used to monitor and assess the development of children in kindergarten and pre-primary classes, as well as their readiness for primary education. These have been used in developing the pre-primary education curriculum and the student's development checklist.
- In Malaysia, the **National Preschool Curriculum Standards (NPCS) for 4- to 6-year-old children** are mandated through the Education Act. The NPCS contains various quality assurance components such as content standard, learning standard, teaching and learning standard, and assessment standard. It was revised in 2010 to make it standard-based and modular-oriented following curriculum transformation in the primary and secondary schools for the continuity of education from preschool to primary education.

Malaysia's MOE has developed the **Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum (0-4 years old)** based on the Permata curriculum and KAAK (from the MWFC) in 2011. Once the acts have been amended, the national early childhood curriculum will be fully implemented. To ensure compliance to the national curriculum standards, the MOE will use the same mechanism in preschools (4-6 years old) and for childcare (0-4 years old).

To ensure the quality of learning, monitoring is conducted by the School Inspectorate in MOE and the Inspectorate Division in Kemajuan Masyarakat (KEMAS) and Jabatan Perpaduan Negara Dan Integrasi Nasional (JPNIN). Moreover, a national assessment instrument for preschool students' performance and development has been developed by MOE and used since January 2011 in all preschools (MOE, KEMAS, JPNIN, and private).

- Myanmar has a **Pre-Primary School Curriculum**. In order to achieve the learning goals contained in the curriculum, the government prescribed the Preschool Syllabus. It contains the objectives and specific content. Myanmar also issued guidelines for the care of those under three years old.
- The Philippines has the **Universal Kindergarten Curriculum** that provides lesson plans with suggested activities and materials,

including stories and questions to ask. The content and skills in the curriculum are derived from the **Standards and Competencies for 5-year-old Filipino Children**. The list of standards categorized by domains/sub-domains, and competencies and indicators guide kindergarten teachers in the holistic development of children and their preparation for formal school. In order to ensure quality development and learning, assessment instruments are in place and are in compliance with professional criteria for quality.

- In Thailand, there is the **Curriculum for Pre-Primary Education** developed by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development under the Ministry of Education for children ages 0-3 and 3-5. Thailand has also developed **Early Childhood Behavioral Competencies** for children 0-3 years old, consisting of four domains and 286 behavioral indicators; and for children 3-5 years old, consisting of seven domains and 419 behavioral indicators. This was piloted by the Office of the Education Council, in cooperation with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), in 12 schools and childcare centers in various communities starting May 2011.
- Timor-Leste has implemented the **Preschool ECE Curriculum** in 2004. Preschool curriculum is a plan or mapping which reflects the educational philosophy, and offers directives to the teachers with the aim to develop activities that facilitate the teaching-learning process.
- Vietnam developed the **National Early Childhood Education and Care Curriculum Program for Education and Care of Crèches** (3-36 months) and the **Program for Education and Care of Kindergartens** (3-6 years old) containing the objectives, implementation plan, content, expected results in the fields for each age, educational activities, forms and methods of education, educational environment, and assessment of the child’s development. Moreover, Vietnam has implemented the **Learning Standards for Five-Year-Old Children** for those who are getting ready for Grade 1. These standards are used in assessing children’s development and in implementing educational programs in preschools.

ECCD Learning Assessment

The extent to which children develop in various domains and the efficiency with which learning approaches are used could be gauged through an internal and external assessment. Assessment is a process by which information about student learning, abilities and achievements are

gathered and evaluated. In Southeast Asia, children in ECCD centers are usually assessed informally using a wide variety of tools and methods. These informal methods include:

- **Checklists** which contain a list of behaviors identifying children's skills and knowledge to note what children know and can do.
- **Anecdotal Records** which describe briefly a learner's behavior at one time to know the appropriate teaching strategy
- **Running Records** which note a learners' behavior on a chain of events to obtain a more detailed insight of the child's development over a period of time.
- **Observation** - a systematic way to watch children to identify their behaviors, note their performance, and observe how they make decisions.
- **Portfolio** - a collection of children's work samples and output such as test scores, writing work samples, videotapes, and the like to document each child's achievement in specific areas over time.
- **Interview** which engages children in discussion to listen to their particular answers or explanation of their behavior and work samples.

Table 6. Types of Assessment Common among Southeast Asian Countries

Countries	Checklist	Anecdotal record	Running Report	Observation	Portfolio	Interview	Others
Brunei Darussalam	X	X	X	X		X	Written, verbal tests, report cards, home projects with parents
Cambodia	X			X		X	
Indonesia	X	X	X	X	X		- Parents' report - Task assignment - Show-and-tell - Dialogue
Lao PDR	X	X	X	X	X	X	- Discussion - Results of activities
Malaysia	X	X	X	X	x		National Preschool Assessment

Countries	Checklist	Anecdotal record	Running Report	Observation	Portfolio	Interview	Others
Myanmar	X		X	X			
Philippines	X		X	X	X	X	Report card
Thailand	X		X	X	X	X	
Timor-Leste	X		X	X	X		Socialization for parents and communities
Vietnam	X		X	X			- case studies - exercises - product analysis - talk with parents
Total	10	4	9	10	6	5	

Sources: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011). Regional Consultation Forum on Early Learning Frameworks, Policies, and Programs; and SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011). Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia, 24-28 October 2011, Quezon City, Philippines.

The most common methods of assessment for early learning used in Southeast Asian countries are checklists and observation. Almost all of the countries in Southeast Asia also use running reports, while at least half employ portfolios and interviews to assess children in their early learning and development. The method of assessment least used is the anecdotal record.

- In Brunei Darussalam, children aged 3-4 in private preschools and those aged 5 in private and government preschools are more often academically assessed continuously using formative assessment set by the individual preschools. Assessments come in the form of written and verbal tests. Some teachers administer tests and examinations quarterly or if directed by their head teachers. Moreover, the **Preschool Checklist Indicators 2011** was implemented for the first time in January 2011, covering teaching-learning processes and pedagogy for children aged 3-5 in both government and private preschools.

- Indonesia's assessment is a series of monitoring, note-taking and children's developmental data processing activities using appropriate methods and instruments. In assessing the development achievements of children, the following are used: observation, task assignment, show and tell, anecdote, dialogue, parents' reports and children's creative work portfolio, as well as children's profile description.
- Lao PDR uses the **Child Development Monitoring Checklist** to assess the levels of development through observation during activities.
- In Malaysia, the **National Preschool Curriculum Standard 2010** has defined the standards of assessment. The methods of assessment suggested are observation, checklist, and portfolio. Paper-and-pencil tests are not allowed. The results of standardized assessment for each child are keyed in digitally through the web. The instruments are based on observation and checklist of the abilities of the child. This system of performance standards is currently being streamlined to provide a continuum with primary school performance standards.
- Myanmar's **ECCD Monitoring Tool** includes assessing the status of children's development as a whole, and not just of an individual child. Its methods include focus group discussion, observation, and checklist.
- The **Philippine ECCD Checklist** is one assessment tool being used that is aligned with early learning standards and program goals, and with specific emphasis on the curriculum. Another tool for assessing early learners especially among the 5-year-old children is the **School Readiness Assessment (SReA)**. Based on curriculum standards set for those aged 5, SReA is administered to determine the program level of Grade I entrants (6 years of age) across different developmental domains that are critical in tackling Grade I learning competencies.
- In Thailand, children are assessed on their development through observation, interview, checklist, and portfolio. These data are recorded and developed.
- Vietnam's evaluation mechanisms are used to check or assess the optimal development and learning in ECCD centers for children 0-5 years old through observing, talking with children and parents, and using case studies, exercises, and product analysis activities of the child.

ECCD Content/ Learning Areas

The scope and focus of age-appropriate developmental domain of children are inputs to the quality of learning and development of children in their early years. Countries in Southeast Asia prescribe or suggest a range of developmental domain which forms the basis of the content and learning areas.

Table 7. Content/ Learning Areas per Developmental Domain

Countries	Self, Social & Emotional	Cognitive	Language/ Communication	Physical/ Health	Aesthetic/ Creative	Moral/ Religious	Techno-logical
Brunei Darussalam	Self and social areas covering myself, my family, my school	Cognitive (literacy, numeracy, early science)	Mother tongue language and English; singing, reading, storytelling, role-playing, dramatizing, show-and-tell	Creative movements; gross and fine motor activities; PE; traditional games	Aesthetic and creative activities; traditional songs and games	Character and values, religious study taught by religious teachers; religious songs integrated in other activities	Early ICT
Cambodia	Socio-emotional	Cognitive (awareness & thinking)	Language	Physical Health		Cultural Moral	
Indonesia	Socio-emotional	Cognitive	Language	Soft and gross motor		Religious / Moral values	
Lao PDR	Socio-emotional	- Sensory perceptual - Numeracy	Communication	Gross and fine motor			
Malaysia	Socio-emotional (self-esteem)	- Early Mathematics - Early Science - Sensorial	Language Communication	Physical	Aesthetic Creativity	Moral Spirituality	Basic ICT literacy
Myanmar		Mathematics	Language (Myanmar & English)	Health Physical	Aesthetic (music & art)	- Civics - Moral - Nation-building	

Countries	Self, Social & Emotional	Cognitive	Language/ Communication	Physical/ Health	Aesthetic/ Creative	Moral/ Religious	Techno- logical
Philippines	Socio-emotional	Cognitive	Language	- Physical health & well-being - Motor skills	Creative Aesthetic	Character and values	
Singapore	Self and social awareness	Numeracy Environmental Awareness	Language and literacy (English)	- Healthy habits - Motor skills	Aesthetics Creative expression	Sound moral values	
Thailand	Socio-emotional	Cognitive		Physical			
Timor-Leste	Socio-emotional	- Pre-writing - Counting	Language	Physical			
Vietnam	Socio-emotional	Cognitive	Language	Physical	Aesthetic		

Sources: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011). Regional Consultation Forum on Early Learning Frameworks, Policies, and Programs; and SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011). Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia, 24-28 October 2011, Quezon City, Philippines.

Southeast Asian countries have essentially covered all developmental domains such as socio-emotional, cognitive, language/communication, and physical/health. Notwithstanding the countries' similarities in these domains, there are differences when it comes to the focus in the learning content. For instance, the coverage of cognitive development learning areas varies across countries: some focus on mathematics and science, others on awareness and thinking. Although values/moral and aesthetic/creative development are usually integrated in activities in preschools, most countries have specifically cited them in their curriculum. Only Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia have specific ICT content in their curriculum indicated as part of their curriculum reform for pupils to achieve 21st century skills.

No standard has been identified for the learning approach; instead, the approach is commonly adopted as part of the principles of the curriculum in ECCD. Some of these include: 1) learning through play, 2) child-centeredness, and 3) holistic/integrated.

B QUALITY ASSURANCE OF ECCD PHYSICAL FACILITIES, RESOURCES AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Most countries in Southeast Asia have specific requirements and conditions set for ECCD centers in terms of physical facilities, resources and learning environment. These requirements and conditions have to be met and maintained for registration, licensing, permission to operate or accreditation. Some are issued as guidelines in achieving quality indicators in ECCD.

For instance, in Brunei Darussalam, the quality of premises, as well as the health and safety requirements for childcare centers, is mandated through **Childcare Center Regulation 2006** that controls, issues license and regulates quality child care centers for children 0-3 years old. It stipulates the conditions required for an operational license to be granted, which include the requirement that child care centers be well-resourced, staff be trained and that the environment be a safe and secure place for children to develop. A child care center is granted a license if it fulfills the following requirements:

- Suitable premises approved for use as a child care center must meet all the health and safety requirements as stipulated by seven key departments (the Department of Land, Department of Town and Country Planning, Fire Department, Ministry of Health, Royal Brunei Police Force, Fire and Rescue Department, and the Municipal Board of District Office). The center must also be well-equipped, secure and child-friendly.
- Staff working at the child care center must be qualified to a minimum acceptable academic qualification, with experience and/or training in early childhood. The legal requirement is that staff must have a minimum of 5 credits in the GCE 'O' level, with experience and/or training in early childhood care.
- The center must provide a suitable curriculum and program which has been approved as 'age-appropriate' for children below 3 years of age.
- The child care center must establish efficient management and include in its activities opportunities for continuous in-service training for staff.

On the other hand, the **Education Order 2003** and the **Education Regulation 2004** require all private schools and institutions to be registered

with the Private Education Section (PES) of the Ministry of Education. The requirements that need to be fulfilled by preschool operators are similar to those required of a childcare center.

In addition, the Malaysian MOE has formulated the **Specification Document on Building, Space, Furniture, Equipment and Fittings for All Preschools** to guide MOE in planning, budgeting and supplying new preschools with furniture and fittings. It suggests a detailed floor plan for preschool classrooms and teaching-learning equipment and materials to use.

Similarly, the Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) through Administrative Order No. 29, s.2004 has outlined the standards for indoor and outdoor environment for day care centers, while the Department of Education issued DECS Order No. 107, s.1989 which outlined the **Standards for the Organization and Operations of Preschools** which prescribe the minimum requirements for the school site, physical facilities, and learning equipment for a kindergarten. These standards specify the structure of the environment, the ideal class size, and the classroom size per child. Moreover, it lists the equipment in the playground and garden, classroom fixtures, health facilities and safety provisions, and the activity centers.

In Myanmar, the quality of preschool environment is listed in the **Core Indicators for Minimum Quality Standards for ECD** which was developed through support from UNICEF. According to the list of minimum quality standards for ECCD, the preschool must have adequate, well-ventilated, safe, and well-furnished and equipped classroom; a green and safe environment conducive to playing, exploring and discovering; and measures and provisions for health and safety of children.

1. Quality ECCD Center Standards

a. Space and Physical Facilities

The physical environment and space is one element of a high quality ECCD system. Elements of the environment such as amount of space, how the space is organized, arrangement of rooms, the type of furnishing and equipment, and availability of a variety of materials play an important role in children's well-being, safety, health, and physical, social, emotional and cognitive development (Beach & Friendly, 2005). The design of an ECCD center can also have an impact on child-staff interaction, staff satisfaction and staff turnover (Olds, 2011 as cited in Beach & Friendly, 2005).

Some countries have specified the measure of area per child that an ECCD center must have. In Malaysia, it is 3.5 square meters; in Indonesia, 3 square meters; in Lao PDR, 2.5 square meters; and in the Philippines, 1½ square meters.

Other countries have specified the areas for the whole ECCD center. In the case of the Philippines, the required ECCD area is 500 square meters while in Indonesia, the requirement is 300 square meters. There are also specifications for rooms and facilities: Based on DECS Order No. 107, s.1989, a Philippine ECCD classroom should be 140 square meters and the playground should be 360 square meters, while in Vietnam, the living room should be 1.5 to 1.8 square meters; the bedroom must be 1.2-1.5 square meters; and the Physical Education room has to be 60 square meters.

Some Southeast Asian countries suggest dedicated spaces within each preschool. For instance, in Malaysia, it is standard to have a Language and Communication Center, a Manipulation Center, a Cognitive Center, a Spirituality and Moral Development Center, a Physical Development Center, and a Creativity and Aesthetics Center. In the Philippines, preschool classrooms should have activity centers or areas for the following: personal care and grooming, house and garden care, communication skills corner, sensory-perceptual and numeracy skills corner, and motor and creative development corner.

Moreover, it is also common in ECCD centers in Southeast Asia to have the following: shoe rack, cabinets for bags, toilet and bathing facilities, washing area and eating areas. Usual furniture required in an ECCD Center are tables, chairs, cabinets, shelves, beds, and shoe rack while outdoor facilities are slides, swings, monkey bars, sand, and water play.

b. Other Learning Resources

There are no specifications as to other resources for the development and learning of children. Generally, however, most countries require non-toxic toys, books, and pictures. For more developed countries such as Malaysia, the list of resources that can be found in an ECCD center includes TV, DVD, radio, kitchen, appliances, musical instruments, sports equipment, carpet and rubber mats. Aside from these, there are first aid kits and medical supplies.

c. Safe and Stimulating Environment

Generally, the type of physical environment that ECCD institutions aspire for is one that is safe, secure and conducive to learning and development. Safety and security are ensured in an ECCD center by having the following provisions:

- first aid kit
- fence around the playground
- safety measure for floors, stairs, doors and windows
- absence of sharp and perilous objects
- disaster preparedness measures

ECCD centers are also made conducive to development and learning by having adequate light and ventilation, and a green environment. Vietnam, for instance, prescribes design requirements that ensure the safety of children within a stimulating and green environment in accordance with their Kindergarten Charter. Malaysia, apart from the acts/ regulations that govern the setting up of childcare centers, also enforces safety policies of the Ministry of Health and the Fire Department, one of which is setting up a childcare center for every 1000 residents or 200 households, one that is not located near the main roads but in corner lots instead.

2. Mechanism for Compliance of ECCD Center's Standards

Most Southeast Asian countries have set a standard in terms of physical facilities and environment. However, some of them have limited authority to regulate ECCD centers through registration or licensing.

One example of regulation can be found in Brunei Darussalam where all private preschools and child care centers are enforced to meet all the health and safety requirements as stipulated in the Childcare Center Regulation. To ensure compliance, inspections are conducted by seven key departments (Department of Land, Department of Town and Country Planning, Fire Department, Ministry of Health, Royal Brunei Police Force, Fire and Rescue, Municipal Board, and District Office).

In the case of Malaysia, the inspection of the learning environment is conducted with reference to the **Specification Document on Building, Space, Furniture, Equipment and Fittings**, as well as another document produced by MOE, namely, the **Preschool Guidelines** that includes a

module on setting up learning centers in preschool classrooms. Inspection of the learning environment for childcare centers is conducted during the regular inspections based on prepared monitoring instruments.

In the Philippines, several government departments issued orders for the compliance of standards in physical facilities and environments. The DSWD Administrative Order No. 29 s.2004 mandates day care centers to follow the standards set and prescribed for a quality learning environment, monitoring and supervision, and evaluation, while DECS Order No. 107, s.1989 ensures compliance with the specified standards set through monitoring by the Division Preschool Coordinator.



QUALITY ASSURANCE OF ECCD HUMAN RESOURCES

A myriad of factors affects the quality and performance of ECCD human resources. One way of achieving quality ECCD program and services is by setting the appropriate qualification standards or requirements for employment of ECCD organizational leaders, teachers, and caregivers.

1. Qualification Standards for Principals/Administrators/Supervisors

In Southeast Asia, those who provide leadership and/or supervision for childcare centers and preschool classes are the principals, administrators or supervisors. Not all countries have set a standard for the qualification of a childcare center/preschool principal, administrator or supervisor. This may be due to the fact that childcare centers/preschools are usually governed by local governments or larger schools that do not necessarily require a specific ECCD head. For instance, in Malaysia, leadership in ECCD is usually provided by the District or State supervisors. In instances when there is a preschool headmaster, he/she is required to have a diploma in education.

Education, training, character, and professional competence, particularly managerial skills and teaching experience, are the usual requirements for principals/ administrators/ supervisors of an ECCD institution.

Table 8. Minimum Standards/Requirements for ECCD Principals/ Administrators/ Supervisors

Countries	College Degree Holder	High School / Diploma Holder	Training / Certificate / Credits	Registration/ Licensure	Examination Passer	Character/ Attributes	(Specify Others)
Brunei Darussalam			✓	✓		✓	- 5 years teaching experience - Professional competence
Cambodia	no answer						
Indonesia		✓	✓			✓	Managerial, social and professional competence
Lao PDR	no answer						
Malaysia	✓		✓	✓			Diploma in education if headmaster
Myanmar	✓		✓				
Philippines	✓			✓	✓	✓	Supervisory and managerial skills
Thailand	✓		✓			✓	
Timor-Leste	no answer						
Vietnam			✓		✓	✓	- 5 years ECCE experience - Professional competence

Source: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011). Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia

- In Brunei Darussalam, a supervisor who ensures the effective daily running of the center and the implementation of programs by the staff is required to possess at least 5 “O” level credits and to have experience in child care for at least 2 years.
- ECCD organizational leaders in Indonesia must have at least a high school diploma with appropriate ECCD training, education or course certificate from accredited ECE institutions. Aside from these, they are required to be professionally and socially competent, with an interest to develop the institution. Lastly, they must have the managerial skills of managing and developing the institution, coordinating among teachers and workers, and managing the facilities.

- In Myanmar, the requirement for a preschool head is a master's or bachelor's degree, and a certificate on ECD awareness-raising workshop and training.
- In the Philippines, organizational leaders should at least be a college graduate in any discipline like Social Work or Education, a Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) board passer, and have the professional competence in supervision, management and planning; monitoring and assessment; mentoring and coaching; and report generation and writing. It is also required that they have good moral character.
- In Vietnam, the standards for principals of kindergarten/ preschool include ethical behavior and managerial and supervisory skills. They must have the appropriate education or training. They must also be able to cooperate with families, as well as establish ties between the school and the local area.

2. Qualification Standards for ECCD Childcare Center Personnel

Taking care of and providing opportunities for the development of children from zero to four years old rest in the hands of day care workers, childcare center minders or caregivers. In Southeast Asian countries, education is not usually a requirement for recruitment of childcare center personnel, but training/certification is usually demanded.

Table 9. Minimum Standards/Requirements for ECCD Childcare Personnel

Countries	College Degree Holder	High School Diploma/ Holder	Training/ Certificate/ Credits	Registration Licensure	Examination Passer	Character/ Attribute	Others (specify)
Brunei Darussalam			✓				18 years old
Cambodia	no answer						
Indonesia		✓					Professional competence
Lao PDR	no answer						
Malaysia			✓		✓		- literate - 18 years old - Malaysian
Myanmar		✓	✓				
Philippines		✓	✓			✓	
Thailand						✓	With ability/ experience
Timor-Leste	no answer						
Vietnam			✓			✓	

Source: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011). Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia

- Bruneian caregivers carry many roles when taking care of young children. They must have at least 3 “O” level credits, including Malay and English. The assistant caregivers assist the caregivers in looking after the young and their activities. They must have at least completed their year 9 of secondary education. Both caregivers and assistant caregivers must be at least 18 years old, must possess a certificate in First Aid, and have undergone a First Aid training accredited by the Ministry of Health. They are also required to have been trained in fire extinguishing, to be physically healthy and of good moral character, with prior work experience with preschool children.
- In Indonesia, caregivers must be at least a high school graduate and must have the following professional competencies in caring for children: (1) understanding the phase of the children development; (2) understanding the children’s growth and development; (3) understanding the giving of education stimulus; (4) facilitating cooperation with parents in children’s education, care, and protection.
- Myanmar’s caregivers must have reached a high school level and must have a certificate in ECCE caregiver training.
- Malaysia’s Childcare Center’s Act requires all childcare providers and minders to attend the Basic Early Childhood course (Kursus Asas Awal Kanak-kanak or KAAK). KAAK has both theory and practical sessions. It is completed by a test. Upon completion and passing of KAAK, the childcare minders will obtain a SKM Level 2.
- A Philippine day care worker must be at least a high school graduate and trained in Early Childhood Care and Development, and must undergo the DCW accreditation and the day care training course.
- In Thailand, the only requirements for a caregiver are ability, experience and a positive attitude to develop very young children.
- In Vietnam, the requirements are training in caregiver work; a good way of life; and good manners, behavior and health.

3. Qualification Standards for ECCD Teachers

Teachers of children in the early years are expected to provide care, offer opportunities for development, and educate. For this demanding task, countries in Southeast Asia have more stringent qualification standards or requirements for ECCD teachers than for caregivers or day care workers.

Table 10. Minimum Standards/Requirements for ECCD Teachers

Countries	College Degree Holder	High School Diploma/ Holder	Training/ Certificate/ Credits	Registration/ Licensure/ Teaching Permit	Examination Passer	Character/ Attributes	Others (specify)
Brunei Darussalam			✓	✓		✓	Professional competence
Cambodia		✓ (urban)	✓		✓	✓	
Indonesia	✓					✓	Managerial, social, pedagogic and professional competence
Lao PDR	no answer						
Malaysia		✓	✓	✓		✓	Professional competence
Myanmar		✓	✓				
Philippines	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Singapore							
Thailand	✓			✓		✓	
Timor-Leste		✓	✓		✓		2 years ECE experience
Vietnam			✓		✓	✓	Professional competence

Source: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011). Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia

- Brunei Darussalam requires that the teachers hold at least 4 “O” level credits while the assistant teacher must possess at least 3 “O” level credits. Teachers of 5-year-old children must have a certified teaching qualification ranging from a three-year training with basic initial teacher’s certificate in education to a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE).
- In Cambodia, teachers are required to have earned two years of training and a high school diploma (urban) or junior high school diploma (rural), to have passed an examination conducted by MOEYS, to possess pedagogical skills, have an appropriate body of work, and must not have a criminal record.
- Indonesian teachers for ECE must have a minimum academic qualification of Diploma IV or an undergraduate degree in early childhood education or psychology obtained from an accredited study program. Aside from these, the following are the other

requirements: 1) professional competence such as mastery of subject and IT skills; 2) pedagogical skills, including mastery of physical, moral, social, cultural, emotional and intellectual domains; of theories of learning; and others; 3) social skills such as attitude towards others and ability to communicate with colleagues; and 4) character which covers religion, nation, teaching profession and personal conduct.

- Malaysia has the **Standards of Malaysian Teachers (SGM)** which was developed by the MOE in 2005 to determine the quality level of professional competencies among teachers, as well as for quality assurance in teacher training. SGM lists the standard professional competencies for teacher.
- In Myanmar, the requirement for a preschool teacher is that s/ he be at least a high school/ lower secondary level graduate, has gone through a one-month preschool training, and has received a certificate in ECCD teacher training.
- In the Philippines, teachers handling 5-year-old children must be a college graduate with a baccalaureate degree in education and at least 21 units in ECE, a civil service-eligible, and a LET passer with teaching experience in preschool.
- In Timor-Leste, based on the Teacher Regime career, the minimum qualification for all teachers is a bachelor's degree. Moreover, teachers working with children who are under 6 years old should have been integrated into the national teacher competence framework, covering: 1) proficiency in the official language of Timor-Leste, as well as other languages needed; 2) technical knowledge; 3) teaching techniques and strategies; 4) professionalism, referring to the teachers' care of the academic, social and emotional well-being of the pupil, as well as their relationship with their work in its broadest sense.
- In Vietnam, ECCE Teacher Qualification Standards include: 1) morality and lifestyle such as good character and healthy lifestyles; 2) knowledge of psychological characteristics, the physical and emotional development of preschool children, and safety and health measures, as well as an understanding of political, economic, social and cultural environment; and 3) pedagogic skills, including classroom management and communication skills.

a. Working Conditions for ECCD Teachers

Performance of ECCD teachers is affected by working conditions, one of which is the number of hours they are required to render. Based on the working hours of preschool teachers in Southeast Asia, it may be noted that the least load was experienced by the teachers in Cambodia who are required to work only three hours a day, five days week, plus one day of methodology meeting. In other countries such as Brunei Darussalam and Thailand, the required number of hours to be rendered by ECCD teachers is five per day per week. Many others require eight hours a day per week.

Despite the longer 40 hours per week, Malaysia compensated its ECCD teachers with a comparatively high monthly salary of US\$1,310 -- 1,600 percent higher than Lao PDR's US\$80 which requires roughly the same number of hours for preschool teachers. Moreover, there are countries which offer preschool teachers a kind of incentive, particularly those teachers in remote places or those who have attained high educational level or training.

Table 11. Working Conditions and Development for ECCD Teachers

Countries	Working Hours (hrs/ wk)	Starting Salary (US\$/ mo.)	Salary Rate per hour in US Dollar	Rewards and Incentives	Professional Development Program
Brunei Darussalam	25	1,102.91 (with least educational attainment)	11.03	✓	✓
Cambodia	15 (+1 day meeting)	60-80	1.33	✓	✓
Indonesia	24	100-350 (private, international school)	3.64	✓	✓
Lao PDR	40	60-80	.50	✓	✓
Malaysia	37.5	1,310	8.3	✓	✓
Myanmar	24.5	60-70	.71		
Philippines	40	441.86	2.76		✓
Thailand	25	820	8.2	✓	✓
Timor-Leste	35			✓	
Vietnam	40	60- 75	1.88		✓

Source: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011). Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia

b. Professional Development for ECCD Teachers

- Brunei Darussalam's ECCE Unit has carried out a **Professional Capacity Building Program for Preschool Teachers Nationwide** to improve the quality of ECCD educators serving 5- to 6-year-old children. This program has involved all preschool teachers nationwide in the country, from government schools to private schools, to introduce the best practices in teaching preschool through play. Furthermore, in-service training to specialize in early childhood care and education is encouraged. These training programs are usually conducted by a local university to develop teachers' pedagogical skills and knowledge and to produce more effective teachers. Since 2009, the ECCE program has been offered at the postgraduate level.
- Indonesia's **Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 16 of 2007 on Standards for Teacher's Academic Qualification and Competence** requires teachers to meet specified personal, social and professional competencies. Those who do not meet the academic and competence qualification are called assistant teachers and caregivers. Those competencies could be achieved through pre-service or in-service training programs. The MoEC has categorized the training system into basic level (48 hours), intermediate (64 hours), and advanced (80 hours).

In cooperation with several accredited universities that have an early childhood education program, the government conducts ECE teacher's certification based on defined competencies in the standard of early childhood education. Those who meet the requirements are entitled to access the benefits provided by the government, including professional allowances. Indonesia offers a lot of incentives for ECE educators to undergo training or pursue higher education. One of these is the **ECE Educator Qualification Program** which includes a scholarship for an undergraduate degree in an ECE program. Another is the Conversion Program which confers formal acknowledgement to a training, portfolio assessment, and competence examination that is equivalent to credits earned from studying a relevant subject at the university level. This, in turn, can be used for certain requirement qualification in education. There is also the Education Aid which provides US \$300 per person as assistance for those pursuing a degree program on their own.

- In Lao PDR, the **Teacher Education Strategy 2006-2015** and **Action Plan 2006-2010** benefit preschool teachers who have a preschool education certificate (course: 11+1 or 11+2) by assisting them so they can continue to study a preschool education course (11+3) or a diploma course abroad.

- Malaysia runs regular **Early Childhood Childcare Courses (KAAK)** for childcare operators and workers for certification. All childcare providers are required to attend this 11-day course. The course content is regulated by MWFC. As an incentive that would encourage more childcare providers to attend the course which is mandatory for childcare providers (minders), half of the cost of KAAK is subsidized by the government through the Social Welfare Department.

On the other hand, MOE, KEMAS and JPNIN regularly organize in-service training for their respective preschool teachers. A national circular mandates all staff, including teachers, to attend at least 7 days of training per year. Content of training includes teaching and learning methods, preparation of teaching aids, assessment, and writing of record books. There is another kind of ad hoc training for selected teachers, which is for self-improvement and for future use. Private colleges, universities and NGOs such as the Malaysian Kindergarten Association (PTM) organized regular or ad hoc in-service training programs, especially for private preschools. PTM organizes regular holiday certificate courses. Teachers are required to attend a number of modules before they are awarded a certificate in a skills training for preschool teachers.

- The Philippine Department of Education provides funds for the professional development/ training of teachers handling 5-year-old children. Permanent or regular kindergarten teachers earn the minimum requirement of 18 units in early childhood education through summer courses at state colleges or universities. Volunteer kindergarten teachers are given 3-5 days training on basic knowledge and skills, specifically on the utilization of the new curriculum guide for kindergarten teachers. The training is handled by a core of trainers found in every region and division nationwide.

Through Executive Order 685 that aims to expand coverage of preschool to include the day care centers, the day care workers are now included in the teacher training program of DepEd which is especially focused on curriculum and competencies for preschool education, including provision of the necessary instructional materials. Day care workers undergo training through the local DepEd training programs. Aside from these, there is a move to accredit day care workers and day care centers to ensure delivery of quality day care services.

- The Thai government provides professional development and compensation for all teachers as part of the program for the whole educational system. The Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC) has developed and/or proposed the following policies:
 - The production and development of teachers and educational personnel;
 - Professional licenses for teachers and educational institution administrators;
 - Rewarding of outstanding teachers;
 - Salaries, remuneration, welfare and benefits for teachers and educational personnel;
 - The fund for development of teachers, faculty staff, and educational personnel; and
 - The fund for the promotion and development of teachers, faculty staff, and educational personnel.

- In Timor-Leste, teachers continue to train every three months (April, August and December) to upgrade their competencies. NGOs provide volunteer caregivers and assistant teachers to support services. The NGOs and the Ministry of Education work together as the ECD Working Group responsible for supervising, monitoring and evaluating the performance of teachers, workers and caregivers.

- Vietnam offers a regular training program for ECE teachers: 120 teaching periods/year, with regulations on objectives, contents, methods, organization methods and detailed evaluations. Furthermore, it has come out with a charter contest for best teachers at the preschool level.

4. Performance Assessment

Some countries in Southeast Asia, in their bid to ensure that ECCD personnel are performing according to standards, have developed instruments to assess their performance and a scheme for monitoring and evaluation.

Table 12. Performance Assessment for ECCD Personnel

Countries	Performance Assessment Instrument	Inspection/Monitoring Scheme
Brunei Darussalam	Annual work performance appraised by head of schools carried out in September	Monitoring and evaluation done twice a year by the school heads; ECCE Unit regular monitoring of the teachers' performance
Cambodia		Quarterly monitoring
Indonesia	Assessment Indicators 1) Offline assessment system in the school level by the principal and senior or qualified teacher, and 2) Online assessment system by teachers who answer questions in the module	
Lao PDR	no answer	no answer
Malaysia	Standardized assessment tool for childcare center minders	Department of Social Welfare (DSW) state level conducts regular inspection School inspectorate inspects preschools yearly
Myanmar	Minimum ECD Quality Standard was used for preschool teachers for self-assessment and improvement	
Philippines	Competency-Based Performance Appraisal System for Teachers (all government-hired teachers)	Local municipal social worker/ administrator monitor performance of day care workers School head, district supervisor or the division kindergarten supervisor/ coordinator monitor performance of the kindergarten teachers
Thailand	Internal standards and indicators External standards criterion	External and external monitoring
Timor-Leste	no answer	no answer
Vietnam	Teacher qualification standards	

Source: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011). Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia

- Brunei Darussalam has the **Preschool Checklist Indicators 2011** which preschool teachers use as a form of self-assessment submitted at the end of every school term. It is hoped that with the revision of the checklist, the Unit will come up with the National Quality Assurance Indicators for Brunei Darussalam.

The educators and workers handling children aged 3-5 and working in private preschools are supervised, monitored and evaluated by the Private Education Section (PES) of the Ministry of Education. However, the delivery performance of educators and workers of both child care centers and private preschools is not professionally monitored and evaluated due to a lack of trained personnel in ECCE. The DCD and the PES only serve as licensing authorities, approving applications and renewing registrations.

For the educators handling children aged 5 and working in government-funded preschools, a number of departments in the Ministry of Education are responsible for monitoring, supervising and evaluating their performance. This includes the ECCE unit, the Department of Schools, and the Department of Inspectorate of Schools.

- Cambodia conducts quarterly monitoring, the results of which are analyzed and distributed to every province, district, school and relevant stakeholders.
- Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC), through the human resources development and quality assurance for education body (BPSDMP-PMP), has two systems for evaluating the certified teacher. The first one is the offline system. This assessment is done at the school level by the principal and a senior or qualified teacher. The second is an online system. Each teacher has to answer the questions that are in the module. This evaluation system took effect in 2012. The assessment indicator is based on the required competencies. These include personality, pedagogic, social, and professional competence. If, within two years, the teachers did not show good performance, the professional allowances will be stopped.
- In Malaysia, the supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the performance of childcare minders are part of the regular inspection for childcare centers that use a standardized instrument prepared by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development. For Malaysian preschools, the School Inspectorate conducts a yearly school inspection, covering areas such as teaching and learning, management of classroom spaces, management and use of teaching and learning materials, and others. Reports from the School Inspectorate are channeled to the Minister and top management for further action.
- For the Philippine preschool teachers under DepEd, the Competency-Based Performance Appraisal System is utilized. It covers several

domains: 1) social regard for learning, 2) learning environment, 3) diversity of learners, 4) curriculum, 5) planning, assessing and reporting, 6) community linkages, and 7) personal growth and professional development. In order to guarantee competence and quality service, the ECCD Council, in particular, is creating performance standards that will serve as a guide in the periodic evaluation of day care workers. Performance of the day care workers, as well as that of the kindergarten teachers, is supervised, monitored and evaluated separately by the agencies concerned -- the day care workers by the local municipal social worker/administrator, and the kindergarten teachers by the school head, district supervisor or the division kindergarten supervisor/ coordinator.

- Thailand’s performance assessment is conducted by the Bureau of Educational Testing (BET) under the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) of the Ministry of Education. It sets policy by using the internal standards and indicators for monitoring and evaluating ECCD educators (teachers, administrators, schools/ nursery center) to meet all the requirements of the quality assurance system. Moreover, ONESQA, a public organization, sets the external standards criterion to monitor them as well.
- In Vietnam, teachers are evaluated using the Teacher Qualification Standards.

D STANDARDS FOR PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Table 13. Program Management Standard for Children 0 to 4 Years Old

Countries	Staffing Requirements	Pupil-Teacher Ratio	Time Period	Program Evaluation
Brunei Darussalam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personnel required to have completed their secondary education to be employed - 18 years of age 	<u>2-18 mos:</u> 1:5 <u>18-30 mos:</u> 1:8 <u>30 mos.-3yrs:</u> 1:12 <u>3-5 yrs:</u> 1:10 Children with disability: 1:4	Child care center 0-3yrs old: No child shall be retained in a child care center for more than 24 hours continuously 3-4 yrs. old: 4 hrs	Program is evaluated once a year for registration renewal

Countries	Staffing Requirements	Pupil-Teacher Ratio	Time Period	Program Evaluation
Indonesia 0-6			<u>0-4 yrs old</u> 120-180 min/ wk <u>Kindergarten:</u> 150-180 min/ wk	There is program supervision and evaluation once a semester.
Lao PDR	1	1: 20-25	School Year	
Malaysia	Number of child minders is in accordance with the child minder: children ratio For preschools: 1 teacher and 1 student management assistant for every 25 students	<u>Existing</u> <u>0-3 yrs old</u> 1:5 <u>3-4 yrs old</u> 1:10 <u>5-6 yrs old</u> 1: 25 <u>For 2011</u> <u>0-1 yr old</u> 1:3 <u>1-3 yrs old</u> 1:5 <u>3-4 yrs old</u> 1:10	<u>0-4 yrs old</u> 3-10 hrs per day, depending on program and on the needs of parents <u>5-6 yrs old</u> 4 hours per week	Inspection is conducted once every three months onto every childcare center by state level officers using standard instruments. For preschools, school inspectorate using standard school inspection instrument. Inspections are conducted regularly.
Myanmar	Availability of active ECD Management Committee/ parents teacher committee	<u>3-5 yrs old</u> 1: 20	Once a year beginning of the schooling	By using monitoring tool for region and state, township and school levels
Philippines	DSWD Administrative Order 29 s. 2004			
Thailand		1:16		BET OBEC ONESQA
Vietnam		<u>3 mos.-3 yrs.</u> 1:8 <u>3-6 yrs old</u> 1:10		Self-inspection for kindergarten Inspection by MOET

Source: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011). Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia

Only a few countries have clear standards on areas of program management. For instance, there are no clear specifications on staff allocation standards as it depends on the availability of resources. As for the child-caregiver ratio or pupil-teacher ratio, only Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Vietnam give specific numbers. There is also no standard set for the time period allocated for ECCD, except in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam. Furthermore, very few countries have laid down the details of how ECCD program could be inspected, monitored or evaluated.

SUMMARY

Countries in Southeast Asia have developed a comprehensive learning framework for ECCD by setting learning standards and competencies that encompass all developmental domains. Children's learning and development progress is also monitored continuously through authentic assessment methods.

Some countries in Southeast Asia, namely, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Philippines, have official documents that set the standards for the ECCD center's physical space and facilities, resources, and environment.

As for qualification standards for ECCD personnel, there is no common ground to set a regional standard, although the most commonly desired qualification of a head, caregiver or teacher in an ECCD center is for one to have undergone training or certification. There are performance assessment mechanisms but these are usually for government-hired teachers and therefore not specifically addressed to assess caregivers or preschool teachers.

Standards for ECCD teachers' compensation and working conditions vary, depending on the economic status of the country, with the more developed countries having better compensated ECCD teachers. Most countries or at least 80 percent of those surveyed in Southeast Asia have a professional development program for teachers, and this program extends to preschool teachers.

There has been no official issuance that pertains to quality assurance of ECCD program management in countries in Southeast Asia, although there are pockets of provisions stated in ECCD-related official documents in some countries in the region.

V. REGULATION AND ACCREDITATION OF ECCD STANDARDS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The government, through its legislative and executive powers, has the authority to prescribe guidelines on the establishment of ECCD centers, to issue licenses/ permits to ECCD providers, and to monitor and evaluate. However, much of the quality of ECCD programs and services is dependent upon the government’s definition of quality and how seriously it is taking its role in regulating ECCD services.

A

CONTROL AND REGULATION OF ECCD PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Government has the power to regulate through the issuance of official rules in order to carry out laws. In Southeast Asia, the most common form of government regulation in ECCD is the issuance of guidelines for the establishment of ECCD centers, licensing, and monitoring and evaluation.

Table 14. Types of Government Control and Regulation

Countries	Prescribes/Issues guidelines for the setting up and operation of ECCD	Issues permits/ license to operate ECCD center	Monitors compliance	Sanctions non-compliance	Evaluates quality
Brunei Darussalam	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cambodia	no answer				
Indonesia	✓	✓	✓		✓
Lao PDR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Malaysia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Myanmar	✓	✓	✓		✓
Philippines	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Thailand	✓	✓	✓		✓
Timor-Leste	no answer				
Vietnam	✓	✓	✓		✓

Source: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011) Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia

- In Brunei Darussalam, MCYS issues licenses for child care centers while MOE issues licenses for private preschools. The curriculum and the pedagogical delivery in government preschools are monitored by MOE, ECCE Unit, primary education section and school inspectorate.
- Cambodia's MOEYS develops standards, as well as documents, monitors and evaluates government preschools.
- The MOES of Lao PDR issues licenses for private preschools and monitors both private and public preschools at the district level.
- In Indonesia, the local government issues permits, but MoEC provides ECE national standards which are the basis used by the accreditation body for evaluating the school. MoEC conducts random monitoring and also gives grants for model/ accredited institutions.
- Myanmar's Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and other concerned agencies monitor and evaluate child care centers while the DSW, MOE, and concerned agencies monitor and evaluate preschools for 3-5 years old children.
- In Malaysia, child care is licensed and monitored using standardized instruments by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD), while private preschools are licensed by MOE and monitored by MOE, the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (MRRD), and the Department of National Unity and Integration under the Prime Minister Department using a standardized instrument by each ministry.
- In the Philippines, the local government issues business permit while the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) issues license to operate day care or preschools catering to 0 to 4-year-old children. On the other hand, DepEd field offices issue permit to operate private and public preschools.
- Thailand's Internal Quality Standards consist of monitoring, supporting budget, and training for supervisors, directors and teachers.
- Timor-Leste's private schools need a license to operate. All preschools are monitored by school inspectors.
- In Vietnam, MOET implements, monitors, and assesses standards. It also regulates policies on: 1) training teachers/ staff/ managers of ECE and children aged 0-5; 2) supporting facilities; and 3) coordinating with involved ministries and institutions.

To make sure that ECCD service providers follow the government regulations on ECCD, the government rewards those that achieve quality and penalizes those that violate the regulation. In Vietnam, ECCD service providers that do not follow the standards are reprimanded. In Brunei Darussalam, those that do not comply are fined at least BND \$50 but not more than BND \$ 2,000, for each day that the offense continues after conviction.

The usual form of incentives for compliance with the standards is the provision of funding. In Indonesia, for instance, USD 20,000-90,000 was awarded to the ECE institutions which have established an integrated service program and which have followed the standards of ECE. Another form of incentive is recognizing quality preschools as models such as what is being followed in the Philippines, or by establishing referral institutions such as what is being done in Indonesia.

B ACCREDITATION MECHANISM FOR ECCD INSTITUTIONS

Accreditation is a process to gauge whether ECCD institutions or specific programs meet set criteria of standards. The ECCD centers or services undergo accreditation to achieve a certain recognized status or to be qualified for licensing. For instance, in Vietnam, the national standards are level 1 and level 2, depending on the standards achieved by the school. National standard preschools of level 1 ensure a safe and stimulating environment through the quality of teachers and staff; are inclusive, particularly for children with learning disability; and have a program for malnourished children. National standard preschools of level 2 have higher standards than the national standard preschools of level 1. Currently, most schools have only been recognized as a level 1.

Majority of child care centers in Southeast Asia are accredited by the Ministry of Community or Social Services, while some preschool centers are accredited by the Ministry of Education. All countries have declared some form of accreditation.

Table 15. Accreditation Mechanism for ECCD per Country

Country	Regulatory Body/Agencies
Brunei Darussalam	0-3 MCYS 3-5 MOE's Private Education section 5 MOE's Department of Schools
Cambodia	Private and public preschool: MOEYS Community and home-based: MOEYS Ministry of Interior, MOWA
Lao PDR	Preschools: MOES for central level for national strategy, Department of Primary and Preschool Education, Private Education Department Private: National Private Education Policy and Strategy at the district, education and sports at provincial level
Indonesia	National Education Standard body (for ECE standard) ECE National Accreditation body (assesses the institution based on the standards) For teacher certification: Human Resource Development and Quality Assurance for Education body under MoEC
Myanmar	Public school: MOE Private day care: DSW
Malaysia	Regulatory bodies for childcare and preschools include the Ministry of Woman, Family and Community Development, and the Ministry of Education, respectively. Each center needs to fulfill standard requirements before it can operate. The mechanism is not known as accreditation, but it is for regulatory purposes. Childcare has plan for accreditation mechanism but is not yet implemented Preschool: No accreditation for the centers but there is for teacher training by the Malaysian Qualification Accreditation Agency
Philippines	Private schools: DepEd field office through private accrediting organizations 0-4 day care: DSWD
Thailand	ONESQA
Timor-Leste	For the teachers, open schools, trainers: MOE
Vietnam	For evaluation of ECC: MOET

Source: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011) Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia

In Indonesia, the ECE National Accreditation Body (BAN-PAUD) developed the quality assurance instrument, covering content, process, competence, educator and educational workers, infrastructure, management, payment, and education assessment. BAN-PAUD also manages the accreditation assessors.

In Thailand, ONESQA is the public organization which sets the external standards for quality assurance or accreditation of ECCD services. The BET under OBEC MOE is the government organization which sets the internal standards for quality assurance or accreditation to ECCD services.

Generally, all countries in Southeast Asia claim that their government exercises regulatory actions over ECCD services/centers, from setting standards to monitoring compliance and taking actions on the results of their assessment. On the other hand, all governments in Southeast Asia provide accreditation for ECCD that meets the set standards. However, the regulatory body is, more often than not, also the provider of ECCD services themselves. The only exceptions are Indonesia and Thailand which have a separate national accreditation body.

VI. STAKEHOLDER'S INVOLVEMENT IN ECCD QUALITY ASSURANCE

A STAKEHOLDER'S INVOLVEMENT IN ECCD

The strength of the government's commitment to provide comprehensive ECCD services could be manifested by the extent to which several government agencies are involved. All education ministries in Southeast Asia have a hand in the provision of ECCD. A considerable percentage (70%) of the countries engage both the health ministry and the social/community development department in the implementation of ECCD programs and services.

Table 16. Inter-Government Agencies Collaboration for ECCD

Countries	Education	Social Welfare / Community	Health	Women / Children	Interior/ Local Gov't	Others
Brunei Darussalam	Ministry of Education; Ministry of Religious Affairs	Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports	Ministry of Health	Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports	Ministry of Home Affairs	Ministry of Religious Affairs
Cambodia	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports		Ministry of Health	Ministry of Women Affairs	Ministry of Interior	Ministries of Information, Rural Development, Economy and Finance, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Environment, Planning, Social Affairs, Veteran and Rehabilitation
Indonesia	Ministry of Education and Culture	Ministry of Social Welfare			Local government	Ministry of Religious Affairs through regional office
Lao PDR	Ministry of Education and Sports		Ministry of Health			

Countries	Education	Social Welfare / Community	Health	Women / Children	Interior/ Local Gov't	Others
Malaysia	Ministry of Education	Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development	Ministry of Health	Ministry of Women, Family & Community Development	Local government departments at federal, state and district levels	Ministry of Rural and Regional Development, Department of National Unity and Integration, Prime Minister Department
Myanmar	Ministry of Education	Department of Social Welfare				
Philippines	Department of Education	Department of Social Welfare and Development				ECCD Council
Thailand	Ministry of Education	Ministry of Social Development and Human Security	Ministry of Public Health		Ministry of Interior	Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Culture
Timor-Leste	Ministry of Education	Ministry of Social Solidarity (Child Protection)	Ministry of Health			Ministry of Justice for Child Rights Commissioner
Vietnam	Ministry of Education and Training		Ministry of Health		Ministry of Interior	Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labor

Source: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011) Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia

The government is not alone in providing ECCD programs and services, and in fulfilling the responsibility of assuring quality ECCD. Most countries in Southeast Asia are benefiting from aid coming from international organizations such as UNICEF, EFA FTI, Plan International, UNESCO and the World Bank. Some have very active NGOs or civil society organizations, while others involve universities, private companies, individual philanthropists or religious groups in implementing ECCD programs and services. In most cases, parents and the community are involved in ECCD establishment, operation, or monitoring of ECCD Centers.

Table 17. Summary of Stakeholders Involved in ECCD

Countries	International Organization	NGO	Academe	Private Sector	Religious Groups	Parents/Family	Community
Brunei Darussalam		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cambodia	✓					✓	
Indonesia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Lao PDR	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Malaysia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Myanmar	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Philippines		✓				✓	✓
Thailand		✓		✓		✓	✓
Timor-Leste	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Vietnam		✓		✓		✓	✓

Source: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011) Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia

B PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT

Most ECCD centers in Southeast Asian countries have a program for parents such as parents' education, parents' orientation or parent-teacher regular meetings to ensure that parents are involved in the education of their children.

1. Monitoring and Reporting of Children's Activity at Home

One of the most common activities that involves parents is monitoring their children's development at home and reporting this to school. In Brunei Darussalam, parents monitor what their child is doing at home. Then during the parent-teacher's meeting every school term, they discuss the strengths, weaknesses and the overall development of the child. In Cambodia, parents participate in the home-based program so they could teach their children at home. In Indonesia, parents are expected to take an active role in giving information or reporting completely about their children's development so that the ECE teacher can evaluate the students' development better.

2. Stimulating or Reinforcing the Learning and Development at Home

In ECCD, it is ideal that children learn not just in a center but at home as well. Most ECCD centers provide guidance on how to stimulate their children to learn or to have activities at home in order to reinforce what children have gained in the ECCD Center.

In Indonesia, parents are expected to continue the learning process that the children experience in the ECCD institution, and also to follow up the notes given by the teacher so that the children get a balanced intervention in the institution and at home. Lao PDR parents at home are encouraged to stimulate and increase their own children's school readiness. In Thailand, parents or guardians are expected to collaborate with teachers and educational institutions that provide guidance on how parents could work with children at home and how to prepare them for Grade 1.

3. Co-Managing ECCD Center through Committee Membership

Managing an ECCD center entails planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. In some countries in Southeast Asia, ECCD centers are managed by a committee that includes parents. In Indonesia, parents are participating directly in ECE institution management through a school committee created in each institution. In Lao PDR, parents are members of the Village Education Development Committees that have a role to stimulate, supervise and monitor teachers and caregivers who have worked in ECCD centers. Parents' Associations in Brunei Darussalam are involved in designing the annual activity while parents in Cambodia are involved in decision-making to develop ECCD.

4. Acting as Resource Person/ ECCD Resource Provider

There are a variety of ways that parents could help in providing quality ECCD. In Indonesia, parents, especially those who have children under 3 years old, are expected to set aside a special time to play with their child in the centers under the supervision of the teacher (once a month). Lao parents support the ECCD Center by providing local materials and local furniture, constructing shelters, as well as contributing allowance to contracted teachers. In the Malaysian Permata program, parents need to help in the center at least 4 hours per month. In Myanmar, parents are expected to provide for teacher salary, playground, school building, school safety, and play materials. In the Philippines, parents act as volunteer or teacher aides. They are also involved in the feeding program and school improvement projects. In Timor-Leste, parents are asked to take an active participation in ECCD activities.

Table 18. Summary of Parents' Involvement in ECCD

Countries	Monitoring/ Reporting	Home-based Learning	Co-Managing ECCD Center	Resource Person/ Provider
Brunei Darussalam	✓		✓	✓
Cambodia			✓	
Indonesia	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lao PDR		✓	✓	✓
Malaysia			✓	✓
Myanmar				✓
Philippines				✓
Thailand		✓		
Timor-Leste				✓
Vietnam		✓		

Source: SEAMEO INNOTECH (2011) Research Forum on Quality Assurance in ECCD in Southeast Asia

The emerging trend in ECCD in Southeast Asia is multi-stakeholder collaboration. In the realm of government service, several ministries -- notably, education, social service, and health -- are enjoined to play a role in the provision of ECCD services. This implies a holistic approach to ECCD. Outside government, there are many international aid agencies and NGOs involved in ECCD. In all the Southeast Asian countries studied, parents and families are involved in ECCD. They are most commonly involved as ECCD resource persons or provider of needed resources in the ECCD center. Moreover, they are also tapped as part of the monitoring team, teaching-learning process, and management.

VII.

GOOD PRACTICES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA



Leveraging the value of ECCE in the region, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH), in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC), supported the conduct of a regional research on quality assurance programs, strategies, and developments in Southeast Asia. It is envisioned that good practices, which may be replicated across the region, can be generated by the study. Three cases are presented in this report, namely:

- Case 1: Capability Building and Performance Evaluation of Early Childhood Educators in Indonesia
- Case 2: Quality Assurance Practices in Developing and Implementing the Early Learning Development Framework (Curriculum) in Malaysia
- Case 3: Monitoring the Development and Assessment of Young Learners in Philippine Public Schools

CASE 1

CAPABILITY BUILDING AND PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS IN INDONESIA

By: Negruho Indera Warman, Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC), Indonesia

Background

Since the establishment of the Directorate of Early Childhood Education (ECE) under the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) in 2011, some priorities of ECE program development have been determined such as expanding the access to ECE and improving the quality of ECE services in Indonesia.

In order to expand access to ECE services, the government launched several programs to motivate communities to participate in developing ECE programs in the form of ECE block grants, socializing ECE programs at various levels, seminars, workshops, and so on.

Improved access in ECCD in Indonesia can work side by side with increased focus on quality. The government also implemented a MONE regulation related to ECE standards, Education Regulation No. 58, 2009, which includes standards for the development of children, educators, and educational workers; content standards; processing and assessment procedures; as well as facilities and infrastructure provision.

Based on this, the MoEC developed programs related to assuring the quality of education such as providing block grants for ECE pilots and cascade training, forming ECE working groups, and implementing parenting and apprentice activities.

To specifically increase the capacity of ECE educators, the government established some training and apprentice programs at both the national and local (i.e., provincial and district) levels. The training materials early childhood educators used are classified as “center approach,” an eclectic method developed by the Creative Preschool in the United States called the “beyond center and circle time (BCCT) method.”

With not-so-expensive costs, it was theorized that to achieve growth and development, educational toys can be adapted to local situations. This approach was introduced and has been implemented since 2004 by the MoEC. At present, government programs such as in-service training are organized for reinforcement. In 2011, cascaded or leveled training activities were designed and implemented. These ranged from basic to intermediate and advanced level training for early childhood educators. Pre-service training, on the other hand, can be gained through formal university education. From 2008 to 2010, in collaboration with the World Bank, the MoEC particularly provided pre-service training to more than 5,000 people from 50 districts in 21 provinces in Indonesia.

Through the center approach, communities developed training courses at the local government level. Each ECE institution in Indonesia also replicates training programs that the government has initiated.

The center approach can be considered a best practice in Indonesia because training courses are acceptable, effective, sustainable, and transferable.

Scope of the Study

This study attempts to document in-service training activities that have been chosen for replication since 2005. It documents training activities in institutions that implement the “center approach,” including PAUD Istiqlal and PAUD Alam Pelopor in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia.

Learning Process in the Center Approach

In 2004, the Indonesian government received royalties for implementing the BCCT method at no charge within a period of five years from the Creative Center for Childhood Research and Training Institution in Florida in the United States. More popularly known as the “center approach,” it uses the moving class system that is center-based. The “center” is a specialized space wherein children play in groups. As such, a classroom can have a blocks center, an arts center, a role-playing center, a nature center, and a preparation center. Each center has toys for three kinds of play, namely, sensorimotor, role-playing, and construction.

This center approach is a learning model for ECE that is based on play that is constructed to help the caregiver and educator gain better perspectives on how to give affection and to stimulate learning.

To help children develop, the center approach refers to Erikson and Piaget's findings (1990)⁴. If, in the period of infancy, children were protected and their security was guaranteed in full, conviction of the goodness of the environment will grow in their souls. If, as toddlers, they were entrusted with and given autonomy to move on their own, they will develop autonomy well. If, in preschool, they were given the freedom to explore, experiment, and freely do things, they will be full of initiative.

According to Piaget (1998)⁵, if children's sensorimotor needs are met in their first two years, they will more steadily go through the preoperational phase and will better develop in the operational phase. The stages of sensorimotor learning allows children to use their body parts to move and touch things. In the preoperational stage, they play with or without tools in order to work hard in school in their teens.

The center approach is basically the implementation of Piaget's theory to practice. The school culture was built based on practice experience when the approach was used. The center approach recommends that the educational system does not revoke the children's culture. This case is related to the principle that learning must be meaningful and must support the children's lives (Sukiman, 2012).

The curriculum for the center approach was developed based on national education objectives, the vision and mission of an ECE/ECD institution, the parents' expectations, and the children's needs. The curriculum is prepared by educators as a reference for the learning process. During the process, however, changes are possible in accordance with current conditions (i.e., emergent curriculum). The curriculum is based on play-based learning considering time and the adequacy of toys using an organized plan. The curriculum's implementation understands that the children's learning pace depends on their behaviors and creations.

Besides giving the children freedom in terms of choosing tools and managing their time, the model is characterized by four kinds of scaffolding, namely:

- Environment play scaffolding
- Preplay scaffolding
- During-play individual scaffolding
- Postplay scaffolding

The fourth type of scaffolding unites the others in order to support quality playtime. Scaffolding is done to build up concepts, rules, ideas, and the

⁴ Patient Teaching, Loose Leaf Library, Springhouse Corporation, 1990

⁵ Piaget's Stages of Social-Emotional Development in Children and Teenagers, 1998, Child Development Institute

children's knowledge. It intends to stimulate the children's ideas or to enrich their experiences so they can reach the "zone of proximal development" (Daniels, 2007: 56–68).

Overview of Paud Istiqlal and Paud Alam Pelopor

Paud Istiqlal and Paud Alam Pelopor are ECE institutions that utilize the center approach to learning. Using play-based learning, these institutions each developed their own kind of ECE training.

Paud Istiqlal is located in Jakarta, Indonesia, and operates in one of the biggest mosques in Southeast Asia. It focuses on integrating Islamic values into the ECE learning process using pre- to postplay scaffolding. It enhances learning through play that has been integrated with Islamic values through the center approach, which uses 10 playing centers, namely:

- Worship center
- Natural materials center
- Macrorole-playing center
- Microrole-playing center
- Blocks center
- Preparation center
- Arts and creativity center
- Music center
- Kinesthetic center
- Cooking center

It has four kinds of class: two are play groups while the remaining two are known as "Raudhatul Athfal" (i.e., Islamic-based kindergarten). All classes start at 7 A.M. and end at 1 P.M. It also provides daycare services from 7 A.M. to 5 P.M. and hosts regular parents' meetings each week wherein parents and teachers discuss the children's development.

The center is managed by Madrasah Istiqlal. Experience in providing ECE training for more than eight years has allowed the institution to become an ECE model in Jakarta. It has provided several training programs for educators from all over Indonesia. It may also be noted that its founder is one of the pioneers of the BCCT method or the center approach in Indonesia.

Paud Alam Pelopor is an ECE model located in Bandung, West Java. Although it is considered new, it already applies the center approach to its early childhood learning process. It has been operating since 1999. At present, it is still visited almost every day by educators from across West Java for either free or very affordable ECE training. It also boasts of beautiful natural surroundings, as its buildings are made of bamboo and other types of wood amid ponds and fields.

With a total of 83 children, the center provides play group and kindergarten services. It encourages teachers to guide the children by preparing the right materials so the children can conduct their own experiments and research, according to Piaget's theory. Similar to Paud Istiqlal, Paud Alam Pelopor implements the center approach using nine playing centers, namely:

- Worship center
- Natural materials center
- Macrorole-playing center
- Microrole-playing center
- Blocks center
- Preparation center
- Arts and creativity center
- Music center
- Cooking center

Besides using the same learning technique, that is, the Center Approach, both ECE institutions are known for utilizing educational toys made from natural and recyclable materials. This allows the people interested in learning to utilize natural materials to easily and efficiently support the learning process while maintaining the learning quality.

In-Service Training

Implementing training programs for ECE educators in Indonesia is based on the government's desire to improve the educators' competence in order to assure the quality of ECE services in accordance with the ECE standards.

Despite the increase in ECE services in remote and rural areas, the government believes that the ECE competence of educators still falls far below expectations. As such, the government continues to look for the proper formula to implement high-quality but affordable training in government-assisted institutions.

Based on available data, only as much as 10 percent of the total 149,854 early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers obtained training from the central government as of the end of 2010 (Early Childhood Education and Development [ECED] Directorate and P2TK PAUDNI, 2011). As such, in 2011, the government through the MoEC implemented cascaded training by giving block grants to chosen providers (e.g., educational associations or ECE institutions). Throughout the year, as many as 1,336 early childhood educators were trained (P2TK PAUDNI, 2011).

Before the existence of cascaded training, the government also conducted training on the use of the center approach, especially to educators who generally come from areas that lack human resources and learning tools.

With the existence of training to use the center approach alongside local cultures and conditions, the implementation of learning can be easily and efficiently done while assuring quality.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING MATERIALS

Each institution can develop training materials that span between 30 and 50 hours. It can, for instance, add materials about the value of a particular religion, if necessary. Paud Istiqlal and Paud Alam Pelopor, in general, have training activities with materials such as those in the table below.

Table 19. Sample In-Service Training Materials

Number	Material	Number of Class Hours
1	Center tour	1 hour
2	Training materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Exploring creativity through play (simulation) o Learning through play o Exploring creativity through the use of educational toys o Assessing children's development 	2.5 hours 2.5 hours 2.5 hours 2.5 hours
3	Microteaching (practice)	4 hours
4	Learning observation	15.5 hours
5	Discussion and sharing	9.5 hours
Total		40 hours

Every activity cited above groups children according to number. It begins with a tour, followed by learning in every center, learning observation, microteaching, making educational toys (i.e., recycling), and accompanying the children to breakfast.

As shown, portions for observation and discussion get more time than other activities. In these, educators will learn more and improve their abilities to teach children (e.g., painting, playing with blocks, cutting, etc.) as well as assist or help children reach the next stage of learning.

Evaluating Training

After every training activity, the participants are evaluated to assess how many of the theories they learned can be applied or practiced in the real world. Paud Istiqlal and Paud Alam Pelopor conduct the same evaluation activities, namely:

- Evaluating the educators' knowledge through a pre- and a posttest on the materials they were given
- Evaluating practice play activities while studying

The evaluations use the Likert scale wherein:

- 1 – Less able
- 2 – Has medium-scale ability
- 3 – Able
- 4 – Has good ability
- 5 – Has high ability

The evaluation also uses the assessment criteria in Table 20.

Table 20. Sample Assessment Table

A	Management of Play Environment					
	1. Choosing toys according to their development stage	1	2	3	4	5
	2. Choosing toys according to their objective	1	2	3	4	5
	3. Suiting the number of chances to play with the number of children	1	2	3	4	5
B	Activity Material Plan					
	1. Suiting chosen activities with the aspects that should be developed	1	2	3	4	5
	2. Integrating themes	1	2	3	4	5

C	Beginning Scaffold					
	1. Emphasizing important things (i.e., concepts that are being introduced)	1	2	3	4	5
	2. Using cues, expressions, or gestures	1	2	3	4	5
	3. Repeating concepts that are being introduced	1	2	3	4	5
	4. Using media (e.g., books and other props) to support activities	1	2	3	4	5
	5. Using vocabulary related to the concepts being introduced	1	2	3	4	5
	6. Demonstrating concepts	1	2	3	4	5
	7. Efficiently and systematically giving explanations	1	2	3	4	5
	8. Constructing and applying the order of playing transition	1	2	3	4	5
D	Experience Play Scaffold					
	1. Strengthening concepts and enriching the children's language or vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
	2. Giving examples of proper communication	1	2	3	4	5
	3. Teaching social relationship footing	1	2	3	4	5
	4. Observing the process of development in every activity	1	2	3	4	5
	5. Documenting the children's development	1	2	3	4	5
E	After-Play Scaffold					
	1. Remembering and reviewing experiences while playing (i.e., recalling)	1	2	3	4	5
	2. Utilizing the time to clean as a positive playing experience	1	2	3	4	5

Learning Tools

The uniqueness of this training approach is realized when educators learn to be creative in making educational toys from local natural and recyclable materials that are easy to get and harmless to children such as:

- Natural materials: leaves, seeds, beans, sand, water, and the like.
- Recyclable materials: plastic bottles, bottle caps, straw, paper, plastic containers, and the like.

The materials can be easily obtained by educators in their areas at a low cost or even for free. As such, ECE services are easy to offer without spending a lot of money to buy toys made in factories. Instead of buying clay, teachers can make their own using flour batter, water, palm oil, and food coloring in the right amounts.

Through training, educators were taught not only to make affordable but also suitable toys to enhance the children's growth and development.

Performance Evaluation

Because the cascaded training was found effective in 2011, the MoEC is currently in the process of developing an instrument to evaluate the performance of early childhood educators who have obtained government training.

Evaluation must be consistent with certification examinations. It should be in accordance with the National ECE Standards, which have the following elements:

- Pedagogy competence: The capability to educate children through playing.
- Personality competence: Reflects steady, stable, mature, wise, dignified, and exemplary behaviors.
- Professional competence: The capability to integrally and holistically master essential materials used in ECE.
- Social competence: The capability to communicate and associate well with children, their peers, the children's parents, and the community.

Benefits of Center Approach Training

Through training, early childhood educators' understanding of children is strengthened by philosophies and play theories in accordance with Erikson's concept of motivating children, Piaget's stages of learning, Vygotsky's theory on social interaction, and Gardner's theory on multiple intelligences.

Furthermore, because the approach focuses on children, the educators learn more about positively communicating with, giving credence to, and developing children's cognitive and social abilities.

Educating children should not stop when they are in school. It must continue when they get home to their families. Because behavior building is done through habitation with parents as role models, the approach also focuses

on building good relationships between teachers and parents. The training also enhances educators' skills in communicating and maintaining good relationships with parents. The children's progress should be communicated to their parents. When the children begin to tidy up after playing, for instance, their parents should make sure they consistently do so at home.

Maintaining good relationships with children, their peers, and the children's parents establishes a feeling of comfort and stability, which enhances the children's socioemotional needs, leading to maximum cognitive development.

Conclusion

The growing community awareness on the importance of ECE increases the need for qualified early childhood educators. Because a lot of educators in Indonesia do not meet the qualifications set in the ECE Standards (e.g., holding a diploma 4 or a bachelor's degree), it is necessary to increase the capacity of existing educators to improve their competence as early childhood educators.

Some training activities have been conducted by the government and institutions on simple and efficient ways to develop the ECE learning approach. The concepts of the center approach are also used in existing teaching methods such as Montessori, High Scope, and Reggio Emilio.

The center approach continues to grow because it can be easily applied in local communities. Using the approach is also easy because it does not require the use of expensive factory-made toys and relies more on educators' creativity and knowledge on using various learning tools.

The center approach creates social interactions not only between teachers and children but also between teachers and parents, assuring that ECE continues to be implemented in school and at home.

CASE 2

QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES IN DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING THE EARLY LEARNING DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (*CURRICULUM*) IN MALAYSIA

By: Dr. Ng Soo Boon, Ministry of Education (MOE), Malaysia

Background

A curriculum is generally regarded as a plan of study or a plan of learning experience. In the Malaysian context, a curriculum is defined as an educational program that includes curricular and co-curricular activities that encompass all the knowledge, skills, norms, values, cultural elements, and beliefs that will help fully develop a pupil with respect to the physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional aspects as well as inculcate and develop desirable moral values and transmit knowledge (Education Act 1996).

In the case of children in the early years, it generally refers to children from birth to 8 years old. However, in Malaysia, the early years refer only to 0–6 years old (MOE, 2007). Based on literature on the development of children, learning at this stage is proposed to be informal and not too structured as in the primary or secondary school. Thus, in some countries, a rigid and standardized national curriculum is deemed not suitable for this age group.

In the Asia-Pacific region, most countries have a national curriculum for preschool (i.e., for children aged 3–5 or 4–6). However, in some of these countries, the curriculum is called a “national framework.” In general, a national framework is less prescriptive in terms of learning outcomes compared to a national curriculum. In Malaysia, the first National Preschool Curriculum (NPC) was developed in 2003, which was mandated to be used by various preschool education providers run by the MOE, the Laman Web Rasmi Jabatan Kemajuan Masyarakat (KEMAS), the Portal Rasmi Jabatan Perpaduan Negara Dan Integrasi Nasional (PERPADUAN), and the private sector.

Quality assurance system is practised in teaching all schools in Malaysia. Below is a description of how the MOE promotes quality assurance in ECCD:

Case Study on Implementing the National Preschool Curriculum in Ministry of Education-Funded Preschools (2007)

This research is a case study on implementing the National Preschool Curriculum in MOE-funded preschools. It adopts the Congruence-Contingency Model for Educational Evaluation developed by Robert E. Stake in the 1960s. Three categories of data were collected—antecedent (i.e., previous situation that will affect the implementation of the curriculum), transaction (i.e., the process of implementation), and product (i.e., the output of implementing the curriculum). For each category, the data collected is related to the aspirations, observations of actual implementation or test results, standards determined by experts, and evaluation by stakeholders. The concepts of congruence (i.e., between aspired and actual implementation) and contingency (i.e., measure of dependency) were used.

The research questions include:

- To what extent has the NPC achieved its objectives?
- To what extent have preschool teachers used the teaching and learning approaches suggested in the NPC?
- What problems do teachers face when implementing the NPC?
- What are the differences in the teaching methods of teachers with varying qualifications?

Data was collected through questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews. The data collection was conducted by the Curriculum Development Division (CDD), the MOE, and preschool officers from the State Education Department. The target respondents of the study include all MOE preschool teachers in Malaysia. However, only 3,624 or 61.6 percent of the preschool teachers returned completed questionnaires due to reasons such as logistics and administrative problems. A total of 28 classroom observations and interviews was conducted in various states as well.

In the instrument design phase, the researchers brainstormed on the anticipated information needed to gather feedback on the implementation of the NPC 2003 in order to further improve it. In these brainstorming sessions, the researchers relied on previous experience with classroom teaching, observation, monitoring, and evaluation as well as related literature and research. Critical issues that arose with regard to the implementation of the NPC 2003 from 2003 to 2007 were considered as well. The brainstorming and deliberation process produced more than 10 categories of items in the questionnaire. Examples of the categories are “understanding of the NPC

2003” and “respondents’ perception of the percentage of achievement of learning outcomes in each component among children (i.e., six components are included in the NPC 2003). A Likert scale of 1–5 with “1” indicating “strongly disagree” and “5” indicating “strongly agree” was used for the questionnaires.

The questionnaires were mainly answered based on the respondents’ perception and understanding. Responses needed to be triangulated using other research methods such as observations and interviews. The observation schedule included items on demonstrating attainment of learning outcomes among students, teaching approaches used in actual classroom instruction, physical conditions of classrooms, and flow of lessons. A Likert scale of 1–4 was used for the observations with “1” indicating “unsatisfactory”; “2” indicating “average”; “3” indicating “good”; and “4” indicating “unrelated.” A semistructured interview schedule included items on support from school administrators, teaching and learning approaches used, problems faced, understanding of the NPC, and suggested changes to the NPC.

Early Childhood Care and Education Policy Implementation Review (2007)

The ECCE Policy Implementation Review was a research project initiated by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Conducted in 2007, it had the broad aim of bringing forth the importance of ECCE and the need to further develop and streamline ECCE-related national policies. Malaysia took up the call and identified the MOE, specifically the CDD, to lead the research project.

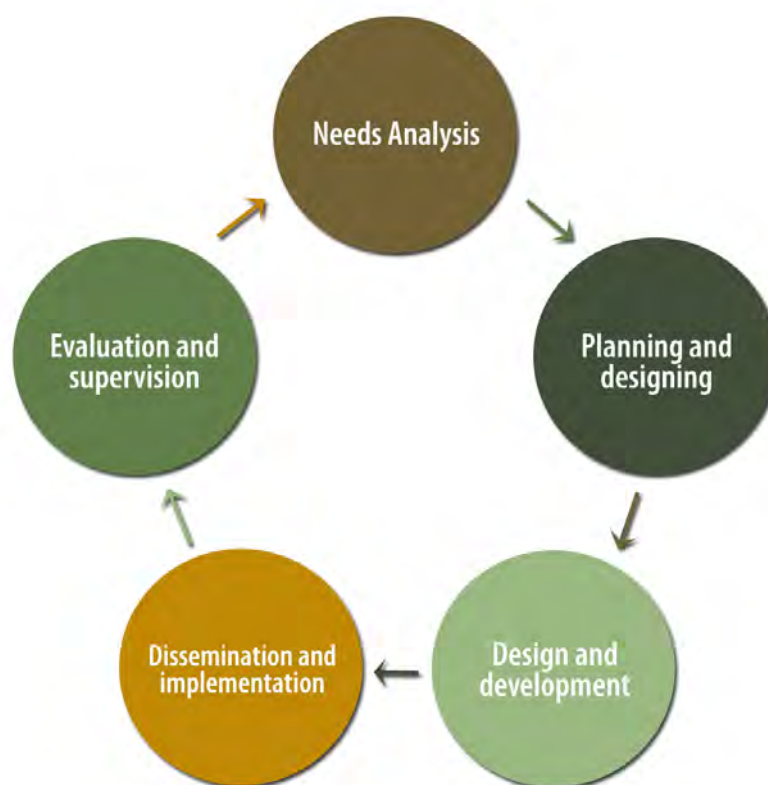
The objectives of the ECCE Policy Implementation Review are the following:

- To analyze existing policies
- To identify possible gaps within and between policies
- To assess how well existing policies are being implemented
- To find gaps in terms of implementation
- To assess the sufficiency of current ECCE policies
- To assess the integration of all ECCE policies

In the last two decades, Malaysia formulated comprehensive ECCE policies, laws, and legislations. Examples of these are the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Education Act of 1996 (i.e., Act 550), the

Education Development Master Plan (PIPP) 2006 – 2010, and the National Policy on Indigenous Children. Within all these policies and legislation, there was a specific mention of the need to provide quality programs for preschoolers and to implement the national curriculum. Some of the ECCE policies in Malaysia, especially those related to preschools, have already been implemented for at least five years. As a common practice, related government agencies planned or embarked to study their implementation. The ECCE Policy Implementation Review did not reinvent the wheel but rather consolidated and built on findings from ongoing or just-completed studies. From the findings of these studies, various issues of concern were discovered. Examples of these are the prevalence of non-registered private ECCE providers, integration, and coordination while implementing various policies. More in-depth data was deemed necessary in order to shed light on these issues. A few smaller-scale studies on private preschools, indigenous children, children with special needs were then conducted.

Figure 2. Curriculum Development Cycle Model Adopted by the Ministry of Education in Malaysia



Source: Curriculum Development Division, MOE, Malaysia, 2011

*Limited to pilot studies

Needs Analysis Based on Anticipated Needs of the Society and Country or Future Individuals

Malaysia is a developing country that aspires to become a developed nation by 2020. Vision 2020 was conceptualized by the country's leaders at around the mid-1990s. It advocates that Malaysia will become a developed nation in accordance with its own mold. In this vision, Malaysia as a developed nation will have citizens that are united and resilient; possess high self-confidence; steadfastly hold on to religious, ethical, and moral values; enjoy a democratic lifestyle; live in a society where there is a fair share of economic success; and are able to compete and be dynamic. Malaysia as a developed nation wants to retain baseline traditional values while progressing, handling the challenges brought about by globalization, and competing with the rest of the world.

With Vision 2020 as the overarching national ideology, various plans and strategies were drafted and proposed by national think-tanks across all levels and different sectors as well as stakeholders, including the education sector. All of these plans and strategies can, in theory, be used to guide curriculum developers to produce a curriculum that satisfies the future needs of the country. Examples of these plans and strategies are the National Mission, the Ninth Malaysia Plan, the MOE Mission 1993, the National Education Philosophy, the Resolution of the Thirteenth National Education Leadership and Management Seminar, the Proposal for the Review of Curriculum 1999, and the Resolution of the National Seminar on the Curriculum Review 1999. Critical analysis of the needs of the country, as envisaged through these national plans, indicated that the nation requires its citizens to be thoughtful, have high emotional quotients (EQs), be highly resilient, be friendly, be noble in character, be rational in thinking, be creative, be independent, and gain experience (CDD, 2007). If all these characteristics are synthesized, it can be inferred that a curriculum that can produce this kind of human capital would need to possess two main characteristics—be a thinking curriculum (i.e., to develop minds) and a character-building curriculum (i.e., to develop characteristics required to face future challenges).

Planning and Design

In 2007, after five years of implementing the then-existing NPC 2003, the MOE was instructed to revise the curriculum. At the same time, since the existing primary and secondary school curricula also reached their time for revision, it was decided that revising the preschool, primary, and secondary

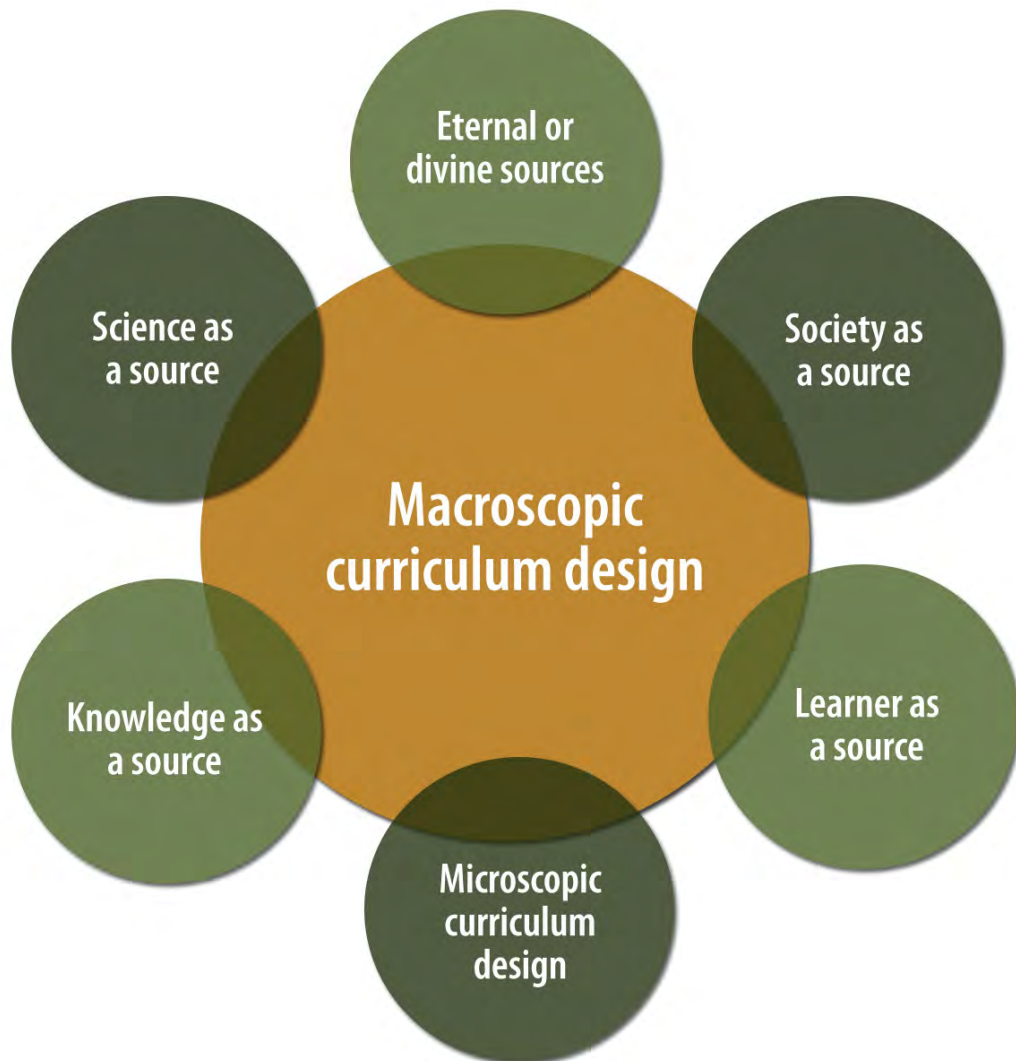
school curricula would be a continuous process, quenching the criticism in terms of lack of continuation that arose. The rationale behind revising the school curricula included:

- To fulfill the need for a curricular cycle as the last curricular revision was carried out approximately five years before
- To inject new, up-to-date, and suitable content and pedagogies into preschool as well as primary and secondary education
- To fulfill the nation's aspiration to produce future human capital who can critically, creatively, and innovatively think
- To request for changes gathered through resolutions from seminars and conferences after finding out that the present school curricula did not fully achieve aspirations (e.g., lack of inculcation of thinking through teaching and learning)

A laborious curricular planning process began in 2008. The curricular planning was initially outlined by a core group whose members were selected by the CDD and the MOE to chart the direction and delineate the scope of the review. A product approach was adopted wherein the characteristics of students that the educational system wishes to produce in order to fulfill the national need for human capital development were determined. Document analysis of various national plans and strategies was conducted. The results of the document analysis as well as brainstorming indicated that the country needed a thinking and a character-building curriculum.

To produce a thinking and a character-building curriculum, a new curricular design needed to be developed. Macdonald's five sources of curriculum design were employed. These sources were deliberated to provide direction in order to shape the new preschool curriculum's design. Figure 3 shows how these sources influenced the formulation of aims and goals and, subsequently, the curriculum design. There are two levels of curriculum design—macroscopic and microscopic. The macroscopic curriculum design refers to the broad framework of curriculum design that involves basic value choices whereas the microscopic curriculum design refers to the detailed or specific organization of learning elements (Klein, 1991).

Figure 3. Relationship Between the Sources of Curriculum Design and the Curriculum Design



Source: Curriculum Development Division, MOE, Malaysia, 2011

The sources of curriculum design influence the philosophies, learning theories, directions, or concerns of the new preschool curriculum. From divine and eternal sources, the idea of loving and obeying God is transpired; thus, a strand on spirituality and moral values was formulated. From society as a source, it is apparent that the country aspires to become a developed nation based on science and technology by 2020. Thus, scientific attitudes and skills need to be instilled right from preschool. From the learner as a source, it is envisioned that at the preschool level, student-centered learning and learning through play are necessary. Students learn through involvement in hands-on and fun activities. Knowledge as a source brings

forward the need to include all major domains such as language, physical development, creativity, and cognitive development. Lastly, science as a source means that scientific and thinking skills, along with scientific methods, will also be a focus of the preschool curriculum. These sources provided the views and basis for curriculum developers to design the curriculum as well as formulate its aims and goals. These aims and goals, in turn, served as guide for the macroscopic curriculum design and, finally, the microscopic curriculum design. In the process of planning and designing, curricula from other countries were also used as benchmarks.

Design and Development

Design and development involve critical analysis and creative synthesis. Two major processes are involved—macroscopic and microscopic curriculum design.

MACROSCOPIC CURRICULUM DESIGN

The macroscopic curriculum design refers to the broad framework of curriculum design that involves basic value choices (Klein, 1991). Curriculum design has four main components—learning objectives, learning experiences, content matter, and evaluation (Giles, McCutchen, and Zechiel, 1942; Taba, 1962; Tanner and Tanner, 1995). It is concerned with how these components are organized into a coherent system. Examples of curriculum designs are disciplined and thematic-based curricula. Most curricula, however, do not adopt a single curricular design. These are usually mixtures of two or more designs (Ornstein and Hunkins, 1993). Taking into consideration the outcomes of the needs analysis, the vision and needs of the country in terms of human capital as well as taking stock of the country's current situation, the macroscopic curriculum designs adopted by the Malaysian Preschool Curriculum Development Panel were standards-based, modular-oriented, thinking-directed, child-centered, and character-building in nature.

Standards-Based and Modular-Oriented Curriculum

The findings of the ECCE Policy Implementation Review can be consolidated under two categories—administrative and professional. The findings consolidated under “professional” dealt more with noncompliance of privately owned preschools to implementing the NPC; the competence of preschool teachers, especially in teaching English and problem solving; and the use of suitable teaching and learning approaches in preschool classes (i.e., both public and private). The findings categorized as “administrative”

were related to coordinating and integrating ECCE policy implementation, nonregistration of private ECCE providers, and expanding special education and indigenous preschools.

The noncompliance of privately owned preschools to the NPC and the competence of preschool teachers in both public and private schools required some professional intervention. The clarity of the learning objectives and teaching strategies stated in the NPC need to be enhanced as well. Some level of autonomy can be given to preschool teachers, especially to private preschool teachers, who do not view the NPC as restrictive and rhetoric. Flexibility in implementation should be allowed. At the same time, to ensure equity and quality, the NPC must be binding as well. As such, a standards-based and modular-oriented curriculum was considered a possible solution.

Standards carry the meanings of “equity” and “quality.” A standard dictates the quality expected of a curriculum and learning. Standard documents are useful in monitoring the implementation of a curriculum, especially when there is a diverse range of curriculum implementers. Standards are also binding, which means preschool operators and teachers will be held accountable for what their students learn at the end of the day. In a system where there are many ECCE providers, this can be a way forward. The process of developing a standards-based curriculum includes decision making, the actual drafting of standards, a validation of the standards, and the finalization of validated standards for inclusion in the curriculum. The process of validation should provide a profile of Malaysian children’s physical, social, and cognitive development. In the process of drafting and validating standards, a consensus among various agencies, NGOs, teachers, and operators is required.

A modular approach requires teaching and learning in units or parts. Findings from the Implementation of the NPC 2003 and the ECCE Policies Implementation Review indicate that both public and private preschool teachers need more structured assistance in preparing classroom teaching and learning activities. A number of preschool teachers expressed that they were not confident in their abilities in areas such as English, musical and creative movements, science, and mathematics. At the same time, the opinions expressed by some private preschool teachers through the Private Preschool Study, a part of the ECCE Policy Implementation Review, indicated that they were confused with the NPC. Observations made in KEMAS and PERPADUAN preschools indicated stereotyped activities such as accomplishing fill-in-the-blanks, coloring, and writing worksheets. Preschool teachers from the public and private sectors need more innovative ideas. A modular approach wherein teachers create and share modules with others can improve the quality of preschool education. These modules can be thematic in nature or specifically created for certain areas such as teaching the English language.

Thinking-Directed Curriculum

Intended learning outcomes (ILOs) or suggested activities proposed in curricula reflect the underlying philosophy of learning adopted by particular curricula. To show thinking, learning outcomes need to be more thinking oriented. The curriculum design used in developing the science curriculum (CDC, 1993, 1999, 2001, and 2004) was a fusion of the discipline-cognitive (DC) process (Ng, 2004). In this design, each ILO has two obvious components—cognitive skills, including critical and creative thinking, and disciplinary knowledge. Implementing this design indicates that teachers are able to translate the curriculum design into teaching more thoughtfully (Ng, 2004). According to Ornstein and Hunkins (1993), in the discipline design, students experience disciplines so they can comprehend and even conceptualize contrary to the purely subject design wherein they are considered to have learned if they acquired knowledge and obtained information. In the discipline design, students are involved in actually using some of the methods of the discipline in order to process information such as scientific inquiry scientists use.

After a careful consideration, it was decided that the ILOs in the National Preschool Standard Curriculum (NPSC) 2010 would be developed using the DC curriculum design. Examples of the ILOs are shown in Table 21.

Table 21. Sample Intended Learning Outcomes in the National Preschool Standard Curriculum 2010

Strand	ILO	Cognitive Skill	Knowledge or Disciplinary Skill
Science	Compare the thickness of objects (i.e., thicker, thinner)	Compare	Thickness
Science	Observe and talk about changes in the environment such as the growth of plants, decaying trees, and changes in the weather	Observe and talk about	Changes in environment
Language	Observe and talk about prints on different media in the environment (e.g., newspapers, story books, computer screens, television screens, pamphlets, and wood engraving)	Observe and talk about	Prints on different media
Moral development	Rationalize why we need to love the members of our family	Rationalize	Love for family
Creativity and aesthetics	Freely create designs using an integration of various techniques	Freely create	Design techniques

The disciplinary knowledge parts in these examples include the concepts of thickness, changes in the environment, print media, ideas of family, and design techniques. Disciplinary knowledge is obtained through observation, inquiry, hands-on activities, and reasoning. In other words, knowledge or skills imparted to students through the curriculum is closely associated with cognitive processes such as comparing, observing, discussing, reasoning, and designing, as stated in the ILOs.

The DC curriculum design is in line with Resnick and Klopfer's (1989) as well as Fennimore and Tinzman's (1990) ideas of a thinking curriculum. They described a thinking curriculum as fulfilling a dual agenda by integrating content and processes. According to Fennimore and Tinzmänn (1990), a thinking curriculum allows students to be taught content through processes encountered in the real world. Examples of these processes are problem solving, decision making, evaluating, and comparing. Perkins (1992) supported the idea of integrating content and processes. To him, the acquisition of content knowledge should be brought about by "learning experiences in which learners think about and think with what they are learning" (page 8). Such learning is considered thoughtful learning. He also expressed his opposition toward the conventional practice wherein students are first provided knowledge then given the opportunity to think with and think about the knowledge they absorbed. He also advocated that learning can only be achieved through thinking.

Child-Centered Curriculum

For learning to be meaningful, it must be contextual and meaningful to a child. As such, the NPSC 2010 panel of curriculum developers decided that early childhood learning must be child-centered wherein the children need to construct their own knowledge and not be spoon-fed. In a curriculum that fully adopts a learner- or child-centered design, students are taught in context with their natural environment, drawing on their needs and interests as each lesson unfolds (Ornstein and Hunkins, 1993). In a highly child-centered curriculum, specific knowledge is not prescribed, as each child should learn according to his or her pace and situation at a certain point in time. Although some Malaysian preschool experts felt that such a curriculum design should be adopted, after careful consideration and due to the existence of different levels of expertise in ECCE among preschool teachers as well as the huge number of ECCE service providers, they decided that the NPSC 2010 needs to indicate, at least broadly, the knowledge or skills that need to be acquired or mastered by a child as well as the method by which activities should be conducted. Thus, the NPSC 2010 adopted a flexible mode of the child-centered curriculum design. It has areas wherein specific prescriptions of ILOs are provided. Some ILOs, on the other hand, are

more open, making learning more child-initiated than adult-led. However, each ILO was developed with the child as the focus. It focuses on what a child needs to acquire and not what a teacher needs to do. Examples of child-centered ILOs as opposed to equivalent teacher-centered ILOs are shown in Table 22.

Table 22. Sample Child-Centered Intended Learning Outcomes and their Equivalent Teacher-Centered Intended Learning Outcomes

Student-Centered ILO	Equivalent Teacher-Centered ILO
Produce patterns or crafts using one's own creativity	Demonstrate ways to produce patterns and crafts for students to imitate
Observe and record the positions of objects' shadows at different times each day	Students are taught that objects' shadows change in length at different times each day
Role-play familiar daily situations	Children follow scripts teachers produce to act out daily situations

The NPSC 2010 uses student- rather than teacher-centered ILOs.

Character-Building Curriculum

In *Learning: The Treasure Within* produced by the UNESCO in 1996, four pillars of learning were identified—learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be. Learning to live together and learning to be are closely related to character building. The Malaysian Philosophy of Education emphasizes balanced individuals who can work with others, demonstrate strength in character, and are responsible. Childhood is an important milestone in the lifetime of humankind. Habits and characters are built in this tender age. In building character, children need to be given opportunities to communicate and express themselves. They also need to develop positive self-concepts through opportunities provided through verbal and nonverbal presentations. Their views should also be respected in discussions. The dynamics of learning should shift from teachers to students, which means that children should be responsible for their own learning. The idea is to develop more independent learners (NPSC 2010).

As in the DC curriculum design, ILOs related to character building can be developed using the discipline-affective (DA) curriculum design. In the DA design, ILOs are written as combinations of skills in the affective domain and areas of concern.

Table 23. Sample Discipline-Affective Intended Learning Outcomes

ILO	Skill in the Affective Domain	Area of Concern
Accepts others' opinions	Accepting	Others' opinions
Shares ideas and things	Sharing	Ideas and things
Is considerate when carrying out activities with others	Being considerate	Carrying out activities with others
Asserts oneself in the face of dangerous situations	Being assertive	Facing dangerous situations

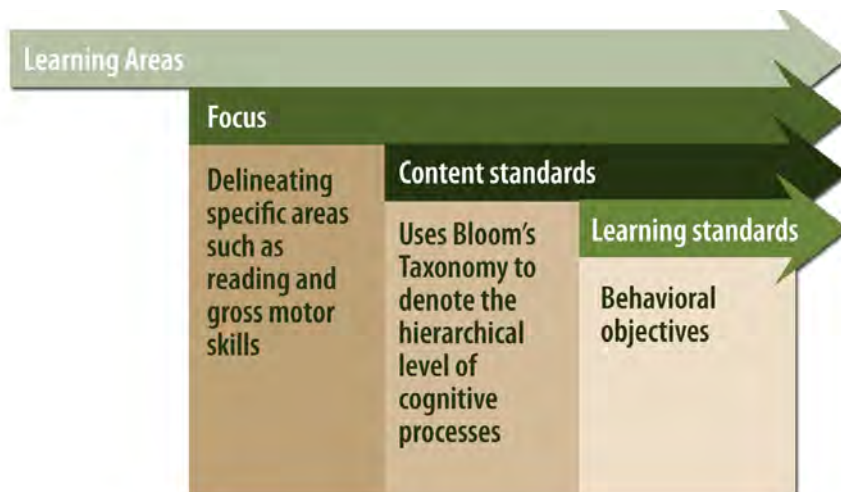
MICROSCOPIC CURRICULUM DESIGN

A microscopic curriculum design is concerned with how the four components of curriculum design (i.e., learning objectives, learning experiences, subject matter, and evaluation) are organized (Klein, 1991). After conducting research on literature related to ECE and benchmarking with other countries, the NPC 2003 panel decided on six learning areas or components, namely, language and communication, cognitive development, physical development, aesthetic development, spirituality and moral values, and socioemotional development (NPC 2003). After much contemplation, the NPSC 2010 was developed based on six learning areas that span across the pre-, primary, and secondary school curricula. These learning areas are akin to those in the NPC 2003 with changes in the terminology used in order to better suit the primary and secondary curricula. The learning areas are communication, science and technology, spirituality and moral values, physical development and aesthetics, humanities, and self-competence.

Each learning area consists of several intended learning outcomes or objectives written in the form of standards. There are two kinds of standards—content and learning standards (see Figure 4). Each content standard was expanded to include various learning standards. Behavioral learning standards were also formulated, rendering these measurable and quantifiable. After taking into consideration the decision to adopt the thinking-directed and character-building curriculum design, a particular formula for writing the content and learning standards was developed. Most of the content standards used verbs in accordance with the levels within Bloom's Taxonomy, indicating hierarchical mental processes. These verbs when arranged in ascending order are "to know," "to understand," "to

apply” (i.e., to take part or show), “to analyze,” “to synthesize” (i.e., to produce or create), and “to evaluate.” Specific verbs, behavioral in nature, are grouped under each verb for use in writing the learning standards (see Tables 23 and 24).

Figure 4. Microscopic Curriculum Design of the National Preschool Standard Curriculum 2010



Source: Curriculum Development Division, MOE, Malaysia, 2011

Table 24. Meta-Representational Verbs Used in the Learning Outcomes of the Cognitive Domain

Verbs Used to Write the Content Standards	Meta-Representational Verbs (Meta-Linguistic and -Cognitive) Used to Write the Learning Standards
<p>Explore to know (Exploring through actions such as hearing, manipulating, interacting, and taking part) (To know is to be able to recall)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify • Name • State • Draw • Write • Sketch • Record • Count • Repeat

Verbs Used to Write the Content Standards	Meta-Representational Verbs (Meta-Linguistic and -Cognitive) Used to Write the Learning Standards
<p>Explore to understand</p> <p>(Exploring through actions such as hearing, reading, writing, manipulating, interacting, and taking part)</p> <p>(To understand involves translating materials or ideas from one form to another, interpreting materials or ideas, and estimating future trends)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiate • Explain • Give examples • Measure • Determine • Predict • Make inferences • Describe or Retell • Group • Tell
<p>Apply what is learned through constructing, practicing, and interacting</p> <p>(To apply is to use materials and ideas in new and concrete situations)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Converse • Draw • Count • Read • Construct • Show • Innovate • Give ideas • Recite • Ask questions • Cut • Pour
<p>Analyze situations</p> <p>(To analyze is to separate information into components in order to understand its structure and the relationship between its components)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose • Solve problems • Sequence • Prioritize

Verbs Used to Write the Content Standards	Meta-Representational Verbs (Meta-Linguistic and -Cognitive) Used to Write the Learning Standards
<p>Synthesize through retelling, acting, and forming syllables and words</p> <p>(To synthesize is to combine components in order to produce whole ideas or new and creative structures)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retell • Role-play • String syllables to form words • Form or build • Design • Communicate • Experiment
<p>Evaluate</p> <p>(Evaluating ideas, materials, information, or methods based on specific criteria for specific purposes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess • Criticize • Interpret • Support • Justify • Identify biases • Make decisions

Table 25. Meta-Representational Verbs Used in Learning Outcomes of the Affective Domain (Character Building)

Verbs Used in Content Standards	Meta-Representational Verbs Used in Learning Standards
<p>Realize or know</p> <p>(Realizing is the stage wherein students know the importance of particular attitudes or moral values)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell • Inform • Explain • Know • State • Identify

Verbs Used in Content Standards	Meta-Representational Verbs Used in Learning Standards
Appreciate or internalize (Appreciating is the stage wherein students show their appreciation for attitudes or moral values)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose • Show interest • Compare and contrast • Suggest • Predict
Love, practice, build, develop, and thank (Practicing is the stage wherein students practice attitudes or moral values)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show • Be involved • Manage emotions • Abide • Share • Solve conflicts • Help • Take part • Love • Give • Carry out • Use • Implement • Prepare • Care • Respect • Wish

The verbs can be classified into two groups based on the Speech-Act Theory mentioned by Olson and Astington (1990). The first group of verbs comprise “meta-linguistic verbs,” which take the place of the verb “to say.” Examples of these include “define,” “describe,” “explain,” and “suggest.” The second group of verbs is referred to as “the language of the mind” by Astington and Pelletier (1998). These verbs replace the verb “to think.” Examples of these include “infer,” “calculate,” “deduce,” “analyze,” “predict,” “hypothesize,” “observe,” and “assume.” These are called “meta-cognitive verbs.” Meta-linguistic and -cognitive verbs are subsumed under “meta-representational

terms.” Olson and Astington (1990) reiterated that to be able to talk about thinking depends on the use of meta-representational terms to describe the process of thinking and ways of expressing thoughts.

Using meta-representational verbs in the learning standards had a great impact from the pedagogical aspect. Take, for instance, the learning standard “compare and group objects according to size.” This guides a child to personally compare the sizes of objects and to group these according to size. The teacher should not just teach children what is big and small. The children also need to have hands- and minds-on activities to grasp the concept of size.

Conceptualizing and refining the formula were mainly done through discussions, related literature reviews, referring to other countries’ curricula, deliberations with the NPSC 2010 panel, as well as trial-and-error curricular revisions. It should be noted that the original design came from the science curriculum (CDC, 1993, 1999, 2001, and 2004). This microscopic curriculum design was continuously refined as the NPSC 2010 was being developed.

Pilot Study

In accordance with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) procedure for curriculum development, the curriculum draft should be piloted in a number of schools before full implementation. During the pilot, the CDD officers should visit the schools to obtain feedback regarding the limited implementation. Interviews and observations should be conducted. Questionnaires should often be administered as well. The objective is to further improve the draft before it is finalized for use by the entire population.

In the NPSC 2010’s case, as content and learning standards were developed, the ECCE sector of the CDD decided to embark on content and age validation. Two levels of pilot study were conducted. In the first level, 76 primary schools were involved. This phase aimed to obtain feedback on the proposed conceptual framework for the standards-based and modular-oriented curriculum design. Feedback was analyzed and the curriculum design was refined (CDD, 2010).

The second phase of the pilot study lasted for almost a year. During this phase, content and age validity were determined. A total of 35 preschool teachers from different parts of the country piloted the NPSC 2010 as well as the teaching and learning modules. Observations and interviews were conducted with them as well. They also completed the questionnaires. The feedback was used for content and age validation. The teachers’ opinions based on their experience and expertise were obtained to gauge the suitability of each learning standard to the perspectives of cognitive levels,

language used, and flow of content. Students were interviewed and observed to see if they could achieve the desired learning standards. The student interviews and observations were conducted mainly for age validation in order to ascertain if the learning standards were age-appropriate (CDD, 2010). As a result of the pilot study, various learning standards were refined, dropped, or added. Content validity was also ascertained through views from lecturers and other preschool educators from other public and private preschool education providers in focus group discussions (FGDs) or informal interviews.

Dissemination and Implementation

In 2009, orientation courses on the NPSC 2010 were conducted nationwide to prepare all teachers for the implementation of the new curriculum in 2010. The cascade method was used wherein key trainers (KTs) were appointed and centrally trained by the CDD. Appointed by implementing agencies such as the MOE, the KEMAS, and the PERPADUAN, the KT's were placed under the leadership of a preschool officer in each state who conducted state-level orientation courses. The number of KT's was decided by each state. A total of close to 300 KT's for the MOE, 200 for the KEMAS, and 100 for the PERPADUAN were trained. The services of CDD preschool officers and some KT's from the MOE were used to train private preschool operators and teachers in each state. At the same time, the CDD preschool officers were invited by various associations or private organizations to give briefings and conduct training on the new curriculum.

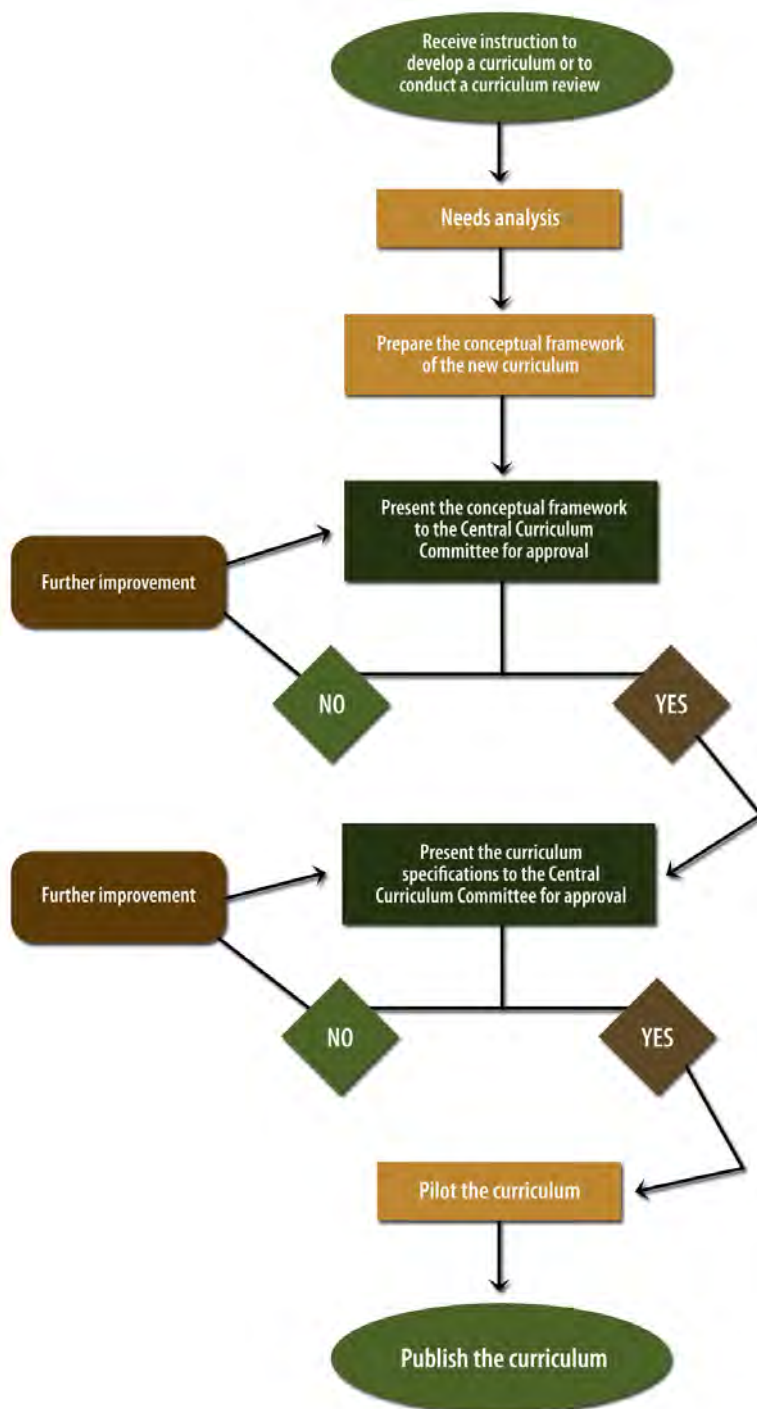
Beginning January 2010, all public and private preschools implemented the NPSC 2010. Queries on the NPSC 2010 were promptly attended to via telephone conversations or face-to-face interactions. Informal interactions were also carried out through informal Facebook accounts set up by the CDD preschool officers.

Evaluation and Supervision

Hiccups during the first year of implementation of a new curriculum are unavoidable but need to be promptly addressed. Observations were conducted on classroom teaching in the first three months of implementation of the NPSC 2010. Meetings with state education preschool officers were also carried out to discuss matters arising from the initial implementation of the curriculum. The new policies in the NPSC 2010 include bilingualism in teaching and learning in preschools with Malay, the national language, as the medium of instruction, and trilingualism in teaching and learning in preschools where Malay is not the medium of instruction. Anxiety ran high among administrators and teachers in implementing these policies.

These even prompted the CDD to conduct a study on the use of English in preschools from February to April 2010. The findings of the study provided inputs to the actions needed to improve the implementation of the NPSC 2010 (CDD, 2010).

Figure 5. Manual Procedure of Curriculum Development in Malaysia



Source: MOE, 2011

Resources Required to Develop and Implement a Curriculum or Framework

HUMAN RESOURCES

Human resources play a central role in the curriculum development cycle. Quality human resources are required not only to plan, develop, and disseminate a curriculum but also to monitor its implementation. Two important issues concerning human resources are inclusiveness in engaging quality panel members for curriculum development and a strong leading agency.

Inclusiveness in Engaging Quality Panel Members for Curriculum Development

Developing an ECCE curriculum is not akin to developing formal primary and secondary school curricula. There are many arguments over the need to develop a formal curriculum for children aged 0–6. Many think that perhaps a framework is sufficient. Experts caution that by developing specific learning objectives for young children, learning becomes formal and does not concur with literature that emphasizes that children learn best through incidental interactions with their environment. Arguments over the importance of nurturing versus educating has resulted in the fact that some countries do not develop national ECCE curricula, only guidelines. These guidelines or frameworks encompass various areas of concern for young children, which include healthcare, emotional care, safety, cognitive development, socioemotional development, physical development, creativity, and so on.

Being in such a diverse field requires the engagement of experts from different fields to provide various perspectives of ECCE so that nothing is missed and a consensus is reached. In the Malaysian context, the experts who were identified to serve as panel members for curriculum development came from the public and private sectors, religious bodies, NGOs, and international nongovernment organizations (INGOs). These experts were administrators, teachers, education and caregivers, principals, university or college lecturers, and children's rights advocates. They served in the health, education, business, and child protection advocacy sectors. These panel members came from diverse geographical regions of the country and included those who work with children with special needs. There was also a need for representation of both sexes, male and female. Inclusiveness was the first principle adopted by the NPSC 2010 panel members. Inclusiveness also means that the voices of all sectors should be heard to ensure better acceptance across all stakeholders.

Strong Leading Agency

Engaging panel members from multiple sectors related to early childhood to develop the national curriculum posed another challenge. It was not easy to manage and maneuver a group of diverse and committed experts in the field. Each expert had his or her own mission and passion. As such, a leading agency with strong leadership skills was necessary to ensure the manifestation of inclusiveness while maintaining order and justice. Opinions can be so diverse that mechanisms for decision making need to be put in place to ensure the smoothness of curriculum development.

In the Malaysian context, the MOE was appointed as the leading agency for preschool education. The leading agency must be forward-looking to guide the panel members toward developing a curriculum that will remain relevant years after. Adhering too much to current practices and refusing to adopt wider and more futuristic perspectives would not augur well for the curriculum development panel members.

MATERIALS

Curriculum specifications or guidelines alone are insufficient to ensure the successful implementation of a curriculum. Materials are needed to ensure standardization in disseminating the curriculum and to enhance the capacity of teachers to implement it.

Ensuring Standardization in Disseminating the Curriculum or Framework

Gaps between the aspired and implemented curricula are challenges often encountered by curriculum developers and decision makers. A good curriculum is useless if the teachers implementing it are not convinced of its worth or do not understand its underlying principles. To ensure that diverse stakeholders would implement the curriculum or framework according to the government's aspirations, proper dissemination is necessary. Standardized training materials tremendously help in this aspect. Having standardized training materials will help ensure quality and equity.

Enhancing the Capacity of Teachers in Implementing the Curriculum or Framework

A national curriculum specification document has limitations in that it cannot be too prescriptive and too rigid since it caters to a wide variety of children with different backgrounds and needs. Reference or enrichment materials developed for specific groups of children are needed to provide sources of inspiration and concrete examples to teachers. The availability of these materials and relevant hardware can reduce frustration among

teachers. Teachers can further expound on the ideas provided in these materials to enhance the success of the implementation of the curriculum.

Strength of the Curriculum or Framework

The strength of the curriculum development process from the perspective of effectiveness, sustainability, transferability, and acceptability will be discussed in the following sections.

EFFECTIVENESS

The methodology adopted by Malaysia to develop and implement the curriculum proved to be effective. The curriculum that was developed received good comments from stakeholders. The effectiveness of the implementation of the national curriculum was evidenced by findings of research such as the Implementation of the NPC 2007 and the ECCE Implementation Review 2007. Though shortcomings were revealed in the studies, these can be overcome. The effectiveness of developing and implementing the national curriculum can be attributed to the following:

- Comprehensive and systematic planning
- Collective commitment to implement the curriculum across all agencies
- Authorized leadership of an identified agency
- Flexibility allowed and trust given to the NPSC panel of curriculum developers

SUSTAINABILITY

National mechanisms have been put in place for the continuous improvement and maintenance of the sustainability of the NPSC 2010. The national mechanisms will set up the following:

- A national coordinating committee for preschools chaired by the Director General of Education
- Annual coordinating meetings between the CDD and implementing state and private sector agencies
- An EFA technical working group that meets four times a year

What is essential in sustainability is an established line of authority wherein ECCE practitioners know where and who to go to when they face difficulties

with implementing the curriculum. Maintaining sustainability also needs attention and commitment from policy makers and leaders. With that in mind, advocacy for quality and equity in ECCE needs to be continuous and rigorous.

TRANSFERABILITY

The method of curriculum development described in this report is transferable. It has, in fact, been used to develop other national curricula, specifically the national science curriculum. The key issue here is to form a committed panel of curriculum developers who are forward-thinking and open-minded.

ACCEPTABILITY

The method described is user friendly and readily acceptable among stakeholders. However, care needs to be taken to ensure the inclusion of related stakeholders in the process and in making collective decisions.

Issues and Problems

Many problems and issues arise during curriculum development and implementation. Among these are pressure to hasten the curriculum development process and evolving curriculum design.

PRESSURE TO HASTEN THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The curriculum development process is time-consuming since syndication among stakeholders is needed for a consensus. Most of all, time for reflection and contemplation on new ideas is very much required. It is a thought-provoking process and cannot be done overnight. The curriculum development process for a subject can take from 3 to 5 years. However, time is often not available because of pressure from and requests by higher authorities to hasten the process. The output produced in such a hastened manner often cannot live up to rigorous scrutiny from stakeholders and the public.

EVOLVING CURRICULUM DESIGN

The curriculum design, specifically the microscopic design, needs to stand trial throughout the development phase before it is considered stable and comprehensive. The meta-representational verbs used to develop the NPSC

2010, for instance, evolved as the curriculum developers used them to come up with content and learning standards.

The curriculum developers need to be patient and open-minded as well as be willing to adapt to and adopt changes even during the development process. It is difficult to rigidly decide on a framework and not entertain any possible change before embarking on developing detailed learning outcomes. New situations and contexts often prompt changes. Without changes, the curriculum design may become irrelevant and inappropriate in certain contexts. Thus, curriculum developers need endurance and persistence in the face of changes.

Conclusion

The economic and social returns on investment in ECCE depend on the quality of a program. Producing quality products is only possible with quality processes. The curriculum development process described in this report was used in Malaysia to develop the ECCE curriculum. It remains a process that can be further improved; nevertheless, it helped Malaysia produce a national curriculum that has successfully been implemented.

MONITORING THE DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF YOUNG LEARNERS IN PHILIPPINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By: Felicitas E. Pado, PhD, University of the Philippines (UP)

Background

Young learners in this case study refer to preschool children, especially those in kindergarten who are about 5 years old, and grade 1 pupils who are about 6 years old. Preschool education at the kindergarten level (i.e., age five) aims for the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of young learners so they will be better prepared to adjust to and cope with the demands of formal schooling. This is addressed through a variety of developmentally appropriate experiences. To ensure that the preschool curriculum addresses the children's strengths and needs as well as starts instruction "where the learners are," the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Checklist is administered to preschoolers while the School Readiness Assessment (SReA) Tool is used for grade 1 entrants. The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) is administered to grades 1–6 pupils in order to assess their reading ability. These three assessment tools will be discussed in this study.

Assessment of Young Learners: The Early Childhood Care and Development Checklist

The ECD Checklist was developed in 1989. It is administered to preschoolers aged 3–5 three times in a school year—in June, October, and March. This checklist assesses preschool children's skills under the gross and motor, self-help, receptive and expressive language, cognitive and socio emotional domains.

ADMINISTERING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

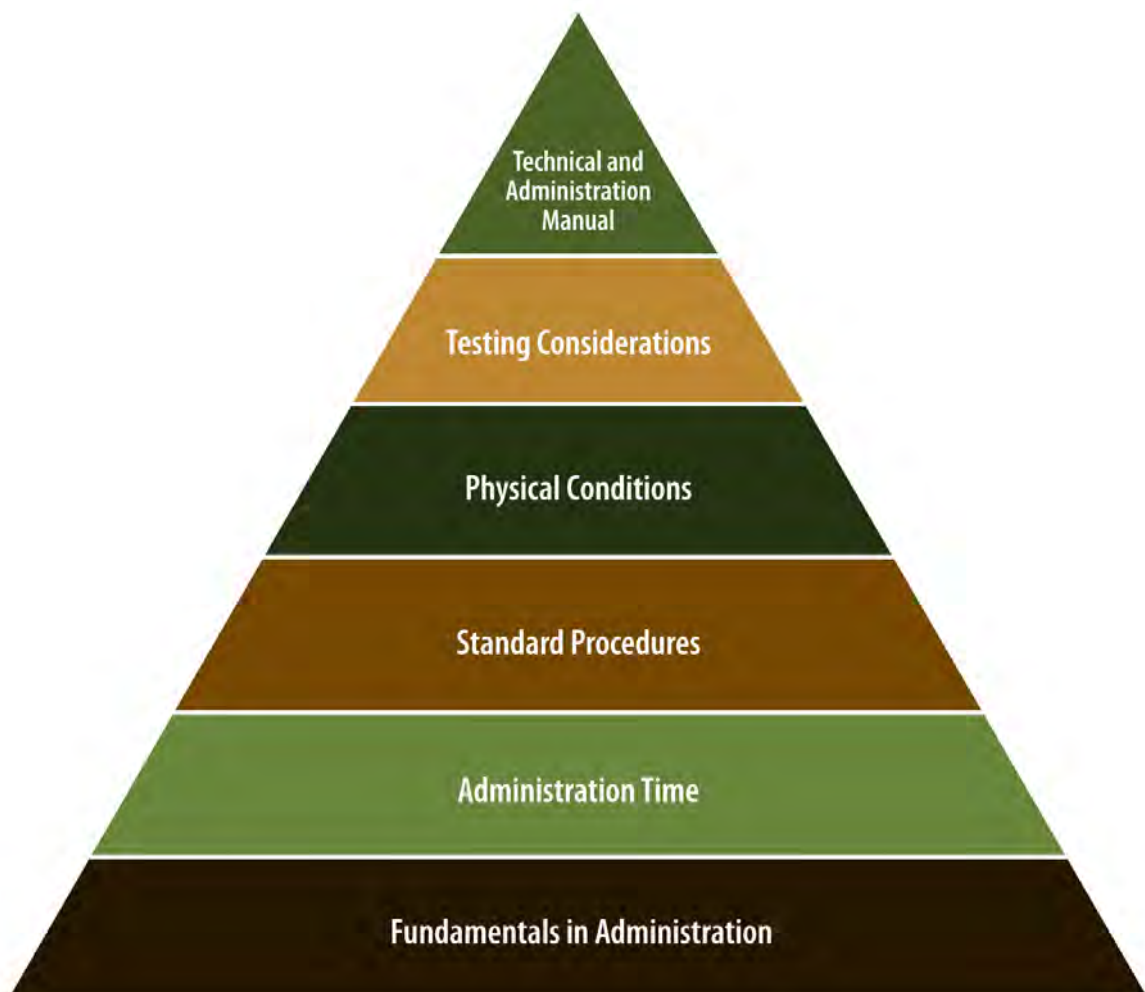
To find out what preschool children know and can do at a particular age, the teacher-examiner employs techniques such as direct observation, performance-based assessment, and interviews with the children and their parents.

During the assessment, the teacher-examiner gives instructions using the language that the children understand. He or she may likewise demonstrate skills in the gross and fine motor as well as self-help domains to make sure the children understand the instructions. Any observation or comment regarding a specific item or the children's responses are recorded in the checklist. Examples of such remarks include "the item is not applicable," "lack of opportunity," or "response was not displayed in two out of three trials."

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

Examinees aged 3–5 and the skills expected of them vary. Hence, the assessment items for the same domain differ according to the examinees' ages.

Figure 6. The Revised Early Childhood Development Checklist



It should be noted that for some items, parental reports are sought. The teacher interviews the parents instead of asking the children to perform activities. It is made clear to the parents that the objective of the assessment is to find out what the children know and can do in order to guide the teacher in planning appropriate activities and creating instructional materials.

Table 26. Sample Items for Gross Motor Skills Development for Different Age Levels

Age	Gross Motor Skill	Material or Procedure	Present	Comment
3 years and 1 month–4 years old	Climbs on chairs or other elevated pieces of furniture like beds without help	Parental report will suffice.		
4 years and 1 month–5 years old	Walks down stairs using two feet per step with one hand held	Parental report will suffice.		
5 years and 1 month–5 years and 11 months old	Hops 1–3 steps on preferred foot	Ask the child to lift one foot up and hop at least three times on his or her preferred foot. Give credit if the child is able to hop at least three times on his or her preferred foot without holding on to anything.		

Table 27. Sample Items for the Fine Motor Development for Different Age Levels

Age	Fine Motor Skill	Material or Procedure	Present	Comment
3 years and 1 month–4 years old	Displays a definite hand preference	Material: Toy Procedure: Place the toy directly in front of the child at midline (i.e., not to his or her left or right) and ask him or her to reach for this. Give credit if he or she uses the same hand two out of three times. Parental report will also suffice.		

Age	Fine Motor Skill	Material or Procedure	Present	Comment
4 years and 1 month–5 years old	Spontaneously scribbles stuff	<p>Materials: Paper and pencil or crayon</p> <p>Procedure: Place a sheet of paper and a pencil or crayon on the table or a flat surface and ask the child to draw anything he or she wants without showing him or her what to do. Give credit if the child uses the tips of his or her thumbs and any of his or her other fingertips to grasp the pencil or crayon and makes purposeful, not accidental, marks on the sheet of paper.</p>		
5 year and 1 month–5 years and 11 months old	Draws a human figure (e.g., with a head, eyes, a trunk, arms, hands, fingers, etc.)	<p>Materials: Paper and pencil</p> <p>Procedure: Give the child a pencil and a sheet of paper and ask him or her to draw a picture of a person. Give credit if the child draws a person with three or more body parts. A pair is considered one part (i.e., eyes, ears, arms, hands, legs, and feet).</p>		

RECORDING AND INTERPRETING THE PRESCHOOLERS' SCORES

The teacher indicates correct responses by checking the appropriate column for every response. The total number of correct responses comprises the raw score. The raw score for each domain is converted to scaled scores that are appropriate to the age of a child.

Table 28. Interpretation of the Scaled Scores

Scaled Score	Interpretation
1–3	Suggests a significant delay in overall development
4–6	Suggests a slight delay in overall development
7–13	Average development
14–16	Suggests slightly advanced development
17–19	Suggests highly advanced development

Appropriate instruction is then planned by the teacher based on the result of the assessment. It is possible that in a class of four-year-old children, some will manifest a significant delay in overall development while others will manifest highly advanced development. The challenge for the teacher is to carefully study the assessment data of the young learners and create a data-based and goal-driven curriculum as well as instructional strategies and materials.

Assessment of Grade 1 Entrants: The School Readiness Assessment (SReA) Tool

Another national assessment tool administered to grade 1 entrants to Philippine public schools is the SReA Tool (recently renamed the School Readiness Year-End Assessment, SReYA). It was developed in 2005 and has been in use since school year 2006–2007. “Based on comments and recommendations from administrators and teachers, the SReA Tool was revised and refined in 2007,” attested Mr. Eldy Oñas of the Curriculum Division of the Department of Education (DepEd). It should be noted that prior to school year 2010–2011, attendance at kindergarten was not compulsory. Hence, six-year-old children enrolled in grade 1, the first year of formal schooling, without undergoing kindergarten.

THE SCHOOL READINESS ASSESSMENT TOOL

The results of the SReA Tool determine who among the grade 1 entrants are ready and who are not for the curriculum.

The main objective of the SReA Tool is to enable grade 1 teachers to have an accurate and reliable view of children’s concepts and skills when they begin school. This is deemed very helpful in planning appropriate lessons

and activities as well as in creating instructional materials. The results of the assessment are not intended to assess the grade 1 entrants' performance but to make a decision on the support system that will work for them. On the part of administrators, the results of the SReA Tool help them make policy decisions about the resources that should be allocated to support the needs of the new entrants.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL READINESS ASSESSMENT TOOL

The SReA Tool comes in two parts. Part 1 consists of 50 items that measure the development of basic competencies while Part 2 consists of a list of questions for the parents to determine their children's developmental skills in the socioemotional and self-help domains.

Table 29. Domains Assessed by Part 1 of the School Readiness Assessment Tool

Domain	Number of Items
Gross motor	2
Fine motor	4
Reading readiness	
• Auditory perception and discrimination	3
• Visual perception and discrimination	7
• Directional knowledge	2
• Phonological awareness	2
• Alphabetical knowledge	3
• Handwriting	2
• Phonics and word recognition	3
• Vocabulary development	2
Numeracy, sensory discrimination, and seriation or classification	16
Concept formation	4
Total	50

ADMINISTERING THE SCHOOL READINESS ASSESSMENT TOOL

The SReA⁴ Tool is administered twice. The first assessment is given as early as the last week of May, before the opening of classes in June. The second assessment is given after the children have undergone the eight-week ECD Curriculum. This eight-week ECD Curriculum is also known as the Early Childhood experience purposely formulated for grade one pupils in order for them to develop social, motor and other readiness of young learner. It consists of skill, objective, and developmental-appropriate practices made of maps, games, stories and movement and other activities. This focuses on the competencies that are not fully manifested by the children during the first assessment.

After undergoing the eight-week ECE Curriculum, the children are given the SReA Tool posttest. Only the items that the children were not able to correctly answer in the pretest are administered in the posttest.

Grade 1 teachers individually administer the assessment, which starts with gross and fine motor skills such as:

- Gross motor: Performs actions as he or she sings or listens to the lyrics of a song
- Fine motor: Draws and cuts any object or figure.

The readiness of a child for reading is assessed through the following activities in each domain of literacy:

- **Visual discrimination:** Identifies similarities among pictures of objects.
- **Directional knowledge:** Arranges or connects pictures from left to right.
- **Oral language or vocabulary:** Names commonly used objects.
- **Alphabetical knowledge:** Identifies the letters of the alphabet.

The ability to read is likewise gauged through the following tasks:

- Reading simple words with the consonant-vowel-consonant-vowel (CVCV) pattern using pictures and picture configuration in English
- Reading at least a five-sentence story consisting of short words with the CVCV pattern in Filipino

⁴ SReA name changed to School Readiness Year-End Assessment or SReYA effective S.Y. 2013-2014

- Showing understanding of a story by recalling details and events

Grade 1 entrants' knowledge of mathematical concepts is likewise gauged through tasks such as:

- **Colors:** Identifies objects according to attributes (i.e., matching, pointing, and naming).
- **Concept of more or less:** Arranges three or more numbers from least to greatest or vice versa.
- **Seriation:** Arranges objects in order according to length and size (e.g., from shortest to longest or from smallest to biggest).

Simple tests on addition, subtraction, telling time, concept formation, categorization, and sensing patterns are likewise given.

INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS

Part 2 of the assessment aims to find out the children's socioemotional and self-help skills. These are gauged by interviewing their parents. There are 29 interview questions, including:

- Self-help skills
 - Does your child independently eat?
 - Does your child dress himself or herself on his or her own?
- Socioemotional skills
 - Can he or she express his or her feelings?
 - Can he or she follow and perform routine activities?

INTERPRETING AND USING THE ASSESSMENT RESULTS

The results of the SReA Tool are used to accomplish the following:

- Identify the beginning level of competencies of grade 1 entrants, both as individuals and as part of a group of learners
- Identify children who need additional developmental support in different domains, which should be addressed during the implementation of the eight-week ECE Curriculum and during the rest of the first grade

- Share the results of children’s assessment with their parents as basis for helping them come up with home-based activities for supplemental learning
- Determine the appropriate teacher training programs for the effective implementation of the eight-week ECE Curriculum

Teachers are cautioned against treating the assessment as an entrance test. Its results are not an indicator of school admission. No child should be refused entry to grade 1 based on the results of the test. Rather, the results should guide teachers in planning and giving appropriate instruction to grade 1 learners in order to address their strengths and needs.

Out of the 50 items in part 1 of the test, the results should be interpreted as follows:

- A score of 38 and above: The child is ready for the grade 1 curriculum.
- A score below 38: The child is not yet ready for the grade 1 curriculum.

Some grade 1 teachers and administrators from regions 1, 4A, 5, 6, 8, and 9 as well as the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) were interviewed to find out how their grade 1 entrants performed in the SReA Tool. They all attested that the results showed that more than 50 percent of the pupils were not ready for the grade 1 curriculum.

This concurs with the record of the Bureau of Elementary Education (BEE) on the results of the SReA Tool for four years as shown in Table 30. As shown, more than 50 percent of the grade 1 entrants are not yet equipped with the concepts and skills that will help them tackle grade 1 lessons. When the teachers were asked what they did with the pupils who were not yet ready, all of them replied that instruction for the first quarter of the school year followed the eight-week ECE Curriculum.

Table 30. School Readiness Assessment Tool Results for SY 2007-2011

School Year	Interpretation of Score	Pretest	Posttest
2007–2008	Ready	39.76%	68.53%
	Not ready	60.24%	31.47%
2008–2009	Ready	36.58%	69.06%
	Not ready	63.42%	30.94%
2009–2010	Ready	40.29%	81.00%
	Not ready	59.71%	19.00%
2010–2011	Ready	40.31%	81.00%
	Not ready	59.69%	19.00%

Source: DepEd, Report on SREA, 2007-2011

Table 30 likewise shows the children's improvement in the posttest, which could be attributed to the eight-week ECE Curriculum. It should be noted that in school years 2009–2010 and 2010–2011, the number of grade 1 entrants who were not ready was reduced to 19 percent. The teachers predict that with the implementation of the universal kindergarten program this school year, the number of grade 1 entrants who are not ready may be reduced further.

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The eight-week ECE Curriculum contains the concepts and skills that should have been taught and mastered by kindergarten children. This is based on the full-year kindergarten curriculum and is designed to be implemented during the first eight weeks of the school year for grade 1 pupils who were assessed as not yet ready for the grade 1 curriculum. The first eight weeks of classes, which correspond to the first quarter of the Philippine educational system, are spent equipping the children with readiness skills.

The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI)

Another early education assessment tool used in Philippine public schools is the Phil-IRI. It is an informal measure that consists of two graded reading passages in English and two in Filipino. One passage each in English and Filipino is used for oral reading. The other two passages are used for silent reading. These passages are followed by five questions about each. The questions are categorized into three levels of comprehension—literal, interpretive, and applied. The reading passages are carefully selected to ensure that these appeal to the readers as well as are culture-neutral and bias-free in terms of gender, religion, race, and socioeconomic status.

ADMINISTERING THE PHILIPPINE INFORMAL READING INVENTORY

The Phil-IRI is administered to grade 1 pupils in October and February. For the oral reading test, each pupil is asked to read a short passage while the teacher records his or her miscues such as mispronunciation, substitution, refusal to pronounce a word, insertion, omission, repetition, and reversal. Then the teacher orally asks the pupil five comprehension questions about the passage.

The silent reading test is a group test. Like the oral reading exercise, comprehension questions follow.

INTERPRETING AND USING THE RESULTS OF THE PHILIPPINE INFORMAL READING INVENTORY

This informal assessment tool provides the teacher quantitative and qualitative information about the pupils' oral reading fluency, word identification, and comprehension skills. The quantitative information shows the reading levels of the pupils who are then categorized as readers in the independent, instructional, or frustration level. Qualitatively, the reading performance gives the teacher information on the pupils' word recognition ability, patterns of miscues, and levels of comprehension.

Based on the oral reading performance of the pupils and the results of the comprehension test, appropriate reading intervention is then planned. Then the posttest is administered in February. The passages given in the posttest differ from those in the pretest but are parallel in length and level of difficulty. The teachers claim that the Phil-IRI is helpful in diagnosing the pupils' reading problems and in planning the appropriate reading intervention. They also claim that after giving the appropriate intervention, they observed a significant improvement in the pupils' reading performance in the posttest.

How Effective Are the Assessment Tools in Monitoring the Learners' Development and Progress?

The three assessment tools used in Philippine public schools have one common objective—to determine the level of competence of learners in different domains in order to design instruction that is appropriate to their learning needs. Assessing pupils is critical because effective decision-making is based, to some extent, on the teachers' ability to understand their students and match their actions with the appropriate forms of assessment (McMillan, 2008). This is essential to good teaching.

The ECD Checklist assesses the readiness of the youngest learners to tackle activities in the preschool level. The SReA Tool assesses grade 1 entrants prior to teaching them in order to make decisions regarding providing developmentally-appropriate instruction. In these two assessment tools, the results gathered by teachers as well as information from parents are valuable in order to get an accurate assessment of the children's abilities. The Phil-IRI, on the other hand, provides profiles of the pupils' reading ability that will help teachers prepare reading materials and activities that are suited to the pupils' level as well as plan early reading intervention programs for those whose reading performance is below par.

The teachers attested that the assessment tools help them know their learners better. However, one difficulty they encountered in administering

the SReA Tool is its length. The majority pointed out that the items on gross motor skills take a long time to administer and suggested that these should no longer be included since even without formal assessment, they can observe the children during playtime and use their performance as gauge of their gross motor skills.

Teachers in small schools have both grade 1-ready and -not yet ready pupils in one class. They find it difficult to manage two groups with different sets of lessons, materials, and activities. The children who are ready are taught competencies in the grade 1 curriculum while those who are not ready follow the eight-week ECD Curriculum. They suggested homogeneous pupil grouping wherein those who are ready are in one class while those who are not are in another class.

The teachers likewise suggested that the materials used in the assessment should be provided as part of an assessment kit. This will ensure uniformity in administration, which will redound to more reliable results.

The Phil-IRI is an effective means to assess the reading ability of pupils. It gives teachers first-hand information on children's skills in the word recognition, fluency, and comprehension literacy domains in both Filipino and English. However, interviews with teachers while evaluating the Phil-IRI last year revealed that many grade 1 pupils cannot read most of the words in the selection. They can only answer an average of two out of the five questions for each passage. Grades 1 and 2 children are not yet used to silent reading. Although the selections in Filipino are longer, they are easier for children to read and understand. They are even more interested in reading these.

The teachers likewise discussed the overwhelming and time-consuming task of assessing the reading ability of children in both English and Filipino using oral and silent reading activities. Due to the amount of time spent in assessing their reading ability, the amount of time spent on reading intervention is lessened. These observations were documented and will be taken into consideration in refining the Phil-IRI this school year.

Improving the Assessment Tools: The Department of Education's Initiatives

The DepEd continuously works toward improving the assessment tools. In September 2011, the BEE started reviewing the SReA Tool. There may be a move to integrate the ECD Checklist with it. Individual items are also being studied based on the comments of its users and plans to refine or change these are being considered. Two current initiatives of the DepEd are being taken into consideration in revising the SReA Tool—universal kindergarten education, which mandates that all children undergo kindergarten

education, and mother tongue-based multilingual education, which will be implemented this year.

The DepEd likewise requested consultants from teacher education institutions to evaluate the Phil-IRI. Based on the results of the evaluation, some passages and comprehension questions will either be changed or refined. Concerns regarding the amount of time spent making children read four passages and answering questions about these will likewise be addressed. Moreover, in light of mother tongue-based multilingual education, which was implemented in 2012, passages for lower grade levels in the learners' mother tongue were already written.

Concerns and Challenges

During interviews with teachers, some concerns regarding the fairness of assessment to all types of pupils were discussed. The assessment items were carefully selected to include questions and activities that are appealing, culture-neutral, and bias-free in terms of gender, religion, race, and socioeconomic status. However, other student diversities such as different learning styles and varying intelligences should likewise be addressed. Teachers are aware that "one size does not fit all." As such, they will attempt to tailor-fit instruction, which should likewise be done in assessment. Technology may likewise make assessment easier, faster, and more reliable.

Conclusion

Developing national assessment tools for young learners is a great move on the part of the DepEd. Another important initiative is the proper use of the data generated by these assessment tools so these will serve their purpose of monitoring the development and progress of young learners.

How should teachers and administrators use the data generated by these assessment tools? Mokhtari, et al. (2008) offer a reminder: "The systematic use of data to make instructional decisions requires leadership, training, and a culture of data-driven decision making and accountability." This is one challenge that teachers, administrators, and other educational stakeholders should address.

VIII.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Quality, as an essential concept that needs to be addressed in the different aspects of ECCD, has traditionally been assured within a system that is based on meeting and conforming to established standards which serve as a yardstick for assessing performance. Thus, quality assurance relies on planned and systematic actions that are deemed necessary in the satisfaction of given requirements for quality. In addition, these actions are undertaken to maximize the possibility of achieving the goals.

The Southeast Asian region has manifestly evidenced that besides its commitment to increase access to ECCD, there are a number of significant efforts as well to improve the quality of ECCD programs and services. Countries in the region, however, are still trying to universalize ECCD programs and services, and this may override other equally important concerns, including reaching a level of satisfaction in the provision of quality ECCD programs and services.

In addition, quality is a “nebulous concept” that has long been a subject of debate among professionals and researchers (Eaton, et al, 2008). Inherently subjective and relative, quality is significantly shaped by values and beliefs that may vary across societies and even across time (Moss, 1994 as cited in Wong & Li, 2010). Differences in cultural priorities, governance structures, policies and practices, as well as other definitional issues, make cross-cultural and cross-national comparisons a difficult task to undertake. Thus, it has been argued that no single model of high-quality care may be deemed as superior over the others.

Given that quality is a construct that reflects social and cultural contexts, many countries have directed their efforts towards establishing national frameworks, standards, procedures and approaches that provide quality assurance in early childhood education and thus contribute to the urgently needed momentum for change. Policies relevant to quality assurance in ECCD have emerged from all over Southeast Asia, influenced not just by national goals and development, but by commitment to international conventions and the desire to prepare children in a globalized world. However, there is a great deal of variation among countries in their progress toward developing systems for quality assurance. Countries like Indonesia and Malaysia have made significant strides and set exemplary quality assurance policies and practices. Others like Brunei Darussalam, the Philippines and Thailand are in

the process of developing or are in the early stages of implementing quality assurance systems.

Findings from this current study have noted that ECCD regulatory standards in Southeast Asia tend to be facility-focused and provider-focused. Nevertheless, standards and indicators on the other aspects of ECCD have been laid down in varying forms and states across the region. Moreover, at least one notable practice on ECCD quality assurance exists in each country in Southeast Asia. This bodes well for those whose unwavering vision involves establishing and enhancing quality ECCD for their nation's young children. For those who possess these standards and indicators, proper enforcement remains uncertain. Such standards on quality may become merely suggestive to some, an ideal to aim for but not necessarily to be attained. This may be particularly true for developing countries which are still struggling to provide access to ECCD services. But even in this situation, quality may be achieved through the collaboration of civil society organizations, parents and communities, as evidenced by the strength of stakeholders' collaboration in most countries in Southeast Asia, such as the case of community-based preschools.

Moreover, there must be legal basis to enforce these, an example of which is Brunei Darussalam's Childcare Center Order and Regulations. Such legally binding regulations shall ideally encompass all ECCD centers, public and private alike, to ensure that all children are receiving quality care and education.

As the experiences of the different Southeast Asian countries have indicated,

QUALITY ASSURANCE DEVELOPMENT IN ECCD



the development of quality assurance standards and policies tends to go through a multi-stage process. The extent of success met by the countries in each stage may be uneven but the similarity in stages has nevertheless indicated a development process for quality assurance that may be worth noting.

1. Standard Setting

Quality standards or indicators should be established in the following areas of ECCD:

a. Learning and Assessment

Standards in learning and development for children aged 0-6 include having a curriculum which specifies the developmental domains, content and competencies. Assessment must include specification of the level of achievement based on the curricular standards and competencies and the mode of assessments to be used.

b. Physical Facilities, Resources and Environment

Under the Physical Facilities, Resources and Environment, there should be specifications as to the type of environment to be established, the space required, the designated rooms or corners, the arrangement of furniture, and the facilities, equipment, materials and supplies needed.

c. Human Resources

Under Human Resources, there should be specifications as to personnel qualifications, development programs, and working conditions.

d. Program Management

Under Program Management, there should be specifications regarding the number and type of staffing, the programs to be conducted with parents, programs for children such as in health and nutrition, activities and schedule to be implemented at the center, class organization and arrangement.

2. Policy Making

a. Issuance of standards

It is not enough that ECCD standards are formulated. These standards need to be anchored on official policies for ECCD providers and educators to comply with.

b. Enactment of regulations and implementation arrangement

Concomitant with the issuance of standards is the creation of a decree that would outline the guidelines on how the standards will be followed.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation

Countries should be able to put in place a mechanism for ensuring compliance with standards and for dealing with situations where standards are not being followed.

a. Assessment Instrument

Tools for assessing the compliance with the standard should be made available for inspectors and evaluators.

b. Inspection Mechanism

There should be an inspection team with clear functions and authority to conduct monitoring, inspection and evaluation at a specified timeframe using an assessment tool.

c. Rating

A rating system or levels of quality should be established that will be used to evaluate the quality of ECCD institutions.

4. Reporting

There should be an arrangement on how the results of monitoring, inspection or evaluation will be disseminated or communicated to the concerned institution as inputs to the improvement of ECCD programs and services.

5. Taking Action

After the report has been given, it is necessary that actions must be taken, depending on the result.

a. Reward

Compliance with the standards is usually rewarded with the issuance of license or permit or renewal thereof. Institutions that have achieved a high level of quality would be given recognition such as awards and/ or other incentives.

b. Penalty

Those that fail to comply with standards or those that violate certain mandates for a specific number of times could be penalized by revocation of license or closure of the institution. In some instances, they may be compelled to pay a fine.

c. Intervention

ECCD providers or personnel who fail to achieve the desired level of quality should be provided with interventions to assist them in improving their performance.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN ECCD QUALITY ASSURANCE

The country experiences also revealed that a number of challenges in the establishment and implementation of ECCD quality assurance continue to slow down the efforts of their ECCD advocates and practitioners. Bringing about changes in ECCD quality settings entails that these challenges be acknowledged and addressed head-on.

1. Quality Standards in ECCE

Most countries in Southeast Asia rely on the private sector to provide childcare and pre-primary education to children 0-6 years old. Unfortunately, not all countries have a quality standards system for private childcare and preschools to comply with. For instance in Malaysia, as much as the government wants to enforce quality assurance measures, it could only do so sporadically due to its lack of manpower, even as it is aware that many private centers are not able to provide services according to quality standards. The private preschools in Brunei Darussalam also pose a challenge for government monitoring due to the different school governance system being adopted prior to the SPN21 reforms.

2. Capacity Building and Certification of ECCD Personnel

Some countries do not have policies for the practice and certification of pre-service and in-service programs for the teachers or teacher aides who are deployed in ECE institutions.

The training programs that will help teachers reach the desired standards and competencies are often times lacking. Brunei Darussalam, for instance, expressed the need for training programs for caregivers, specifically of young children below 3 years old, as well as for assistant teachers. This results in deficiencies in the number of qualified and trained ECCD teachers, as is the

case in many countries like Vietnam, Timor-Leste and Lao PDR. In Vietnam, there are numerous unqualified ECE teachers, especially in mountainous and remote areas, who are slow in improving their teaching methods and in meeting the requirements of the new preschool education program. In school year 2008-09 alone, the whole country had 15,461 unqualified teachers, accounting for nearly 10% of total ECE teachers in the country (MOET, 2009 as cited in Le, 2011). This concern causes many difficulties in children care and in encouraging children to go to school.

In Lao PDR, the severe shortage of qualified preschool teachers is likewise a major concern, with many teachers having limited or no professional training at all. Brunei Darussalam also reported about the dearth of specially-trained teachers in both government-funded (75% not trained to teach 3440 children aged 5) and private preschools (86% not trained to teach the 9430 preschoolers aged 3-5) (Morni, 2011). It was observed that many teachers still lack the necessary knowledge to understand the play concept needed for a more effective implementation of the learning-through-play approach in preschool classrooms.

In Indonesia, requiring teachers to be certified poses other kinds of problem. Since the focus is on fulfilling the requirements, teachers tend to rush to fulfill the required hours of teaching (24 hours a week) without looking at the students' readiness for the learning process.

3. Limitations of Regulators or Assessors

The lack of understanding of the role of the ministry in standard-setting, regulation and accreditation is one shortcoming in achieving quality assurance. In Indonesia, for example, this inadequacy limits the function of the National Accreditation Body (BAN).

There is also a deficiency in terms of the competence and the financial support provided to the accreditation body. In Indonesia, BAN's 200 personnel are inadequate to reach and assess 147,013 ECE institutions that are spread out all around Indonesia. Compounding this insufficiency is the lack of tools for quality assessment in ECCD.

The lack of monitoring and mentoring system, as well as competent supervisors and personnel who would monitor teaching and learning in all preschools and child care centers, remains to be a problem in Brunei Darussalam and other countries as well.

4. Harmonization of ECCD Programs and Services

Inter-agency collaboration among government agencies in the provision of ECCD programs and services is a promising development for the holistic development of children. Moreover, the support coming from international aid agencies, NGOs, and the private sector may provide the needed ingredient for success. The influx of ECCD players, however, may not always be a rosy scenario, particularly when it leads to potential problems such as:

- Poor inter-agency coordination and collaboration among government agencies, particularly in data-gathering, information-sharing and standard-setting.
- Lack of coordination between NGOs and government agencies in harmonizing services
- NGOs speaking in discordant voices. There may be no lead organization which could mobilize a common strong voice to push for quality ECCD.
- Lack of involvement and awareness of parents, community and local leaders on the importance of ECCD programs necessary to provide and sustain quality child development.

This is one challenge that Malaysia faces, where preschool education is under the jurisdiction of several ministries or departments, each with its own quality assurance mechanism in place. Even the relatively young ECCE Council, which represents the private institutions, has set up its own quality assurance mechanism for private preschools. The point of convergence for all these efforts from the various players remains to be seen.

5. Support for systematic evaluation and assessment of ECCD programs

Quality assurance does not end in providing relevant curriculum. There should be interventions and evaluation activities to assist childcare centers, preschools, pupils and teachers that need improvement. Such support programs including systematic evaluation and assessment of ECCD should be in accordance with legislative and national policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Advocate for evidence-based and culturally relevant frameworks, standards and practices for quality assurance. The introduction of a quality assurance framework, driven by a research base, is clearly a significant step in the achievement of a quality assurance mechanism in ECCD. But such an evidence-based framework also requires attention to cultural context that would reflect local factors. An uncritical application of international studies and findings without regard for local context, culture and needs may put to risk the achievement of desired outcomes in ECCD. In designing quality assurance systems, there must be efforts to reconcile divergent perceptions of quality, and establish a framework for the system. There is a need as well to increase local research that will examine the validity and reliability of the quality assurance practices, indicators, and tools, or to find out if such standards, practices and indicators really contribute to achieving quality ECCD toward developing holistically developed Southeast Asian children. Licensing standards may not be sufficient to ensure that the level of quality achieved would lead to meaningful outcomes. Therefore, it is important to develop more rigorous standards of quality that are based on empirical research and accepted principles of best practice in ECCD.

Develop more appropriate supports that would ensure that the standards have the desired beneficial effects on young children. The establishment of standards is only one of the initial steps toward improving quality. There must also be an effort to ensure that tools and resources that contribute to quality are readily available to all providers and practitioners of early care and education services. This quality support may include, but are not limited to, training and education programs for ECCD personnel and technical assistance to individual ECCD programs and providers.

Expand government regulation and accreditation. With the increase in demand for ECCD services, and with the private sector providing childcare and pre-primary education in most countries in Southeast Asia, there is a need for increased government responsibility, especially in providing legislative and policy frameworks for the establishment and operation of schools and programs, quality assurance, monitoring and accreditation. Accreditation should be made mandatory and enforced strictly in both government and private centers alike, to provide safeguards for minimum quality standards of ECCD programs and services.

Strengthen and improve the cooperative ties between the state and other stakeholders of ECCD. Promote continuing dialogues between all relevant government departments concerned with ECCD, and the community stakeholders to develop frameworks for quality assurance and other initiatives meant to improve quality of ECCD, building upon existing government, school and community ties.

Adopt relevant and effective ECCD policies. Advocate for ECCD policies that structurally support services and programs to operate at high quality, and that adopt a regulatory and accreditation system that requires services to demonstrate continuous improvement.

Ensure capacity building and certification of ECCD personnel. To better ensure quality ECCD programs, ECCD personnel need to be given professional development programs to enhance their capacity to implement curriculum standards and improve their early childhood teaching practices and skills. Ensuring appropriate certification of ECCD personnel will help promote improved quality of ECE program delivery with beneficial outcomes for children.

Enhance monitoring and assessment skills of ECCD regulators or assessors. The present ECCD study revealed the need for better awareness of what constitutes high quality ECCD provision and effective implementation of the curriculum. Investments are needed to strengthen the monitoring skills of regulators and assessors so they are better able to perform leadership and supervisory tasks required to support quality improvements of ECE programs and adherence to quality standards.

Take initiatives to harmonize ECCD regulators within a common framework. Ministries and agencies responsible for early childhood should systematically facilitate open dialogue among ECCD implementors and stakeholders about the purposes, goals and values of ECCD in order to promote a holistic venue of ECCD. Mechanisms for inter-agency collaboration should be established and strengthened to promote convergence and coordination of ECCD efforts of various players. There is also a need to strengthen through advocacy strategies with parents and other stakeholders such as ECE/ECD information packets to increase their awareness of involvement in ECCD programs. Opportunities for exchange of ECCD policies and practices among SEAMEO countries should be promoted and institutionalized.

Conduct systematic evaluation and assessment of ECCD programs.

Determining the effectiveness and relevance of ECCD programs and services is challenging for many SEAMEO-member countries due to lack of exposure and capability of the ministry level to conduct systematic evaluation, collecting valid data and assessment procedures. Developing appropriate tools for assessment of quality standards compliance is a critical area for future research and development. It is important that inspectors are given training on ECE program-to-outcomes evaluation. Philippines has an evaluation checklist for inspectors that identifies core competencies of the ECE/ECD program intervention. This ECE/ECD evaluation checklist may be shared in the region for upscaling to improve practice.

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