
Policy in Support of Young Children: An Introduction

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What are we talking about?

ECE

ECD

EDUCARE

ECCE

ECCD

OTHER?

Early Childhood Care for Development

Early Childhood Care for Development includes all the supports necessary for every child to realize his/her right to survival, to protection, and to care that will ensure optimal development from birth to age eight.

Early Childhood

Conception to age eight

- **Psychology.** This timeframe is consistent with the understanding within developmental psychology of the ways in which children learn
 - **Transition:** Including the ages of 6-8 allows educators and planners to address children's needs for an adequate transition from early care and education settings to primary school
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Care

The process that results in the creation of an “enabling environment” that supports the child’s optimal development.

- **Care is embedded in the culture. It includes what adults and significant others in the child’s life are able to provide, such as a healthy and safe environment, supportive and affectionate interaction, appropriate modeling, stimulation, protection, and time, which are all components of respect for the child’s rights.**
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Development

The *process of change* in which the child comes to master more and more complex levels of moving, thinking, feeling, and interacting with people and objects in the environment. **Physical growth, mental, social, emotional and spiritual** growth are crucial in a child's overall development.

Learning

- **The process of acquiring knowledge, skills, habits, and values through experience, experimentation, observation, reflection, and/or study and instruction.**
- **The child's current developmental status either facilitates or inhibits both present and future learning.**

Thus learning is a key part of the development process

THE FOCUS

Policy and Early Childhood

**An introduction
to Policy**

What is Policy?

- **“Any plan or course of action adopted by a government, political party, business organization or the like designed to influence and determine decisions, actions and other matters.”**
 - **“A course of action, guiding principle or procedure considered to be expedient, prudent or advantageous.”**
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Policy can be:

- **Formulated at all levels**
 - **Made and adopted by a wide range of organizations (e.g. governments, political parties, businesses, and members of a community)**
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Within a national context,

- **Policy frames the course of action to be taken**
 - **Represents a philosophy about the role of government**
 - **Defines the style of government in place**
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Social policy

- **Is broad and strategic**
- **Addresses the role of the government vis-à-vis families and society as a whole**
- **Sets out social goals and strategies**
- **Positions government in terms of what it will and will not support in relation to families and the care and development of children**

Examples ?

Operational policy

- **Frames how the government operates**
- **Defines the judicial and legal systems**
- **Guides how monies are allocated and disbursed**

Examples ?

Sectoral (issue specific) policy

- **Determines the services to be provided by a sector**

Examples ?

Implementation policy

- **Is more specific than sectoral policies**
- **Clarifies the role of central government in relation to local units**
- **Defines standards and procedures**
- **Specifies how intersectoral collaboration is structured (if it exists)**

Examples ?

Ways of articulating policy:

- **Policy can be explicit and codified**
 - **Policy can be implicit and vague**
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Codified

- **Exists within a constitution**
 - **Exists within laws**
 - **Is a set of directives, a plan or a set of decisions**
 - **Can include general principles, goals and courses of action, but also the guidelines, plans of action and procedures necessary to achieve those goals**
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Implicit Policy

- **A speech of a major government official**
Example?
 - **Actions and programs that exist that are not defined within current policy**
Example?
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Challenges:

- **Policies can be inappropriate**
 - **Policies can be restrictive rather than facilitative**
 - **Policies can be contradictory**
 - **Policies can have unintended consequences**
 - **Policies may not be implemented**
 - **Having no policy may be better than having a bad policy**
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Assessing Policy

Criteria for assessing policy in relation to:

- **The rights of the child**
 - **The Family environment**
 - **Early childhood services**
 - **Infrastructural support**
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How should policy be judged?

A good policy is one that:

- **Seeks to ensure that all children, without distinction of gender, race, language, religion or of any other kind, have the opportunity to develop to their full potential**
 - **Enables families (who have the primary responsibility for their children) and communities to fulfill their responsibilities of childrearing and protection**
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Specifically:

Are policies 'rights based'?

Do they support young children and their families, promote non-discrimination, child participation and the best interests of the child?

In relation to the child...

Do policies:

- **Reflect a holistic and integrated approach?**
 - **Begin with attention prenatally?**
 - **Address varying age and levels of development?**
 - **Recognise the importance of the child's environment?**
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In relation to programming...

Do policies enable Early Childhood programming that:

- **Seeks integration?**
 - **Fosters participation by primary beneficiaries?**
 - **Builds child-focussed partnerships?**
 - **Builds on strengths and local childrearing practices?**
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In relation to programming... (cont.)

- **Takes an intergenerational view?**
 - **Is open to diversity and to complementary approaches?**
 - **Seeks quality?**
 - **Aims at universal attention**
 - **Gives priority to those most at risk?**
 - **Seeks cost effectiveness?**
 - **Incorporates monitoring and evaluation?**
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In relation to services...

Do policies:

- **Support affordable quality services?**
- **Provide standards for registration, supervision, inspection?**

Do they promote:

- **Relevant and accessible curriculum guidelines and resources?**
 - **Minimum qualification standards?**
 - **Flexible, affordable choices?**
 - **Government support for community and NGO initiatives?**
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In relation to infrastructure...

Is the policy effective in terms of:

- **Making resources available for young children?**
 - **Organizational structure – governmental and non-governmental?**
 - **Expected outcomes?**
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Key Question!

**Do countries need a separate
Early Childhood policy, or are
they better served with and
Early Childhood Framework?**

Early Childhood policy

- **A National Early Childhood Policy is a high-level plan that is officially adopted. It guides current and future planning decisions, policy implementation, policy advocacy and evaluation. A policy identifies and guides general programme development areas, and it provides a framework for programme coordination strategy, structure, financing and procedures. An Early Childhood Policy should include all sectoral (MoE, MoH, MoSW, and others) and cross-sectoral activities and age spans.**
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Cautions

An ECD policy can become a 'White Elephant'

Questions to be asked:

- **Who is responsible for coordination?**
- **Do all Sectors accept that institution/ position?**
- **How will it be funded?**

It can be powerless!

Early Childhood Policy Framework

Useful for:

- **Making sectors responsible for national goals related to young children and their families**
 - **Nations that have a full array of well-developed cross-sectoral and sectoral policies dealing with issues affecting young children and their families**
 - **Nations that want to embrace existing policies and fill in notable gaps in policies**
 - **Nations that want to set priorities among policy areas, and establish key strategies and standards under an umbrella framework**
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Cautions

An Early Childhood Framework can be too broad

Questions:

- **Who is monitoring the framework?**
- **Who is responsible within each sector to answer to EC goals?**
- **Within the sector how are funds allocated?**

Young Children can get lost!

In your country

What is better.....

An Early Childhood Policy

or

**An Early Childhood Policy
Framework?**

In summary

To work, a child-care policy must be contextual; that is, it must grow out of the specific historical and social circumstances of the society in which the policy is to be implemented.

Lamb et al. (1992)
