The Quest for Access, Quality and Equity in Early Childhood Education (ECE)

The Role of a Conceptual Framework

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I. Introduction

II. Why quality in the provision of Early Childhood Education (ECE) matters?

III. Challenges for CEECIS: equitable access to quality ECE services

IV. A framework for monitoring and improving the quality of ECE services: recommendations for implementation
Methodology

- Based on a UNICEF study
- **The audience**: policy makers and key ECE country partners
- **The methodology**: field data collection and review of selected studies in CEECIS and global policy papers
Objectives of the quality GPE/UNICEF agenda in the region

Help countries to:

- Build a participatory process and community of practice on how to improve the quality of equitable ECE services
- Develop a conceptual framework of factors impacting ECE quality and equity
- Show impact in terms of access to and learning readiness
  - Develop a validated Action Plan for a quality framework implementation
What is Early Childhood Development?

- A multidimensional process
- Containing 4 basic interconnected areas of child development (birth to 6-8 years old)

**Definition:** United Nations Convention on the Rights of children 2006
Children learning (school) readiness depends on:

- Cognitive skills
- Language
- Executive function
  - Physical and motor
  - And social and emotional development
Barriers to education achievements emerge before schooling

Vocabulary scores of Ecuadorian Children aged 36 to 72 months by wealth quartiles

Parxson, K.&Schady N., 2005
Lack of learning readiness may result in:

- Poor learning outcomes
- Class repetition
- Early drop out in the schooling

- Serious implications for human, social, and economic development
- Inefficient education system
Quality ECE promotes learning readiness

Research looks at:

- School readiness
- Learning readiness

Findings

- “In Argentina, one year of preschool was estimated to increase the average third grade test grade in mathematics and Spanish by eight percent.”
- “Bangladeshi children who received center-based preschool education outperformed their peers in the control group by 58% on a standardized test of school readiness”. Aboud, F.E. (2006)
The positive impacts of quality ECE services, especially for the poorest

- Educational
- Health
- Economic
- Social
- Poverty reduction

In low, middle and high income countries

Therefore:

- Only ECE services of good quality benefit child development, especially children most in need.
- Poor quality ECE services may have no effect or even negative effect.

The provision of quality ECE services is often unequal for the poorest children

- wide disparities within countries
- poor data availability on disadvantaged children
- ECE staff shortage especially in rural areas
- low percentage of trained ECE staff
- discrepancies between private and public institutions
- lack of common agreement on ECE quality indicators limiting effective M&E

III. Challenges for CEECIS

Equitable access to quality ECE services, in an environment of economic stress
(1) Increased disparities under economic stress

Two poles of countries:

- Countries having achieved access, and reduced poverty but with internal disparities and inequalities to access to services
- Countries lagging behind in the region, at all levels: access, quality and equity
(2) Scale of innovation and quality in an equitable way

During transition, remarkable innovations and programs were introduced in the region (ISSA 2009)

New challenges:
Scale of innovation and quality of ECE in an equitable way
(Bernard van Leer Foundation 2011. Early Learning: lessons from scaling up)
A country showcase: Moldova in the forefront of ECE reforms for quality for all

- **Efforts:** to expand early childhood development coverage, address equity issues and enhance and scale the quality of pre-school services (3 time recipient of GPE grants)

- **How?** by promoting national policies/legislation, a system wide professional development program (mentoring), modern teaching and learning materials, monitoring child development outcomes.

- **Expected outcomes:** Scale quality of ECE services, including curriculum implementation and teaching learning process, child development outcomes
Why a quality framework for ECE services?

- Guide policy makers in their effort to improve ECE services by referring to a general framework and to selected priority factors
- Think beyond regulations and minimum standards
- Help countries implement basic monitoring of quality improvement processes
Obstacles policy makers face:

- The concept of quality ECE services is not clarified and contextualized;
- Poor and restrictive regulations for the private sector;
- Measurement and assessment tools are lacking;
- Limited country capacity to support quality improvements and if so then it is unequal;
- Quality ECE is seen as a luxury, given its perceived cost.
How to define the quality of ECE services (1)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The market/regulation approach</th>
<th>The cultural/anthropological approach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Licenses and regulations:</strong></td>
<td>• Quality is seen as a constructed, subjective concept, related to values, beliefs, and interests.</td>
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<td>▪ Provide a necessary minimum of quality in terms of protection from harm;</td>
<td>• Focus on contextualization and the role of specific actors, (Reggio Emilia participatory process).</td>
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<td>▪ Does not assure overall service quality</td>
<td>(Dahlberg, Moss &amp; Pence, 1999)</td>
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How to define the quality of ECE services? (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Licenses and Regulations</th>
<th>Define priority quality factors in country (consultation process)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the CEECIS:</td>
<td>Questions to ask:</td>
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<tr>
<td>(i) Revising the regulations</td>
<td>➢ What is our perception of child rearing?</td>
</tr>
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<td>(ii) Open the system of licensing</td>
<td>➢ What does quality care and education look like?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➢ How good are the ECE services in our country?</td>
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What international organizations are doing:

- European Union: focus on access quality and fairness (Eurydice/EACEA 2009)
- OECD promotes policies for quality ECE
- The UNICEF/Innocenti Research Center: “child well being” and benchmarks of the quality of ECE services
- The World Bank SABER program (2012)

What’s missing: the teaching learning process
The OECD Quality Policy Toolbox

- The OECD Quality Policy Toolbox presents “practical solutions” in encouraging quality in ECE.
- The toolbox presents five policy levers that are likely to enhance quality and supporting materials.

(Starting Strong III, Policy Toolbox to Encourage Quality in ECE, OECD, 2012)
The five policy levers (OECD):

- Policy Lever 1: Setting out quality goals and regulations
- Policy Lever 2: Designing and implementing curriculum and standards
- Policy Lever 3: Improving workforce conditions, qualifications and training
- Policy Lever 4: Engaging families and communities
- Policy Lever 5: Advancing data collection, research and monitoring
The Quality Framework

Quality of Governance

Quality of Inputs

The ECE center
Quality of the Education Process

Quality of Outcomes

Quality of parental Involvement and Accountability
A QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

**Governance**
(Central governance, local authorities, communities, NGOs, private providers)
Policies, financing, functioning, monitoring and quality assurance

**INPUT**
- Physical environment
- Pedagogic material
- Curriculum
- Student/educator ratio
- Educators

**THE PEDAGOGICAL PROCESS**

**The Early Childhood Education Center**

**Pedagogy**
(Teaching-learning process, Interactions)

**THE BENEFICIARIES**

Parents/Community and children
Outreach involvement, accountability

**OUTCOMES**

Child development outcomes & Other outcomes
(Economic, social, health, women labor and poverty reduction)

**THE CONTEXT**

External factors affecting ECE quality
(general governance, economic, social, political, cultural and home factors)
Principles for quality framework development

- **Teaching-learning process** is in the heart of the ECE quality framework
- The quality of *ECE governance* matters since it affects the poorest
- **Parent and community involvement** is crucial for quality improvement (accountability)
INPUTS:

- **The physical environment** inside and outside the ECD facility: location, accessibility, safety, flexibility, scale and visibility

- **The child-educator ratio** intervening factors: the age of the children; the mixed-age groups and the cultural context and behavioral expectations.
PROCESS:

- The *teaching learning process* (pedagogical process): 3 domains of educator-children and peer interactions

![Conceptual framework diagram]

- Emotional support
- Instructional support
- Classroom organization
PROCESS (2):

The quality of interactions between the teacher and child is the single most important determinant of program success.
Developmentally Appropriate Practices vs. Academic Approaches?

- **Current debate**: how to balance *developmentally appropriate practices* (DAP, also referred to as ‘social-emotional orientation’) and *didactic* (with direct instruction) or *academic approaches* (with a strong focus on basic language and cognitive skills related to initial reading, writing and math, but not necessarily direct instruction).

Source: EACEA/ Eurydice, 2009
Toward a synthesis

- DAP may be the best option for the youngest children, while older preschoolers should gradually be prepared for learning tasks, to facilitate transition to first grade.

- In the year before grade 1: “An academic orientation on basic skills such as phonological awareness and letter knowledge, can be set in a curriculum of playful, authentic activities, including shared dialogical reading and talking with the teacher, that foster deep vocabulary, discourse comprehension and world knowledge”.

- Source: EACEA – Eurydice 2009
Essential to all approaches:

- A positive socio-emotional climate: emotionally safe and stable relationships, with sensitive-responsive, teachers.

- Practice aimed at emerging learning (school) skills through authentic activities in which teachers participate

(EACEA/ Eurydice 2009)
INPUT: teacher and staff quality

Quality of educators refers to professional skills, education, pay, working conditions and incentives. The term “educators” embraces the lead educator and ‘supporting staff” in direct interaction with children.

Key factors affecting teacher quality (EU, 2009):
- Training
- Pay
- Working conditions
Teacher and staff quality: evidence

- Strong correlation between teachers and staff qualifications and child development outcomes (Montie, Xiang, Schweinhart 2006)

- Teacher knowledge of curricula and of child development principles linked with strong child outcomes (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2003)

- Low correlation between centers using para-professional staff and promising child development outcomes. (Madrasa Preschools in East Africa - Mwaura and Mohamed, 2008)
The quality of governance

### Refers to:
- Central government
- Local authorities
- Communities
- NGOs
- Private providers

### In terms of:
- Policies
- Financing
- Functioning
- Monitoring and quality assurance
Parental and community involvement

Why involve parents and community?

- To give educators a better understanding of children and their family life
- To improve parenting attitudes and behaviors
- To provide parents/staff with information and referrals
Measuring and monitoring the various factors of ECE services
Instruments to measure the teaching-learning process

- The selection/development of the measure should be connected with a clear purpose developed by countries.
- Measures should be easy to understand for teachers and other ECE actors.
- The measures can be administered by educators themselves and local authorities’ monitors, advisors, inspectors, or other external observer.
- The results of measurement are usually used for monitoring purposes, for improvement of the pedagogical process, for training purposes, for accreditations and for evidence based policy development.
Examples of instruments/measures looking at the teaching-learning process
The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

- Areas of Assessment: Emotional Support, Instructional Support, Classroom Organization

Each of the domains predicts child behavioral and academic outcomes in the early years.

(Pianta et al., 2008)
The Early Childhood Classroom Observation Measure (ECCOM)

Areas of Assessment: the quality of academic instruction as well as at the social climate, at the resources, and other aspects of effective classrooms. The ECCOM independently assesses the degree to which constructivist (child-centered) and didactic (teacher-centered) instructional approaches are observed.

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The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Extension (ECERS-E)

Area of Assessment: **Academics (Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Diversity), Parent Involvement**. It supplements the ECERS-R. Four new sub-scales have been devised for the ECERS-E: Literacy, Mathematics, Science, and Diversity

Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart (2003)

Trentham Books Limited: **tb@trentham-books.co.uk**
The Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO)

Areas of Assessment: **Pedagogic Practices for Early Language and Literacy Development.** Purpose


[www.brookespublishing.com](http://www.brookespublishing.com)
The Early Literacy Observation Tool (E-LOT)

Areas of Assessment: Instructional Practices, Student Activities, and Environmental Settings for Reading and Literacy Processes. (Grehan et al., 2006, p. 27)
The Observation Measures of Language and Literacy (OMLIT)

Areas of Assessment: Language And Literacy. (1) Classroom Description, (2) Snapshot of Classroom Activities (SNAPSHOT); (3) Read-Aloud Profile (RAP), (4) Classroom Literacy Instruction Profile (CLIP), (5) Quality Rating of Language and Literacy Instruction (QUILL), (6) Classroom Literacy Opportunities Checklist (CLOC).

Areas of Assessment: **Materials, Instruction For Math And Science. Purpose:** It assesses differences in classroom supports for mathematics and science. It measures the presence of classroom materials and teaching strategies that support early mathematical and science concept development (e.g., reasoning that supports classification, seriation, identifying patterns, measurement, data collection and representation).

The Ready School Assessment (RSA)

Areas of Assessment: **School Readiness, Pedagogical Process, Curricula, Management, Families community Involvement**


- [www.highscope.org](http://www.highscope.org); [www.readyschoolassessment.net](http://www.readyschoolassessment.net)
Monitoring Child Development Outcomes

- It is key to demonstrate that investment in ECE services improves the child development outcomes, including learning readiness outcomes for all children (GPE strategic objectives)

Measuring the accessibility- equity and inclusion (governance factor)

- **Accessibility** refers to the extent to which children of 3 to 5 years old have access to ECE services, without geographical, cost or cultural constraints.

- Monitoring the accessibility to ECE services helps policy makers ECE advocacy groups and parents to:
  (a) track progress in enrollments and (b) to select the right policies for equity and inclusion.

**Tools to monitor:** National statistics and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Household Budget Surveys.
Recommendations for the implementation of a Quality Framework

**SIX STEPS:**

**STEP 1:** Basic analytical work on ECE services such as: policy analysis, outcomes assessment, cost-effectiveness and sustainability analysis, etc.

**STEP 2:** Participatory consultations with all ECE actors, within the country, including parents, for defining the expected quality of services and a quality framework
Recommendations (continued)

- **STEP 3**: Contextualize the quality framework by prioritizing the quality factors and defining targets and standards for a given country.
- **STEP 4**: Revise regulations and licensing.
- **STEP 5**: Select cost-effective instruments for measuring the priority factors in order to achieve the quality targets for ECE services.
- **STEP 6**: Awareness and selection of simple tools to monitor equity.
The journey............... 

Less of that.....

More of this!!!!!
References

- Young M. Ed. 2007. *From Measurement to Action*, The World Bank
- Naudeau and al., 2011. *Investing in Young Children*, Human Development The World Bank
- Starting strong III, *Policy Toolbox to Encourage Quality in ECE*, OECD, 2012