

2007 EFA Global Monitoring Report on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) - Online Consultation

Resume from Week 2 (December 5-13, 2005)

Last week I concluded the resume of the first week of the online consultation by saying that we were looking forward to wide participation and exciting discussions on the draft outline for the 2007 EFA Global Monitoring Report on ECCE. Indeed our expectations were met this week, the second week of consultation! We now have registered participants from most regions of the world, and the GMR team has been closely following the consultation. Discussions this week have developed in complexity and in the sharing of experiences, a very good combination. The team is also very happy to see that participants are now sending contributions both in French and in Spanish. This opens up for *linguistic* as well as cultural diversity.

Because discussions this past week reflect the diversity of ECCE, it has not been easy to categorize and summarize the many valid points made. The following is an attempt to draw discussions into a coherent framework:

On the whole comments centered around the following themes:

- The Context of ECCE and child well-being
- Patterns of organization of ECCE
- Universalization of ECCE
- Conditions of service and pay for ECCE workers

When synthesizing the discussions I hope I will not be offending anyone when I use your first names!

The Context of ECCE and child well-being

Several participants have emphasized the value of putting the needs of the child at the very center of ECCE. These needs include nutrition and health, early stimulation, interaction with the environment amongst other things. Patrice from UNICEF is glad to see that child nutritional and health outcomes are included in the outline, but she suggests that indicators such as *immunization rates* and *child mortality* data be included in the analysis.

Collette (OMEP¹, France) would like to see a stronger focus on *expression* of and by the child. She notes the various registers of *expression*: verbal, vocal, through gesture or movement, or graphic, plastic or pictorial expression. Expression is inextricably linked to us as social beings. It is important to facilitate communication of expression by putting the child into a context that will promote creation, interest and emotion, which can result in *expression*. Collette speaks as well of the importance of graphic expression through drawing. She believes (pre-school) teachers should be better trained in didactics of graphic expression. In Norway one of our most well known educationalists, *Helga Eng*, was a pioneer in educational research. Her book *Margarethe's Drawings from the 9th to the 24th Year*, came out in 1926. It is known internationally and is still in use!

Fernanda (University of Rio de Janeiro State, Brazil) notes that her country is in a transition period from teacher directed to child-centered approaches. The role of the teacher is more to discuss, share ideas and allow children to come to a consensus agreement which allows for learning at the child's own pace.

Patterns of organization of ECCE

Quite a few of the participants discussed various elements of the organization of ECCE such as:

- challenges related to decentralization of administration
- challenges of fragmentation of responsibility for ECCE
- organization of ECCE programs in various countries
- language of communication and instruction.

From Brazil Fernanda tells us that the decentralization process in education has been in effect since 1988. Central government provides policy, while state and local bodies are implementing authorities. One advantage of decentralization is that municipal government has more contact with local people and their needs. At the same time this creates great expectations among local populations. They are not always in proportion to the budget funds accessible. This in turn creates frustration both amongst clients and service providers.

Diane (SIL International, Papua New Guinea, PNG) describes a similar situation. PNG has over 800 languages, and 85% of the people live in

¹ Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Préscolaire
World Organization for Early Childhood Education
Organización Mundial para la Educación Preescolar

rural areas. One of the main challenges of the decentralized system is that budgetary resources on the district and local levels are not at all in proportion to the country's national strategy for early childhood policy in PNG.

Does this sound familiar to more of you?

The GMR team is interested in hearing more about the language issues initiated by Diane.

Upendranadh (Aide et Action, India) highlights the problems that may arise when ECCE activities are managed by various governmental departments. The largest programs under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) in India are supervised by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. What role then does the Ministry of Education play in assuring that children receive minimum standard education –related services? He raises an important question: Is there a way of addressing mechanisms for coordination amongst ministries and departments? **Who can give him some feedback on this?**

Renu (University of New Delhi, India) points to the fact that ICDS reach out to 12 million children under the age of 6 and to 3 million pregnant and lactating mothers. ICDS programs target children in vulnerable sections of the population, *and yet* they do not target *children with disabilities*. "This is a group that remains excluded from policy plans..." she comments.

Ashok (Mahavir Yubak Sandh, India) works in poor districts in Orissa State. He writes that after 20 years of community service and with more than 120 welfare programs for the poor, the number of persons living under the poverty line has not decreased significantly. Providing infrastructure and teachers is not enough. "We must ensure to involve the Parent-Teacher/Mother –Teacher Associations more to give the movement success", he says.

Guadalupe (Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico) has given us a very concise picture of the 2-track system of "Pre-Kinder" and "Kinder" educational programs for 0-6 year olds. Each program type has a distinct variety of provision, supervision, early childhood focus etc. It is interesting to note from Guadalupe that in Mexico pre-school ("Kinder education of 3-6 year olds) has now become compulsory. She has also given a useful presentation of how pre-school educators are trained in Mexico. Margarita (Independent Organization, Mexico) tells of her experiences with the Huichole people of the Sierra Madre and her experience in the rural region of Sinaloa.

Universalization of ECCE

Renu (India) refers to India's legislation of 2001 making education a fundamental right for children from 6-14. What about children between 0 and 6 years of age? She wants governments committed to EFA to wake up to the realization that 3-6 year olds must be given stimulation during these critical years. Upendranadh (India) regrets the fact that EFA and MDG goals do not include the very young child. He asks if this is not as attractive a theme to politicians, planners and donor as *microfinance!*

Lynn (AdoptALibrary, USA) strongly supports Upendranadh's point of last week that childhood care can be developed as an enterprise in urban and semi-urban areas. Lynn sees this as an incentive for governments to put resources into ECCE.

Conditions of service and pay for ECCE workers

Guadelupe (Mexico) points to the fact that elementary school teachers get fringe benefits for working in parts of the country where access is difficult. Why don't pre-school teachers or other ECCE staff get the same? Upendranadh (India) is of the same opinion. Salaries, benefits and working conditions have been an issue of contention in the ICDS of India. Most of the underpaid workers are women, and Upendranadh believes that much of the neglect here is due to gender bias, but also to low political priority given to this sub sector.

Fernanda (Brazil) speaks of the "FUNDEB" (Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education) which has now been extended to include benefits to Early Childhood Education. Some of the resources in this fund are to go to the training of pre-school teachers.

Some Areas for Further Discussion during Week 3

Seen from the perspective of the GMR team response has been satisfactory to the questions we posed for the 2nd week of discussions. Still, we would appreciate some additional feedback on:

- Specific comments to the draft outline
- Is civil society consulted on and involved in the formulation of ECCE policies in your country?
- Can you tell us about the historical roots of ECCE in your country? To what extent do ECCE settings support traditional childrearing practices in your countries? To what extent do they value diverse linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds of children and families?

- Please tell us about your country's national policy for ECCE. What does it address? To what extent is it implemented in the field? What are the main implementation challenges?
- Are there certain requirements of children to enter primary school in your country? How is "school readiness" defined and addressed? What are some promising strategies to facilitate children's transition from either home or ECCE to primary school?
- Can you help us understand what is going on within ECCE programs? What are the dominant pedagogical approaches used? To what extent are these approaches covered in staff training?

Welcome to the third week of the consultation!

Betsy Heen
Moderator
Paris, December 13, 2005