Ministry of Education

POLICY IN

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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1. POLICY OBJECTIVE

1.1   The purpose of this policy is to provide clear direction to all organizations and parties providing Early Childhood services in Fiji ,to ensure that all services offer quality programs.

2. POLICY

2.1   All Early Childhood Programs will be referred to in this policy as "EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE, DEVELOPMENT and EDUCATION" [ECCDE]

2.2   Early Childhood Care, Development and Education Programs in Fiji must provide developmentally and culturally appropriate, quality care and education to all children from 0 – 8 years of age.

2.3   Early Childhood teachers should work with families communities and other organizations to promote the health and well – being of the children.

2.4   Early Childhood Care, Development and Education programs. should be conducted in the vernacular where ever possible.

2.5   Early Childhood Care, Development and Education (ECCDE] programs include half day sessions, either morning or afternoon , full day care and programs in the early years of school.

2.6   The Ministry of Education will advise and support communities in the establishment of any Early Childhood programs.

2.7   All Early Childhood Centres must operate only once approval of recognition is given by the MINISTRY OF EDUCATION.

2.8   Prior to approval, the Ministry of Education will assess the facilities, resources, teaching programs, teacher qualifications and the constitution of the Management committees to ensure that these   requirements are met.

2 9   Compliance with OHS Regulations must be considered by the Management as they are part of the requirements for approval for recognition.

2.10   The early childhood care, development and education programs must be based on the philosophy and principles that underpin the Early Childhood Curriculum Guidelines for the Fiji Islands.

2.11   Management Committees or owners are responsible for the establishment and operation of Early Childhood Care, Development and Education programs. These include the provision of safe buildings, employment of qualified teachers, provision of appropriate resources and maintenance of all facilities and equipment.

2.12   The Early Childhood Care, Development and Education teacher[s] employed by Management Committees must be qualified early childhood teachers.

2.13 Remuneration for teachers should be commensurate with their qualifications and experiences; Degree, Diploma, Advanced Certificate, Certificate and basic training from Ministry of Education.

2.14 Terms of employment and conditions of service must be drawn up, agreed to and signed by the committee and the teacher (s.)

2.15 The following teacher child ratio for all ECCDE programmes should be strictly adhered to:

0 - 1 year is 1teacher to every 3 children
1 - 2 year is 1 teacher to every 5 children
2 - 3 year is 1 teacher to every 6children
3 - 5 years is 1 teacher to every 15 children
5 - 6 years is 1 teacher to every 20 children
6 - 8 years is 1 teacher to every 30 children

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

Early Childhood Care, Development and Education experiences aim to promote the total learning and development of the child, namely, social, emotional, physical, spiritual, language and cognitive skills. Such a holistic approach will ensure the child's optimum learning development. At the same time, ECCDE experiences will equip young children with the necessary knowledge and skills for later schooling and life long learning.

3.2 Rationale

It is in the first years of life that the fundamental organization and functional capabilities of the brain are established as young children interact with and make sense of their world. Research indicates that, of all educational investments, ECCDE achieves the highest rate of social return both in developing and industrialized countries. ECCDE offers children a "head start" in their primary schooling and positively influences their later performance in school. Children who have been exposed to a quality ECCDE programme are more successful in their schooling than those who have not [UNESCO 1995]. ECCDE is one way of providing opportunities for the less privileged child, thus helping to eliminate the inequalities in educational opportunities that are inherent in Fiji today, particularly among the rural/low income families.

3.3 Definitions:

3.3.1 **Early Childhood Care, Development** and **Education** is an overarching term for any kind of service that promotes health, growth, care, development and learning for children from 0-8 years.

3.3.2 **Early Childhood Development:**

This is an informal program, catering for children 0-3 years. Support is given to parents and families to enhance their child rearing practices, parenting skills and further understanding of child development.

3.3.3   **Playgroup:**

This is an informal program, involving parents, families and qualified care givers for children, 0-6years.

3.3.4   **Pre-school:**

This is a ½ day program for children 3-6 years under qualified ECCDE teacher(s).

3.3.5   Preparatory **Kindergarten**:

This is a ½ day program for children 5-6 years under qualified ECCDE teacher(s).

3.3.6   Day/ Childcare Centres:

This is a full day program offered to children 0 - 6 years under qualified ECCDE teacher(s), Health workers and Care givers.

3.3.7   **Montessori program:**

This is ½ day program for children from 2-6 years based on the Montessori concept of learning under qualified Montessori teacher(s).

3.3.8   **Early Primary:**

The first 2 years of primary school - classes 1 & 2 .

4. RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND OTHER LINKS

4.1. Relevant Policies
Establishment of Educational Institutions
Staffing
Excursions

4.2. Relevant Legislation or Authority
Education for All (EFA 2000)
Education Commission Report (2000)
Education Act 1978
Public Service Act, 1999 Part 2; Section 6 (1) – (14)
Public Service Code of Conduct
Social Justice Act 2001
Compulsory Education Act 2000
General Orders

5. PROCEDURES

5.1 **Enrolment**

5.1.1 Children must be already three years of age before enrolling in a pre – school programme.

5.1.2 Children must be already five years of age before enrolling to in preparatory kindergarten.

5.1.3 Children from 0 – 6 years may enrol into Playgroups or Full day/child care centre programmes.

5.2 **Staff**

5.2.1 Early Childhood Care, Development and Education Management Committees will ensure that staff currently teaching in ECCDE programmes meet the standards and procedures set out in the *Staffing Policy.*

5.2.2 Early Childhood Care, Development and Education Management Committees will follow the Procedures in the *Staffing Policy* when employing ECCDE staff.

5.3 **Physical Environment**

5.3.1 All parties wanting to establish Early Childhood Care, Development and Education centres will do so through a formal application process as set out in the *Establishment of Educational Institutions Policy.* The Ministry of   Education [hence forth called 'the Ministry'] will oversee this process.

5.3.2 Early Childhood Care, Development and Education Management Committees must ensure that buildings, grounds and equipment, [indoor and outdoor], are safe and developmentally appropriate for children.

5.4 **Programs**

5.4.1 Qualified Early Childhood Care, Development and Education teachers must deliver quality programs that are developmentally and culturally appropriate.

5.5 **Funding**

5.5.1 Early Childhood Care, Development and Education Management Committees are responsible for funding all operations including staff salaries and maintenance of ECCDE centres.

5.5.2 Recognised Early Childhood Care, Development and Education in rural and disadvantaged communities will continue to receive salary grants from Ministry of Education under the following categories :

- ❖ Cat 1 - $3,500 annual salary grant
- ❖ Cat 2 - $1,800 annual salary grant
- ❖ Cat 3 - $900 annual salary grant.

The above is subject to review.

5.5.3 Early Childhood Care, Development and Education Management Committees will need to apply to the Principal Education Officer [Development Section], through the respective Senior Education Officer in their district, for Building Grants.

5.6 **Monitoring and Evaluation**
   5.6.1 The monitoring and evaluation of Early Childhood Care, Development and Education services will be the direct responsibility of the Director/ Primary or his/her representative .

5.6.2 For closure of any Early Childhood Care, Development and Education centre – refer to *"Establishment of Educational Institutions Policy."*

6. GUIDELINES

6.1. **Staff**
   Kindergarten Management and teachers should work collaboratively to ensure the focus of all decisions is based on what is best for the child.

6.2. **Physical Environment**
   6.2.1. Kindergartens should be welcoming for students, parents, visitors and communities.
   6.2.2. The environment should be safe including the grounds and buildings.
   6.2.3. The environment should be print rich, stimulating and spacious.
   6.2.4. The physical environment should be colourful, and attractive that is conducive to learning.
   6.2.5. The environment should be well planned so its accident free.

6.3. **Programmes**
   6.3.1. The most powerful way young children learn is through "PLAY".
   6.3.2. Play provides an ideal opportunity for children to demonstrate and to test their knowledge, skills and understanding.
   6.3.3. Play promotes the development of physical, emotional, social intellectual and language skills.
   6.3.4. Play provides opportunities for talking, listening and concentrating.
   6.3.5. Play provides the foundation for later learning skills.
   6.3.6. Play provides opportunities for sharing, waiting his/her turn and taking pleasure in the company of the other children and adults.

7. EFFECTIVE DATE
1 January 2007

8. REVIEW DATE
1 January 2008

9. KEY SEARCH WORDS

Early Childhood Care Development and Education, Play Group, Pre School, Preparatory Kindergarten.

10. APPROVED BY CEO

SIGNATURE

DATE