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Country profile prepared for the
Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007
Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education

Singapore

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

Compiled by:
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SINGAPORE

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) programs

A. GENERAL INFORMATION, STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

Starting age of compulsory education (if applicable):

The compulsory education age range is 6-15 years.

1. ISCED 0 PROGRAMS (USUALLY, PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION)

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programs:

Kindergarten, part of Early Childhood Care and Education

(Note: In Singapore, there are mainly two sectors of Early Childhood Care and Education for young children, i.e. the childcare sector and the kindergarten sector. Child care centres provide care and education for children aged 2 years to 6 years which are licensed by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports—MCYS. Kindergartens provide pre-school education for children aged 4 to 6 and are private education institutions that have to be registered with the Ministry of Education—MOE).

1.2. Normative age group(s) covered by ISCED 0 programs:

4-6 years of age

(Childcare centres take in children aged 2 to 6. Kindergartens admit children aged 4 to 6.)

1.3. ISCED 0 programs: statistics and indicators

1.3.1. Enrolment: See below

	Percentage	Year
Gross enrolment ratio		
Net enrolment ratio		
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience		

1.3.2. Enrolment ratio by age group (percentage, also including the first years of primary education when applicable): See below

Less than 3 years of age	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7

1.3.3. Teachers: See below

Total number of teachers	Of whom female (%)	Percentage of trained teachers (all)	Percentage of trained teachers (males)	Percentage of trained teachers (females)

Enrolment:

	Less than 3 years of age	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7
Childcare centres	10,499	10,956	10,394	10,594	5,542	1,317
Kindergartens	-	-	92,379			-
Other preschool institutions *	Data not available					
Live-births of the year	Not available	40,760	41,451	46,997	43,336	43,664

Source: Ministry of Education, February 2006 (data refer to 2004/05).

(*) Some children may be home schooled. Others receive PSE offered by the international schools, special schools, playgroups and enrichment centres in Singapore. Some children may receive PSE in kindergartens overseas where their parents were working overseas.

Teachers:

Total number of teachers	Of whom female (%)	Percentage of trained teachers (all)	Percentage of trained teachers (males)	Percentage of trained teachers (females)
5,213 (in childcare centres)	99.7	80.0		79.7
3,775 (in kindergartens)	99.6	77.1		76.8

Source: Ministry of Education, February 2006 (data refer to 2004/05).

1.3.4. Funding: Not available

	Percentage
Public current expenditure per pupil as percentage of the Gross National Product per capita	...

1.3.5. Main source(s) of financing: Not available

2. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMS

(Generally preceding ISCED 0 programs)

2.1. National definition of other ECCE programs:

Other ECCE programmes include playgroups and Enrichment Centres, e.g. speech/drama, physical development, music, etc.

2.2. Normative age group(s) covered by other ECCE programs:

2–6 years

2.3. Estimate number of children covered by other ECCE programs:

Not available

B. BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING ECCE PROGRAMS (INCLUDING ISCED 0)

3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:

The Child Care Centres Act and Child Care Centre Regulations of 1988 were established to control, license and regulate childcare centres for children from ages 18 months to 7 years. Kindergartens are regulated under the Education Act and are for children from ages of 4 years to 6 years.

3.2. Official body/bodies in charge of supervision or coordination:

In Singapore, childcare centres and kindergartens come under the auspices of the Ministry of Community and Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) and the Ministry of Education (MOE), respectively. Childcare centres are licensed by the MCYS while kindergartens are registered with the MOE.

3.3. Other entities involved in the provision (e.g. municipalities, local governments) and main types of providers (e.g. public, private, mixed, community-based, etc.):

Kindergartens are under the supervision of MOE. A structured three-year programme for nursery, kindergarten 1 and kindergarten 2 is provided for children aged 4-6 years. Kindergartens are run by the private sector, including community foundations, religious bodies, social organisations and business organisations. There are also foreign system kindergartens that offer pre-school programmes for children of expatriate parents. Except for foreign system kindergartens, all MOE-registered kindergartens carry out their programmes in English and a second language.

A kindergarten can be considered for registration by MOE if it fulfils the following requirements: (i) a programme that is assessed to be appropriate by MOE; (ii) teachers possessing the minimum acceptable academic and pre-school teaching professional qualifications; (iii) suitable premises approved for use as kindergartens and meeting all safety requirements stipulated by the relevant authorities on buildings and (iv) a properly constituted committee of management to administer and manage the kindergarten efficiently.

Childcare centres cater to children from 2 to 6 years and operate from 7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. The childcare programme also includes a preschool programme for 4-5-year-olds. Such classes do not come under the jurisdiction of MOE; they remain within the purview of the MCYS.

Childcare fees are state-subsidized, and poor children are eligible for further financial assistance from NGOs. Kindergarten fees are much lower and are not state-subsidised, although financial assistance is available for poor children.

3.4. Type of personnel involved:

Not available

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):

In-service training for preschool teachers was *ad hoc* and brief when it was first introduced in the early 1970s.

In 2001, a Pre-school Qualification Accreditation Committee (PQAC) was set up jointly by MOE and MCYS to assess and accredit the certificate and diploma courses in pre-school education. The PQAC reviewed all pre-school teachers training courses and set up a three level training framework leading to a Certificate in Preschool Teaching (470 hours), a Diploma in Preschool Education-Teaching (700 hours) and a Diploma in Preschool Education-Leadership (500 hours). The Specialist Diploma in Pre-school Education is established for degree or polytechnic diploma holders from other disciplines. The PQAC meets regularly to consider applications from training agencies seeking accreditation for their courses and approval for their trainers to teach specific modules of the course. To date (2005), 23 such training agencies exist, compared with four in 1994 and eight in 2000. These are mainly for-profit agencies. There are subsidy schemes for training in early childhood education available to pre-school teachers and such funding is employer-based. For example, the government may be able to subsidise up to 90 percent of the course fees, while employers pay the remaining 10 percent.

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:

In the late 1990s, a review of preschool education led to MOE's decision to improve the quality of preschool education. As MCYS was also responsible for preschool education, a high-level inter-ministerial committee was tasked with aligning and improving the quality of preschool education and the training of childcare and kindergarten teachers. The Steering Committee on Preschool Education (SCPE) was led by MOE's Senior Minister of State with a mission to forge a framework for the development of preschool education, define desired outcomes, establish systems and structures for preschool teacher training, design a developmentally appropriate curriculum and regulate the preschool education system.

To raise the quality of pre-school education, MOE and MCYS announced a common teacher training framework in December 2000. The teacher training framework requires all kindergarten principals to obtain a Diploma in Pre-school Education-Leadership by January 2006. In October 2001, MOE further announced that all teachers would be required to have a Certificate in Pre-school Teaching and one in four teachers would be required to obtain the Diploma in Pre-school Education-Teaching by January 2008.

3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:

The MCYS have in place the following programmes for disadvantaged children:

- Integrated Child Care Programme (ICCP) for children with special needs aged 2 to 6 years in child care centres run by Voluntary Welfare Organisations

(VWO). There are currently 17 VWO run child care centres providing this service. The objective of the programme is to provide an appropriate learning environment as well as provide opportunities for the children to learn and interact with other children in a natural setting.

- The Healthy Start Programme (HSP) is for ‘at risk’ families with infants aged 0 to 6 years old. It provides for early detection and intervention in reducing family stresses and potential dysfunction. It works on the principle of nurturing the parent and child, by providing intensive support to these families at the earliest possible point. The HSP is an outreach programme implemented by Family Services Centres, working in collaboration with a number of agencies including maternity hospitals, Community Development Councils (CDCS), Self-Help Groups and Voluntary Welfare Organisations.

3.8. Special projects/programmes aiming at expanding or improving ECCE:

Not available

3.9. Information concerning the curriculum (if applicable) or the contents of ECCE programs

The curriculum implemented in child care centres, facilitate children’s development and learning. The curriculum focuses on the holistic development of children and provides a variety of age appropriate activities and materials.

In the kindergarten sector, MOE developed a curriculum framework which is based on a set of desired outcomes of preschool education. The framework was launched in January 2003. The new curriculum advocates the holistic development of children in the five domains: the moral, cognitive, social-emotional, aesthetic and physical domains, in a supportive environment that encourages discovery through play and interaction. The framework is available to all kindergartens, and they are encouraged to use it as a guide to design their own programmes to meet the needs of children.

3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

At the end of pre-school education, children will:

- know what is right and what is wrong;
- be willing to share and take turns with others;
- be able to relate to others;
- be curious and be able to explore;
- be able to listen and speak with understanding;
- be comfortable and happy with themselves;
- have developed physical co-ordination and healthy habits;
- love their family, friends, teachers and kindergarten.

For additional information, please refer to:

<http://www.moe.gov.sg/preschooleducation/>

3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:

The daily kindergarten programme of each level includes activities that develop language and literacy skills, basic number and simple science concepts, social skills, creative and problem-solving skills, appreciation of music and movement and outdoor play. Children learn in two languages, English as the first language and Chinese, Malay or Tamil as a second language. At the end of pre-school education, children should:

3.9.3. Average number of hours per week and average amount of weeks per year:

Kindergartens function daily, five days a week, with schooling hours ranging from 3 to 4 hours each day. Most kindergartens function at least two sessions a day. The kindergarten year consists of four 10-week terms beginning on 2 January each year. There is a one-week vacation after the first and third term, a 4-week vacation mid-year and 6 weeks at the end of the year.

Child care centres are operational from 7am to 7pm on Mondays to Fridays and from 7am to 2pm on Saturdays. Depending on the types of services enrolled, children can either attend full-day, half-day or flexi-care programmes offered by the centres.

3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information

The number of child care centres increased exponentially from 39 centres (2,310 places) in 1984 to 709 centres (59,029 places) in November 2005. There are 503 kindergartens registered with MOE in December 2005.

[Main source: UNESCO Policy Briefs on Early Childhood. No. 24/June 2004.]

C. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION REGARDING ECCE (TO BE COMPILED IN COLLABORATION WITH UNICEF OFFICES WHERE POSSIBLE)

Information is not available

4.1. Parenting programmes are usually addressed to parents and families of children less than 6 years of age. Please provide information about any parenting programmes in your country according to the table below:

Type of programme	Yes or No (note for each programme)	Please estimate the number of beneficiaries (if possible)
Parenting education through early learning centres and child care centres		
As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits		
Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development		
As component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes		
Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with media for and with children		
Other (please specify)		

Are any of these programmes targeted specifically toward the vulnerable, poor, disadvantaged or excluded? If so, which ones? (Please provide/attach any additional and relevant information if available).

4.2. Is there a national-level system for monitoring children's development or school readiness prior to entering primary school?

4.3. Is there a policy on early childhood (ECCE, ECD, etc.) that has been accepted? If not, is there one under development?

[Information revised by the Ministry of Education, February 2006.]