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# **Journal of Early Childhood Development**

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# **Journal of Early Childhood Development**

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## Preface

ECD Resource Centre established at the Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID), Tribhuvan University with the support from the UNICEF Nepal has been undertaking different activities since its inception in 1997. Its major activities include research, publication, conference, networking, training, development of resource materials, dissemination of knowledge and information, and provision of technical support to individuals and organizations working in the field of early childhood. Publication of the Journal of Early Childhood Development has become one of its regular features.

The publication of the journal is the direct outcome of the World Forum Networking project undertaken jointly by Dr. Kishor Shrestha of this Centre and Dr. Wayne Eastman of College of the North Atlantic, Canada. With the publication of the third volume of the journal Dr. Jacqueline Hayden, Professor of Early Childhood and Social Inclusion of Macquarie University, Australia has joined the team of the editors of the journal.

This volume of the journal consists of seven articles written by academicians, professionals and experts in the area of ECD in Nepal and abroad. The articles cover a wide range of areas—Environmental psychology, challenges for early childhood development in Cambodia, Multiple intelligence and learning style theories, Improving quality of early childhood development programs, Parents'/Guardians' knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) on early childhood development, and Male involvement in early childhood development. We hope the readers will find the articles included in this volume interesting and useful.

On behalf of CERID, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Ms. Lieke van de Wiel and Mr. Purushottam Acharya of UNICEF Nepal for the support received in publishing this journal. I appreciate the collaborative spirit of Dr. Kishor Shrestha, Dr. Wayne Eastman and Dr. Jacqueline Hayden to bring out this volume. I acknowledge the contributions made by all the writers whose articles appear in this volume. My special appreciation goes to Mr. Veda Nath Regmi for his support in editing the language. Appreciative thanks are also due to Mr. Gautam Manandhar for the layout and cover design and Mr. Bhakta Bahadur Shrestha for the printing.

May 2009

Prof. Arbinda Lal Bhomi, PhD.  
Executive Director  
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# **Environmental Psychology: The Relationship between Noise and Developmental Outcomes in Early Learning Settings**

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## **Introduction**

Environmental Psychology deals with the relationship between people and space. More specifically, this science considers such concepts as personal space and the impact of environmental factors on a person's 'sense of self' (Jorde-Bloom, 1989). Noise is an example of how the environment could affect an early learning setting. Environmental factors such as noise can facilitate or hinder early learning educators in carrying out their jobs (Essa, 1996). As Yeates (1994) writes, "You do not want to discourage productive sound, but you want an atmosphere where children can get into an activity requiring quiet concentration (p. 90). Hence, Yeates (1994) further states that "More and more professionals are becoming involved in the design of child care centres, studying ways to reduce impact noise" (p. 90).

Ergonomics is the study of the relationship between a particular job, a particular person, and a particular setting. Ergonomics draws on the knowledge of sciences such as psychology and sociology to enhance the work environment. From an ergonomic perspective, the role of the early learning educator is two-fold: "to monitor children's behavior and to respond to children's behavior by altering the child care environment in a way that benefits children" (Canadian Paediatric Society, 1992, p. 665). Consequently, environmental psychology and child care ergonomics both consider the impact of noise on the health of young children and early learning educators.

Even though noise in early learning centres may not be loud enough to affect hearing, to young children and staff excessive noise can be disturbing, fatiguing and may impact upon the well-being of both

children and early learning educators. Furthermore, constant high levels of noise are known to cause symptoms of ill health and impair a child's ability to think clearly (Canadian Paediatric Society, 1992). A more detailed impact of noise on a child's well-being will be discussed later.

Early learning educators can minimize the adverse affects of excess noise by implementing noise control strategies. The significance of developing noise control techniques was documented in a study of child care workers in the province of Quebec, Canada. Investigators found that noise and aggressive children constituted the two most stressful elements for early childhood educators (Markon, 1994).

### **How Loud**

How loud is too loud? Sound levels are measured in a modified decibel scale (dBA). Exposure to sounds that exceed 85 dBA can be potentially dangerous to a child if the child is exposed to this noise level over a period of time (Bronzoft, 2004). When addressing the question 'how loud is too loud' one must consider the following statement: "The higher the decibel level above what is considered safe and the longer time exposed to the noise (85 dB for 8 hours), the more likely it will harm your child's health" (The Hearing Foundation of Canada, 2009).

Below is a table of typical toys found in an early learning centres and their dB levels. It should be noted that these levels are based on a toy held at a distance of 25 centimeters from the child's ears (The Hearing Foundation of Canada, 2009).

Toys	db Level
Whistle	106
Keyboard	104
Drum	103
CD Player	97-103
Xylophone	92
Rattle	102

Hearing loss is of course just one of the effects of excessive noise. The section to follow will articulate a wider understanding of the

negative impact of lack of noise control in an early learning setting. Many countries have laws pertaining to decibel levels of toys. For example toys that emit over 100 dB are banned by Canada under its Hazardous Products Act. The US standard is set at 70 dB while European levels are set at 80 dB at the ear (The Hearing Foundation of Canada, 2009).

### **Effects of Noise on Young Children's Development**

A child's physical environment is a key factor in determining whether a child feels calm or stressed. A well developed early learning setting, an environment which respects the well-being of children must include noise control. Chronic exposure to loud noise is not only associated with hearing lost but studies have also linked noise pollution to problems with speech, reading and attention skills as well as with language and cognitive development in young children (Holland, 2008; Bronzaft, 2004). Other documented effects of noise on young children include:

- Excessive noise may make children more susceptible to learned helplessness. "Learned helplessness means that the individual learn that the outcomes of it's behavior are independent of the actions of the individual (Maxwell and Evans, 2003).
- Studies have shown that chronic and acute noise exposure affects the cognitive development, especially the long-term memory, of young children (Kopko, 2008).
- Children often adapt to chronic noise by ignoring auditory input. "A consequence of this coping strategy is that children also tune out speech, which is a basic and required component of reading" (Kopko, 2008).
- Early learning educators employed in noisy centres are more fatigued and often less patient than teachers in quieter child care centres (Kopko, 2008).
- Research had demonstrated that ". . . children as young as four are less motivated to perform on challenging language and pre-

reading tasks under conditions of exposure to chronic noise (Kopko, 2008)

- Young children exposed to uncontrollable noise often had less tolerance for frustration (Maxwell, 2023).

### **Controlling Exposure**

If early learning educators determine that excessive noise is provoking irritability, discomfort and health problems, then the following general suggestions may help control exposure to noise during the day:

- Alternate quiet and active programs; for example, circle time can follow outdoor play.
- Guide children to control their voices while indoors. For instance, have children use their 'indoor voices' when inside the centre and their 'outdoor voice' when playing outside. Modeling appropriate speech levels by staff is essential if early childhood educators want children to 'control' their voices.
- Alternate the staff supervising the playground. The playground is one of the noisiest areas of centre life and thus excessive time on playground duty can be stressful.
- Locate staff work breaks in an area of the building/centre that is physically separate from the children. This gives early learning educators quiet time in which to rest.
- Control the volume on stereos, radios, and computers. Along with not turning up the volume on CD players, etc., early childhood educators can sensitize children to noise by using quiet games and stories.
- Noisy activities should be separated from quiet ones. Early learning educators need to organize space for the quieter centres; for example, the book corner and art area are clustered together. Similarly, block and movement centres, which can produce a significant amount of noise, should be clustered. It is also suggested that early learning educators initiate quiet activities several times a day, especially between noisy activities such as

dramatic and outdoor play. Furthermore, quiet areas--for example, a pillow corner--should be designed into the room arrangement.

- Early learning educators should acoustically design or redesign the interior of their child care facilities. Carpets or rugs throughout a centre, as well as drapes and wall hangings, couches, pillows, and dress-up clothes--all absorb and cut down the negative impact of sound transmission. Also, noise can be controlled by covering ceilings with acoustical absorption tiles. In areas where carpets are impractical--for example the art area--cushioned linoleum is just as effective as carpeting in decreasing impact noise. Furthermore, to support the development of young children an early learning environment should incorporate 'soft' elements such as beanbag chairs, into the setting (Canadian Paediatric Society, 1992; Melancon, 1988; Jorde-Bloom, 1989; Eastman, 1993; Click, 1996; Pimento, 1996; and Essa, 1996).

### **Practical Implications to Reduce Noise**

Schedules help give structure to a young child's day. Hence, with predictability, early childhood educators can better plan for noise-related problems. When developing daily schedules, the Canadian Paediatric Society (1992) suggest the following ideas:

- Ensure that most of the daily activities are child-initiated.
- Encourage children to choose the activities they want to participate in, and allow them to move between activities at their own pace.
- Make activity areas available to children during periods of free play throughout the day.
- Plan for periods in the day when children are free to explore their own interests without having to hurry.
- Balance active and passive, or quiet, periods.

- Prepare children in advance for any change in the schedule (p. 516).

Surface colours, furniture, lighting, room temperature, textures, space arrangement, types of toys, and group size can also impact upon noise transmission.

The ways early learning educators use colours influence noise transmission. For instance, the orange-red-yellow 'warm' tones tend to stimulate whereas the blue-green-purple 'cool' colours tend to have a calming affect (Jorde-Bloom cited in Eastman, 1993). Consequently, in rest areas it is preferable to select 'relaxing' colours such as blue, white and mauve; whereas 'warm' colours such as red or orange can be used in active areas (Melancon, 1988). It should be noted that several studies have indicated that 'warm' colours can increase noise transmission through such things as children yelling (Melancon, 1988). In the context of the relationship between colour and noise transmission, Jorde-Bloom (1989) implies that colour can produce unintended behaviour in young children. "Therefore, the ways we use color in early childhood settings have a strong influence on the behaviour of children and on classroom management: (Jorde-Bloom, 1989, p. 161).

Certain furniture such as chairs and table tops can increase noise production. By putting coasters on the legs of chairs, early childhood educators can eliminate the irritating noise of chairs being scraped across a floor. Hard table surfaces--for example wood--can be a further source of excessive noise. Hence, by using a cushioned table covering child care centres can have a hygienic product as well as reduce the noise of toys and other objects hitting a hard surface.

Studies indicate that lighting may influence noise production or noise control. It is suggested that early learning centres use natural light where possible and if not feasible incandescent not fluorescent artificial lighting should be utilized (Melancon, 1988). As a general rule, use lower illumination levels for activities that are less active and need concentration and higher illumination for active centres that require less concentration (Jorde-Bloom cited in Eastman, 1993).

Research findings have ascertained that lighting may influence the behaviour of children. Thus, many early learning educators "...have found, for instance, that toning down lighting by manual dimmer controls helps calm children (Jorde-Bloom, 1989, p. 159).

Texture can give children appropriate noise cues to what is expected at each area of a centre. Soft environments surrounded by rugs and pillows indicate low activity areas like the book corner whereas hard surfaces such as wood cue children to active participation (Eastman, 1993).

There is a relationship between spacial arrangement in an early learning setting and noise levels. When the quality of spacial organization is low, the noise level is likely to increase and the children are more likely to engage in inappropriate behaviour (Jorde-Bloom, 1989). Because of the preceding association, Jorde-Bloom (1989) asks that early learning educators consider the following questions when evaluating their centre's spacial arrangement:

- Are materials organized in a clear and consistent way to encourage self-help?
- Do children wonder aimlessly?
- How frequently do minor accidents occur in the centre?
- Is the environment too stimulating in places?
- Does the spatial arrangement encourage shouting and boisterous behaviour?
- Are routines consistent, transitions smooth, and clean-up time organized (pp. 156-157).

Early learning educators need to organize space so that it prevents noise-related problems. Typical behaviour problems such as running in the centre or fighting over toys can often be associated with room arrangement. For example, if you wish to discourage running indoors, eliminate open spaces. At times children need to be able to move away from the group and rest, thus, by arranging a centre in a 'L' or

'T' geometric shape early childhood educators can often reduce the noise associated with frustration (Melancon, 1988).

### **The Centre Perspective**

Phyfe-Perkins' examination of the impact of physical arrangements on children's behaviour should be considered when developing noise control strategies in an early learning setting. Phyfe-Perkins (cited in Essa, 1994) stipulated the following principles to be adhered to when focusing on the relationship between physical arrangements and a child's behaviour:

- Children in full-day care need privacy; so places where children can be alone should be provided in the environment.
- Small enclosed areas promote quiet activities as well as interaction among small groups of children.
- Physical boundaries around areas can reduce distraction, which, in turn increases attention to activities.
- Large spaces allow for active large-group activities that are more boisterous and noisy.
- Clearly organized play space and clear paths can result in fewer disruptions and more goal-directed behaviour (p. 228).

Group size is a further criteria affecting sound levels. Because preschoolers are often noisy in their play pursuits, as a general rule, there should be no more than ten children at any one particular activity area/centre. Numerous surveys have stated this limit is necessary to avoid noise problems (Melancon, 1988). Thus, as the Canadian Paediatric Society (1992) states, "When the group of children is too large, the emotional and physical demands can become over-whelming for the staff, affecting both staff and children" (p. 739).

A further criteria when considering the impact of group size on noise transmission is room dimensions. In Canada, for example, at least 2.75 square meters of indoor space per child is required. Crowding can effect the noise level of an early learning setting. It may increase



noise-related problems through aggressive behaviour or other inappropriate interactions.

It is obvious that sound from certain toys--for example, musical instruments, etc.--are beneficial for children's learning. However, certain toys/equipment can be excessively noisy. For instance, hard balls and rigid building blocks create a lot of impact noise. Consequently, early learning educators should consider impact noise when purchasing toys/equipment and buy for example soft and spongy balls that absorb 100% of impact noise.

There are certain periods during the day, for example lunch time and coming indoors from outside play, that are noisier than others. Thus, to lessen the noise associated with transitions, early learning educators need to develop transitional techniques. As Essa (1996) states, "Failing to plan how children will get from one area to another--from group to the bathroom to snack, or from cleanup time to putting on coats to going outside--can result in chaos" (p. 220). The significance of planned transitions garners increased significance when one considers such studies as Berk's where it was found that children in an early childhood setting spend approximately 20 - 35 percent of their total time in transitions (cited in Essa, 1996). Consequently, Essa (1996) suggests that early learning educators should "carefully think through what has to happen at the beginning of an activity, at the end of an activity, and between activities" (p. 49).

To avoid sound environments that are prejudicial to the health of young children and early learning educators, Melancon's (1988) guide for Architectural Strategies to Avoid Noise Problems in Child Care Centres recommends the following:

- As a general rule, there should be no more than ten children in each activity area.
- Each activity area should be protected from noise in other areas, regardless of the activities taking place.
- In each activity area, background noise should be low.

- Each activity area should be so arranged that sound reverberation allow adults and children to understand clearly what is being said to them or to hear any other useful communications. (p. 1).

## **Conclusion**

By planning for possible acoustic difficulties, early learning educators can prevent or lessen noise problems such as children running indoors and impact noise imitating from certain toys. Remember noise problems can affect the healthy development of children as well as the well-being of early learning educators. Chronic exposure to noise effects younger children especially when language and discrimination skills are forming. Maxwell (2003) writes: “In child care centers, spaces must allow for the fact that children need to make noise but the subsequent noise levels should not be harmful to them or others in the center”.

In conclusion, as early learning educators, we need to teach young children to protect themselves so:

- Encourage children to keep the volume adjusted low.
- Encourage quieter games and activities.
- Substitute loud activities with quiet toys and games.

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## **Programmatic Challenges for Early Childhood Development in Cambodia**

Ila Varma

### **Background**

The early years are critical to a child's development. Evidence shows that children who are well nurtured during this early period tend to do better in school and stand a better chance of developing the skills required to contribute productively to social and economic development. Parents/siblings and grandparents are natural caregivers who play significant roles in shaping the lives and futures of children at home, nurseries, or pre-schools.

Cambodia has had a traumatic history and it is believed that to children a generation of parents has been lost. The general population is still living under the poverty line, unable yet to break the poverty cycle due to lack of economic opportunities. The country is gradually overcoming the crisis situation it was in of providing economic relief to the millions affected as well as their children who were deprived of proper educational facilities and care, especially those living in orphanages. Therefore, of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme the goal is to ensure that young children in Cambodia reach school age healthy and well nourished, intellectually curious, socially confident, and equipped with a solid foundation for lifelong learning. Early Childhood Development advocates a holistic approach to young children. It is an integrated, cost-effective and sustainable approach that makes it easier for families to understand and access programmes and services and therefore yields greater benefits.

Global evidence suggests that Early Child Development programmes help to overcome socioeconomic disparities by leveling the playing field for all children before they enter primary school. Programmes reach not only children but their families as well; this was also seen in the case of Cambodian parents as reflected in the recent findings of the UNICEF study “Assessment of the Early Childhood Development Programmes in Cambodia” by Dr Nirmala Rao.

The case for Early Childhood Development programmes becomes even more compelling for Cambodia. The health indicators for Cambodian children are a matter of concern. The infant and under-five mortality rates (IMR, U5MR) in Cambodia have decreased substantially in the last few years, from 95 and 124 in 2000 to 65 and 83 in 2005, respectively. Despite the decline, IMR and U5MR in Cambodia still rank among the highest in the East Asia and the Pacific Region after Papua New Guinea and Lao P.D.R. The prevalence of anaemia among children is equally alarming, with six in ten children aged 6 to 59 months reported as being anaemic. Malnutrition remains a big problem, with 36 per cent of children under 5 years of age underweight and 37 per cent stunted, according to the preliminary report of CDHS 2005. By the time children reach their first birthday, half of them are already underweight.

A number of issues surround the care and feeding practices for infants and young children require attention, such as the practice of exclusive breastfeeding, timely introduction of appropriate complementary food, and hygiene conditions. According to the Cambodia Inter-Censal Population Survey (CIPS) 2004, 37 per cent of households in Cambodia had access to safe drinking water (33.3 per cent among rural households). Elevated levels of arsenic were reported in some areas, particularly in the Mekong river basin. Access to sanitation was increasing gradually in rural areas but it was still very low, 21.9 per cent. All of these impacts on the active learning capacity of young children, affect their cognitive capacities and efforts have to be made to reduce the loss of their developmental potential.

Malnutrition is a major contributor to early childhood mortality. It is estimated that 54% of childhood deaths are associated with malnutrition. Under-nutrition is at the core of the problem, but micronutrient malnutrition is an aspect that is highly destructive, particularly three micronutrients crucial for healthy growth, development and a functional immune system because they are most often lacking: iron, vitamin A and iodine

The prevalence of anemia in children is very high. The early years of life are most critical for brain development; therefore this stage calls for helping families and communities to understand the importance of adequate nutritional intake of the mother during the period of gestation, and of the growing child after birth. The incidence of significant childhood illnesses makes immunization of mother and child, in addition to immunization against communicable diseases an imperative. It is also important to complement these health and nutrition interventions with developmentally appropriate early stimulation and adult- infant interaction to promote mental, emotional and social development of children. All these taken together have a synergistic influence on the child's overall development. Short stature, frequent outcome of many of the most prevalent infections, and malnutrition conditions of early childhood, are associated with late or non-enrollment in school, slow progression through school, and enhanced risk of drop-out.

A strong body of research links maternal and child health to performance in school. We know that conditions such as very low birth weight and poor nutrition may have long-term effects on a child's preparedness for school. Social and emotional development serves as the foundation for relationships that give meaning to school experience ( Doherty,1997 ). It involves a sense of personal well-being that comes from stable interactions in children's early lives and interactions that enable children to participate in classroom activities that are positive for themselves, their classmates, and their teachers.

Critically important conditions of social and emotional development include emotional support and secure relationships that help the child acquire such characteristics as self-confidence and ability to function as the member of a group. In the context of Cambodia quality and responsive child care is becoming even more important. Women are increasingly being integrated into the workforce, particularly in the garment manufacturing industry where 200, 000 women (2004) were reported to be employed. Therefore, to meet the child care needs of families with both parents in the labour force provisions of early childhood care and development services become even more crucial.

Cambodia has adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to be reached by 2015. The overall goal is the reduction of poverty. It is surprising to many policy makers that what families and communities do with young children can contribute to the reduction of poverty. Yet the evidence of the importance of early child development for poverty reduction is growing<sup>1</sup> and families play a key role in this development. The holistic approach to ECD is a powerful tool for poverty reduction (MDG1) and the key indicator of underweight reduction. Integrating interventions and national policies for young children in the areas of child and maternal health and nutrition, water and sanitation, psychosocial care and early learning, and child protection can have a long-term effect on children's growth, development and productivity – their human capital.

Many poor children are handicapped when they enter school because they had little opportunity to develop the skills, habits and attitudes expected of the average child in Pre-school and Grade 1. This lack of school readiness is often manifest in children's low scores on tests measuring intellectual or scholastic ability, repeated failure and high level of drop out. While poor children may be developmentally advanced in other respects, their lack of preparedness for school can lead to unnecessary (preventable) placement in special education classes, being held back a grade, repeated scholastic failure and dropping out of school at an early age (Weikart,2000).

Various Cambodian studies undertaken in the primary education sector confirm that poor literacy skills of children in Grade 1 affects their ability for later learning. The KAPE (1999) study on student repetition reports that "25 % of the students who never repeated had attended pre-school and only 12 .2 % of the repeaters had attended pre-school". The study also highlights that the socio-economic background and lack of school readiness seem to have a strong relationship with repetition.

The findings of a study to evaluate the World Bank-assisted Education Quality Improvement Programme (EQIP) schools in 3 provinces of

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<sup>1</sup> The World Bank: *World Development Report 2006, Equity and Development*. World Bank: Washington, DC. (pp. 132-135 on ECD).

Takeo, Kampot and Kandal provinces suggest that schools with pre-schools have higher test scores, higher promotion rates and less drop outs. (Marshall, 2004). This result is consistent with the global studies that indicate that repetition increases the chance of children dropping out of school.

The challenges faced by the young child in Cambodia (as mentioned above) show that the need for early learning and development programmes has become even more pressing. The need for pre schooling is even more crucial in the context of Cambodia as existing studies have repeatedly shown the lack of children's preparedness for schooling, consequently resulting in high repetition and dropout rates in Grade 1. A number of evaluations in developing countries (as well as those from high-income countries) demonstrate the short and long term benefits of these early intervention programmes – with the strongest and most dramatic benefits for the most disadvantaged children, including poor and disabled children, as well as the children disadvantaged due to gender, ethnicity or rural isolation.

### **Strategic Options**

The Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE) within the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (MoEYS) was established in 2002. Its mandate was to oversee preschools for children aged 3-6 years. Since its establishment, the Department has been initiating several new strategies for reaching out to this group of children with the specific aim of increasing their access to early learning. According to MoEYS data, in the School Year 2005-06 only 12% of children aged 3-5 years and 25 % of children aged 5 years were enrolled in pre-primary education programme of whatever kind. This was one of the lowest figures in the region.

This strategic direction acknowledged that the Government did not have resources to provide formal preschool education to all children, and, therefore, sought to increase formal preschool coverage in partnership with community-based and informal activities, to ensure that all children had access to some form of Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme, whether provided by the government



or in partnership with it. This included programmes funded by international donors, NGO-financed pilot innovations, and alternative parental home-based approaches. While seeking partnership, the Department of ECE would maintain ultimate responsibility for strategic oversight and quality assurance

State preschools, which are typically located in primary schools, operate on a 3-hour programme, 5 days a week during the 38-week school year. Classes are taught by a teacher having completed a 2-year full-time professional preparation course undertaken after Grade 12. In Community Preschool programmes ( UNICEF supported), educational experiences for 3 to 5 year olds are provided by a member of the village who has typically received a ten days' initial training and who participates in the refresher training for three to six days a year. The programme operates for 2 hours a day, 5 days a week, for 24 to 36 weeks a year. Home-based programmes (UNICEF supported) provide educational resources and opportunities for mothers to come together weekly as a group led by a trained “core” mother, who provides instruction on how to promote children’s development and well-being. Meetings of mothers' groups and their children are typically held one hour a week for 24 weeks a year.

In order to compensate children without pre-school experiences a School Readiness programme was launched in 1000 primary schools on an experimental basis in 2004 with UNICEF support to address the issue of overage enrolments and the high repetition in Grade 1. It was an 8 week programme administered in the first eight weeks of school in Grade 1. The results of the evaluation of the School Readiness Programme (Cambodia) indicated that even students who were far behind at entry to preschool could develop vocabulary, math, and literacy skills that approached national norms when provided with the extended-duration preschool that maintains reasonable quality standards. ECD programmes were known to reduce demand for remedial education interventions targeted to young school drop-outs or adults with poor basic skills.

The Government having developed School Readiness standards and a curriculum which based on the Early Learning and Development Standards, MoEYS would have to enact policies to increase access to high quality ECE for all children, particularly those who are socially disadvantaged. Children living in the remote areas with fewer preschool programmes had a significantly lower developmental functioning than other children (Rao, 2007). Special attention was required for the children who were disadvantaged in more than one way, i.e., children who live in remote areas and who are poor and from ethnic minorities. It was therefore recommended that a national policy and monitoring framework be established for ECD and early primary grades.

Early child development programmes focus primarily on the development and well-being of children. The involvement and support of parents and families in the programme is an element of quality that maximizes children's experiences. This is still not very well understood by the communities. There is reciprocity to parent involvement in children's early learning. As suggested by the findings of the recent UNICEF study by Dr Nirmala Rao, educating parents benefits not only the parents themselves and their children, but stand out as the most effective means of raising awareness and increasing public understanding of early childhood programmes when the educated parents share what they have learned with other parents.

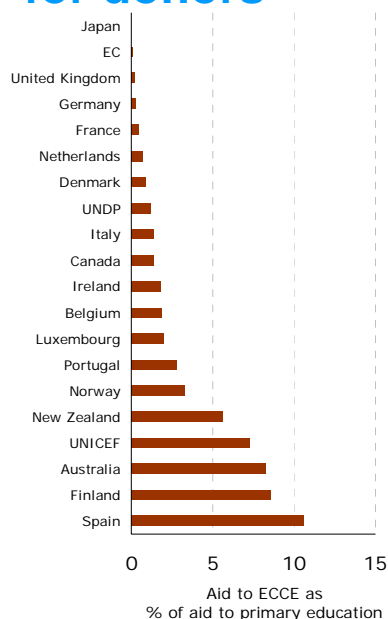
To meet these parental needs a pilot programme was initiated by UNICEF. UNICEF is already working with the local self-governance structures like the Commune Councils (CC) and Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC) to implement the community pre-school. The parenting programmes were expected to build on these structures for managing the project. CCWC with the health and education functionaries and the community pre-school (CPS) teacher would manage the project at the commune level. Village chiefs would provide assistance to ensure parents are aware of the initiatives, understand their objectives and encourage regular participation.

## **Implementation Challenges**

There is also a need for leadership training and mentoring to ensure that parents and other community members have the skills and capacity to participate in the work of planning and decision-making for programmes related to children's development and learning. Early child development and parenting centres are at the core of an integrated framework of activities and supports for the prenatal period, for children birth to 6 years and for their families. The centres are key initiatives to creating a new "tier" for the early period of development, before the public education "tier". This approach is both intergenerational and cross-cultural. Programmes support the growth and development of parents, prepare the next generation for parenthood and enhance parental ability to function as contributing members of society. They provide a meeting place for the families, setting the foundation for pluralistic societies. These are relatively new structures in the system of local governance, and it would be awhile before they can manage these programmes on their own.

However, the issues of sustainability of the present programmes relate to government funding. The Department of ECE is currently equipped to manage only the formal preschool programme, which has limited reach (reaching about 8-9 per cent of the 3-5 year olds). The proposed project would enable the Department of Early Childhood Education to expand the provisions for preschool to reach a larger number of children, who would be better prepared for primary schools. The figure below shows that not much donor funding has been made to the sector. While there is much rhetoric it does not match the fund expectation from donors.

## Early Child Development: Low priority for donors



Almost all donors allocate to pre-primary less than 10% of what they give to primary

Bilateral donors give priority to centre-based programmes for children from age 3

**From EFA Report, UNESCO 2007**

One of the options that could be considered for sustaining the ECD programmes may be the creation of an ECD trust. The Fast Track Initiatives funds could be used to set up a trust to which donors could contribute for implementing the ECD programmes until the time the Government is better able to support the programme from its own budget. Presently, there are a few donors like UNICEF, UNESCO, and SCN who provide strategic support, but there are a number of smaller NGOs who work on a relatively small scale and could continue their activities. The larger donors could contribute funds to the Trust, the interest from which could be used for implementing programmes until the government is ready to commit funds. Recently the Priority Action Plan funds to the sector had been reduced, which was a matter of great concern.

Quality, sustainable programmes require government funding. Public/Donor funding should cover the core operating costs, at least

enough to ensure that all children are entitled to a half day programme and families are provided with pre and post-natal and parent/child programming. Parents may be charged an affordable fee if their child attends beyond the half-day. To ensure equitable access fees are waived or reduced for low-income families.

In the event that government funds are not forthcoming, the focus of services would be limited to disadvantaged populations, using trained community workers or family members as caregivers and teachers. All available resources (people of all ages, facilities available part-time, recycled materials) and the existing infrastructure could be used by incorporating ECD elements into ongoing health, nutrition, regional development and adult education programmes. The use of mass media and all other means of communication could also be tried in order to keep the costs low. The possibility of partnering with the World Bank on conditional cash transfer for child development not only for education but for health and nutrition as well of the poorest families could be considered.

Of the various options that exist presently, the state preschools seem to be the best in terms of quality as the inputs to the programme are consistently better. However, the Government's inability to expand the programme led to the setting up of community preschools and the Home Based education programme. Expansion of the state preschools involves increase in the manpower requirement. Presently, there is only one Teacher Training Institute in Phnom Penh for about 100 students, who pass out every two years. Earlier, it was a year long course but it was extended to two years fairly recently, to reduce costs of training and recruitment. These trainees are selected from the provinces and after the training return to the provinces where they are absorbed. In case the numbers of teachers were to be increased for the preschool sector, the number of teachers for primary education would have to be decreased for lack of funds for teacher recruitment and salaries.

The UNICEF study also showed children in the State Preschools had a significantly better functioning at pre-test and post-test than children in

the other groups .There were no significant differences between children in Community Preschools (CPS ) and Home-based (HB) programmes at pre-test and post-test. But Children in all groups had a significantly higher developmental functioning at post-test than at pre-test. Therefore, it could be concluded that services like CPS and HB programmes being provided did developmentally help children attend some form of pre-school. Thus, it would be useful to study the costs of both these programmes to come up with a model which is both workable and suitable for Cambodia. The costs would not be high, and should an integrated programme be considered, the costs could be met by the different line ministries (Health, MOWA, Education and MoI).

If the child development programmes are to succeed they have to become an integral part of the education system and structures. Decentralised education structures like the District and Commune Education For All Committees would need to take into account the ECD programmes currently being implemented and strive for improvement so as to ensure children's participation in the preschool and then help in enrolment and retention at the primary level. The Local School Support Committees (LSSCs) of the Child- friendly School structures need to include the preschool children in discussion and plans. Until the importance of early learning is clearly understood and steps are taken to address the issues, the programme would remain a weak one. The School Readiness programme has demonstrated that even an 8 week programme was very helpful in improving the pre-literacy and pre-numeracy competencies of children who had no prior experience of preschooling.

A quality early childhood workforce is central to the success of any child development strategy. An expansion of vocationalisation programme options, which provides an alternative to the formal education system, could be considered. This would help children, particularly girls, to study up to Grade 8 after which they could take up courses on child development and women's issues and develop as child care staff to demonstrate competency in areas relevant to child care and education in order to acquire trained ECE status. The other

career opportunities for them would be to become better trained Commune Council Focal Points for Women & Children.

Currently there are no colleges or universities offering Child Development as a discipline, which makes it even more difficult to get a critical mass of child development trained workforce. As the Higher Education system develops the society will have Departments of Child Development, which will provide for the youth opportunities for employment. It already appears that sufficient employment avenues are up coming in programmes related to women and children. This would further reduce the costs of training of Government and donors of staff who have the responsibility of demonstrating quality programmes.

Reaching the most disadvantaged children is a challenging task. Early Childhood Development can no longer be left to chance or to donors to implement as they will. Government has to take a more proactive role in ensuring appropriate structure, funding and proper monitoring. The programme has over time demonstrated some potential and some success, which now need to be brought to scale. This would involve engaging the ministries to think through the process. However, creating coordinating mechanisms across ministries for Early Child Development would be critical for the success with a well-defined core set of globally accepted indicators for child development.

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## Integrating Learning Styles in Classroom

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### Abstract

The focus of the present paper is to integrate the Multiple Intelligence theory with the Learning Style theory so as to improve the learning of individuals over the range of intelligence. The paper highlights both of the theories, their differences and similarities and their integration for the benefit of the learner.

The Multiple Intelligence and Learning Style theories have different roots but combine insights from biology, anthropology, psychology, medical case studies. They are neither simple categories of identification nor any description of a learner in an approximation. Both the models are useful ways of helping learners to understand their own strengths and weaknesses so that they may grow and become more balanced. This paper will consider the following questions:

- *What is the Multiple Intelligences theory?*
- *What are the learning styles and major proponents of this theory?*
- *Are they similar or different theories?*
- *How will the integration of these two help to improve learning?*

### Multiple Intelligence Theory:

One single notion of intelligence was prominent till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Then came the era in which some researcher criticized this traditional concept of labeling children as gifted or disabled (Guilford, 1967; Gardner, 1999; Sternberg, 2000). One of them was Howard

Gardner, who proclaimed that our mental ability was not sole or fixed but that we possessed a blend of cognitive competencies that produced a unique intellectual profile. Gardner's ideas have received widespread attention and acceptance among parents and have been eagerly embraced by teachers (Collins, 1998; Campbell, Cambell, & Dickinson, 1999; Chan, 2004).

The theory of Multiple Intelligence was conceived by Howard Gardner in 1983 in his book entitled *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. According to Gardner, intelligence is much more than IQ because IQ in the absence of productivity does not equate to intelligence. According to Gardner (1983), “Intelligence is a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are value in culture” (pp. 33-34). Gardner originally identified seven components of intelligence. Then he added an eighth intelligence to his list which are as follows (Checkley, 1997):

- *Verbal-linguistic intelligence*: These people have the ability to think in words and language to express and appreciate complex meanings. Authors, poets, journalists, speakers, and newscasters exhibit high degrees of linguistic intelligence.
- *Logical-mathematical intelligence*: These people make it possible to calculate, quantify, consider propositions and hypotheses, and carry out complex mathematical operations. This intelligence enables to perceive relationships and connections and use abstract symbolic thought and sequential reasoning skills. Scientists, accountants, engineers and computer programmers demonstrate this intelligence.
- *Visual-spatial intelligence*: This intelligence involves the ability to think in three dimensions and use mental imagery, spatial reasoning, image manipulations, graphic and artistic skills, and active imagination. Sailors, pilots, sculptures, painters, and architects exhibit this type of intelligence. .
- *Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence*: People with this intelligence have the ability to control body movement and handle objects

skillfully. They express themselves through movement. They have a good sense of balance and eye-hand co-ordination. Athletes, dancers, surgeons and crafts people are examples.

- *Musical intelligence*: These individuals possess a sensitivity to pitch, melody, rhythm, timber, and tone. It enables to recognize, create, reproduce and reflect on music; that is, they immediately respond to music either appreciating or criticizing what they hear. This intelligence is demonstrated by composers, conductors, musicians and instrument makers.
- *Interpersonal intelligence*: It is the capacity to understand and interact effectively with others. It involves nonverbal and verbal communication. These people have an uncanny ability to sense feelings, intentions and motivations. It is evident in successful teachers, social workers, actors or politicians.
- *Intrapersonal intelligence*: It refers to the ability to construct an accurate perception of oneself and use such knowledge in planning and directing one's life. It involves the understanding and appreciation of the human conditions. It is evident in theologians, psychologists and philosophers.
- *Naturalist intelligence*: It consists of observing patterns in nature, identifying and classifying objects including flora and fauna, and understanding natural and human made systems. It is evident in farmers, botanists, hunters, ecologists, and landscapers.

### **Learning Style Theories:**

According to Bisson (2002), learning style is a preferred way of acquiring knowledge and processing information. A learning style affects how to learn, how to solve problems, how to work, how to participate in different activities, how to react in a group, and how to relate oneself with others.

Learning style theory began with Carl Jung in 1927, who noted major differences in the way people perceived (sensation *versus* intuition), the way they made decisions (logical thinking *versus* imaginative

feelings), and how active or reflective they were while interacting (extroversion *versus* introversion)(Silver, Strong and Perini, 1997). Learning styles are not fixed throughout the life; they develop as the person learns and grows. Each learner has a primary learning style and can be taught how to study, and concentrate capitalizing on that style. However, learners also have a secondary style, which can be used to reinforce initial learning effectively. In addition, educators should vary their teaching styles to accommodate their students' varied styles (Dunn & Dunn,1993).

Research indicates that several of the learning style elements are correlated with one another. Strongly analytic learners often tend to prefer concentrating in brightly illuminated, quiet, formal, seating, without breaks or snacks, whereas strongly global learners often tend to prefer concentrating in a softly lit, casual (informal) environment with music, periodic breaks, and snacks (Dunn, Bruno, & Beaudry, 1990). Even though there are many advocates of learning styles, the focus of this paper will be on two major theories. One is the learning styles proposed by Rita and Kenneth Dunn and the other is VAKT.

### **Dunns Learning Style Model:**

The Dunns (1993, 1999) define learning style as the way in which each person begins to concentrate on process and internalize, and remember new and difficult academic contents. Their Model addresses 21 unique elements. Although no one is influenced by all 21 elements, most students are affected by between 6 and 14. Those 21 elements are classified into environmental, emotional, sociological, physiological and psychological variables.

- Environmental: This variable is composed of four elements:
  - Sound: Some learners require absolute quiet to learn, while others do best with music or other sound in background.
  - Light: Some learners require bright light to concentrate, whereas others require a softer and perhaps more focused light.

- Temperature: Some learners require warmth, whereas others require a cooler environment while concentrating on new and difficult academic knowledge or skills.
- Design: Some learners prefer more formal setting ( e. g. hard chairs), whereas others prefer casual, informal setting (e. g. sofa).
- Emotional: This variable is also composed of four elements:
  - Motivation: Some learners are eager to begin learning something new or difficult, whereas others need to be challenged by someone else to begin.
  - Persistent: Some learners remain focused on an academic task until it has been completed, whereas others need to be reminded to complete the task at hand.
  - Responsibility: Some do what is required, whereas others do the opposite of what they are supposed to do (Conformist vs. nonconformist).
  - Structure: Some rely on the directives of the teachers or peers to provide structure to the task, whereas others determine their own structure for completing a task.
- Sociological: This variable is composed of six elements:
  - Self: 13 percent of students (often our gifted) perform best when studying alone (Dunn & Griggs, 2003).
  - Pair: Some prefer to study in pairs with peers.
  - Peers: Some (less than one third) prefer to study with a group of peers (Dunn & Griggs, 2003).
  - Team: Some prefer to study with a large group of peers.
  - Adult: Some (about 28%) prefer to work with an adult (Dunn & Griggs, 2003).

- Varied: Some function in varied ways, whereas others learn best in single pattern.
- Physiological: This variable is composed of four elements:
  - Perceptual: Some students learn best by hearing (auditory) complex material, others by reading or seeing it (visual), others learn when able to manipulate items with their hands (tactual, as when doodling or taking notes). Still others learn most effectively, moving while they are concentrating (kinesthetically, as by tapping their feet or walking).
  - Intake: Some learners require a drink or something to eat; others ignore drink and food when concentrating on new and difficult material.
  - Time: Some prefer to concentrate in the morning, some in the early or late afternoon, and some the evening.
  - Mobility: Some sit and concentrate for long periods of time without much movement; others require the ability to move about.
- Psychological: This variable is composed of three elements:
  - Global-analytic processors: Global processors learn best through an initial overview of the content or concept to develop an understanding of how the content relates to them before they can focus on the facts related to it. Analytics learn along a step-by-step sequence, gradually (building to increased understanding) by first examining the facts and then building toward an understanding of the concept (Dunn & Griggs, 2003).
  - Hemisphericity: Some learners tend to employ a right side of the brain style, whereas others use a left-side pattern when concentrating on new information.
  - Inclusive-reflective: Some learners reach conclusions by going through the thorough process, whereas others reach conclusion quickly and have little fear of failure.

### **VAK Model:**

The VAK learning style uses three main sensory receivers: Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic (movement) to determine the dominant learning style. It is sometimes known as VAKT (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, & Tactile). It is based on *modalities* -- a channel by which human expression can take place and is composed of a combination of perception and memory. It seems to be the most popular model nowadays due to its simplicity. Bisson (2002) elicited that most individuals have a dominant learning style. However, some will demonstrate even scores in all three learning styles.

- *Auditory learners:* There are two types of auditory learners: *listening* and *verbal*. The listening learners learn by hearing. Listening to lectures is very effective method for them. The verbal learner is much more aggressive in his approach to information. He speaks words that represent exactly how he understands.
- *Visual learners:* have two sub channels - *linguistic* and *spatial*. Learners who are *visual-linguistic* like to learn through written language, i.e. through reading and writing tasks. They remember what has been written down, even if they do not read it more than once. They like to write down directions and pay better attention to lectures if they could watch them. Learners who are *visual-spatial* usually have difficulty with the written language and do better with charts, demonstrations, videos, and other visual materials. They easily visualize faces and places by using their imagination and seldom get lost in new surroundings.
- *Kinesthetic learners:* They do best while touching and moving. It also has two sub-channels: kinesthetic (movement) and tactile (touch). They tend to lose concentration if there is little or no external stimulation or movement. When listening to lectures they may want to take notes for the sake of moving their hands. When reading, they like to scan the material first and then focus in on the details (get the big picture first). They typically use

color highlighters and take notes by drawing pictures, diagrams or doodling.

### **Similarities and Differences in Multiple Intelligence and Learning Style theories:**

- MI theory has its roots in cognitive sciences whereas Learning style theory has its roots in psychoanalysis.
- MI theory focuses on changing instruction according to the intelligence of a person; whereas Learning Style theory focuses on change in instruction according to the learning style of the individual.
- MI theory centers on the content and products of learning; that is what is taught. Learning Style theory is concerned with the process of learning that is how it is taught.
- MI theory has an effort to understand how culture and disciplines shape human potential, while Learning Style theory emphasizes the different ways people think and feel as they solve problems, create products and interact.
- According to MI theory, students learn intuitively. This theory states that each individual is equipped with a unique blend of intellectual strengths and that each of the multiple intelligence can be nurtured and developed (Gardner, 1999). In accordance with the Learning Style theory approach, all students are not intuitive learners, many require appropriate structure and supervision (Dunn, Denig, & Lovelace, 2001).
- MI theory does not deal with the individualized process of learning like how composers differ from conductors in musical intelligence, whereas Learning Style theory emphasizes individual learning.
- Even though both theories have insights from other sciences but MI theory has more theoretical depth as compare to Learning Style theory.



- MI theory, at this point, is a theory searching for successful implementation practices. As children do not learn in the same way, they cannot be assessed in a uniform fashion. Therefore, it is important that a teacher create an “intelligence profile” for each student. Knowing how each student learns will allow the teacher to properly assess the child's progress (Gardner, 2005). Learning Style has been practitioner-friendly for decades (Dunn, Denig, & Lovelace, 2001).
- Styles refer to the customary way in which an individual approaches a range of materials; for example, a playful or a planful style. Intelligence on the other hand refers to the computational power of a mental system: for example, a person whose linguistic intelligence is strong is readily able to compute information that involves language (Gardner, 1999).
- Gardner's proponents advocate change in the delivery system but most emphasize using students' talents in the same way, at the same time, and in the same amount of time. Learning Style proponents also advocate this but they see that different students need to use different instructional resources in different sequences to learn best.
- Gardner and Learning Style proponents both describe bodily-kinesthetic intelligence but Learning Style theory differentiates between tactile (learn through use of hands) and kinesthetic learners (learn through whole body activities).
- MI is understood more as the ‘output’ function of information intake, knowledge, skills and ‘talent’- mathematical, musical, linguistic etc., whereas Learning Styles can be seen as explaining information ‘input’ capabilities of human beings.
- While Multiple Intelligence theory is consistent with much empirical evidence, it has not been subjected to strong experimental tests (Gardner, 1993, p.33). There are hundreds of experimental studies that document the statistical gains produced with the Dunns' Learning- Style model approaches (Dunn, Denig, & Lovelace, 2001).

Even though not with a strong experimental base, the concept of Multiple Intelligences has some strengths over Learning Styles:

- It serves as impetus of reform in our schools, “leading to a reevaluation of those subjects typically taught in school, with increased emphasis placed on the arts, nature, physical culture, and other topics traditionally limited to the periphery of the curriculum” (Armstrong, 2003, p.4).
- It is child-centered and develops children's innate potential rather than requiring them to master extraneous academic information (Denig, 2004).
- It challenges educators to find “ways that will work for this student learning this topic” (Gardner, 1999, p.154). As sometimes Learning Style models are less sensitive than they should be to the effects of context on learning.

### **Integration of Multiple Intelligences theory with Learning Style theory:**

All these similarities and differences show that Multiple Intelligence and Learning Style are not the same, that they are certainly not interchangeable. Students with similar intelligence factors in the MI theory can have vastly different learning styles, based on their personal biological makeup and their individual conditioning. Students learn according to their Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligence preference is finally becoming accepted as an instructional strategy. Knowing which intelligence one possesses enables to select learning styles that work for them. The intelligence that a learner identifies with most is considered the preferred learning style. By identifying the preferred learning style, students can optimize learning (Nolen, 2003). Integration of both the theories can be fruitful for education because they are complementary to each other. Nelson (1998) proposed that people who are smart in intelligence learn best through methods associated with that intelligence:

- Verbal-linguistic learners learn best through reading, hearing and seeing words and speaking, writing, and discussing and debating ideas.
- Math-logical learners learn best through working with patterns and relationships, classifying and categorizing, and working with the abstract.
- Spatial learners learn best in working with pictures and colours, visualizing and using the mind's eye, and drawing.
- Bodily-kinesthetic learners learn best by touching, moving, and processing knowledge through bodily sensation.
- Musical learners learn best with rhythm and melody, singing and listening to music and melodies.
- Interpersonal learners learn best through sharing, comparing and relating with others, interviewing, and cooperating.
- Intrapersonal learners learn best through working alone, doing self-paced projects, and reflecting.
- Naturalists learners learn best when working in nature, exploring living things, and learning about plants and natural events.

Dunns' Learning Styles and Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theories can be combined to improve learning in the classroom, they are cannot be taken as opposing ideas. Howard Gardner insists that people can develop, in varying degrees, each of the eight intelligences. Rita and Kenneth Dunn remind educators that students will learn in a manner consistent with their primary and secondary learning styles ( Denig, 2004). Without Multiple Intelligence theory, Learning Style theory is rather abstract, and it generally undervalues context. Without the Learning Style, the Multiple Intelligence theory is unable to describe different processes of thought and feeling. Each theory responds to the weaknesses of the other; together, they form an integrated picture of intelligence and difference (Dunn, Denig, & Lovelace, 2001).

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## **Improving Quality of Early Childhood Development Programs in Nepal**

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### **Background**

It is less than two decades since early childhood development (ECD) in Nepal started making any significant impact in the lives of children from rural and disadvantaged communities. Although Montessori School was established as early as 1950 in Kathmandu, no other school or agency was evidenced to have run an ECD program during the 1950s. It was probably due to the influence of the recommendations of All Round National Education Committee 1961 that Nepal Children's Organization (NCO) imparted child care education in its Balamandir in the district headquarters beginning in 1962. Credit goes to this organization for taking the ECD program outside the Kathmandu Valley for the first time. However, within the district NCO's ECD program was limited to a single classroom in the Balmandir premises in the district headquarters. With the expansion of private schools during the 1980s and thereafter, ECD programs of a year or longer in duration were introduced by private schools in urban and semi-urban areas of the country. Children from families who could afford the cost of private schools benefited from exposure to the early childhood development programs. It was during the 1980s that Production Credit for Rural Women program of the Ministry of Local Development and Small Farmers Development Program of Agriculture Development Bank provided support to child care and child care development education to free women and men in rural areas so that they were able to engage in income generating activities. It was again in the middle of 1980s that Plan International provided support to organization of some ECD centres in the outskirts of Kathmandu.

Shishu Kaksha (SK) introduced by Basic and Primary Education Project in 1991\1992 can be considered as the start of ECD program in

community schools. The latest statistics indicates that there are over 24,000 school-based and community-based ECD centres in the country with a combined enrollment of over 823,000 (Flash Report, 2007). With the government's commitment to EFA goals and increased awareness on the part of parents\guardians about the importance of early childhood education for their children, the number of enrollees in ECD centers will continue to grow.

In the context of a rapid growth in the number of ECD centres and their enrollment, it is high time to pay attention to qualitative improvements as well. This paper attempts to identify some of the areas where improvements are needed. The opinions expressed here are not that of an ECD program expert but that of an informed individual based on limited observations and research and evaluation experiences.

### **Determinants of ECD Program Quality**

According to some ECD facilitators, parents and management committee members interviewed during evaluation of ECD programs, the impact of ECD program on children is not much different in well equipped privately operated ECD centres as compared to poorly equipped government supported ECD centres . They all say that as a result of attending the ECD centres the children have developed the habit of going to school, they socialize better and their personal hygiene has improved. It is hard to pin point what exactly determines quality of an ECD program. Some aspects like physical facilities and educational materials are obvious while other aspects like teacher quality and management skills area not so obvious. In the paragraphs below the status of some of the major factors that tend to be responsible for enhancing the quality of an ECD program in the government supported ECD centers in Nepal are discussed.

#### **1. Government Policy**

On the whole, the government policy for the development of ECD program in Nepal is favorable. The government's commitment to the EFA goal of "expanding and improving comprehensive early

childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children” is reflected in the Strategy Paper for Early Childhood Development in Nepal 2004. The Paper spells out strategies in the areas of coordination, management, community involvement, parental education, integration of health and nutrition, physical resources, curricula and curricular materials, human resources, monitoring and evaluation, communication and mass media and financial management. Guidelines for Operation of Early Childhood Development Program 2004 have further specified these policy measures at the implementation level. The ECD policies and strategies are aimed at improving child care and learning as they address to the role and functions of stakeholders from the centre to grassroots level. However, the policies have only partially been implemented. Those that are implemented also require strengthening.

## **2. Physical Facilities**

There are certain standards that are considered as minimum for an ECD centre. They include indoor and outdoor space, flooring and furnishing, child friendly toilet and drinking water facilities. Past studies indicate that most school-based and community-based ECD centres lack one or more of these requirements or the existing facilities are unsatisfactory. Although the children in school-based ECD centers are free to use the facilities of the school, they are at times unsuitable for small children (e.g. primary classroom with desks and benches and toilets). Many community-based ECD centres lack adequate classroom space, playgrounds and toilets. Only a few government supported centres are equipped with such amenities as swings, see-saw and slides.

## **3. Curriculum**

Although no rigid curriculum is prepared for ECD aged children, the learning experiences should be guided by activities towards physical, emotional, social and mental intellectual development of children. The ECD Curriculum 2006 published by the Department of Education has rightly stressed the need for holistic development of children. Studies



indicate that teaching methodology employed in many ECD centres is not much different from methodology in primary schools. Academic achievement of children is often emphasized at the cost of physical, emotional and social development related experiences. It is the experience of some facilitators that parents stress on academic achievement of their children so that the children are better prepared to compete with others to gain entrance to the more prestigious schools. Schools also are reported to expect some literacy experience of their newly enrolled first graders. Children in some schools are mixed with grade one students. Teachers in such classes tend to focus more on grade one curriculum than on curriculum for ECD aged children

#### **4. Health and Nutrition**

Health and nutrition play an important role in holistic development of any child. Child care in many countries begins even before a child is born. Plan Nepal supported ECD program has trained local women to provide child care service at the time of pregnancy and after the delivery of a child. Parents in this program are made aware at an early stage to take care of their children's health and nutrition needs for early childhood education.

Organizations like Plan Nepal and Save the Children provide nutrition to children at ECD centres. They ensure regular health check ups of the children through coordination with local health posts. National NGOs like Seto Guras, local NGOs and community based organizations have been mobilized to arrange for health and nutrition for children and training and awareness raising programs for ECD facilitators, parents and management committee members. A few years ago Morang District. Health Office, Seto Guras and Plan Nepal entered into an agreement to provide health and nutrition services to ECD children in coordinated manner.

The national ECD policy encourages similar arrangements at the local level. However, a vast gap remains between the INGO supported and government supported ECD centres in terms of health and nutrition and other facilities. Sringeri Lower Secondary School of Lalitpur District is a rare case where the ECD children enjoy hot lunch made

possible by the local community forest. That government aided school whose management is transferred to community has a very active management committee. It is truly a model ECD centre for others to emulate.

## **5. Educational Materials**

A recent situation analysis of selected school-based and community-based ECD centres in five districts commissioned by the Department of Education revealed that the centres had only a few wooden cars, coloured garlands made from corn cobs, dominos, dolls, illustrations of animals and wooden sticks. The facilitators, ECD Management Committee members as well as the guardians pointed out that lack of sufficient educational materials was a major constraint towards engagement of the children in creative activities. When there are no educational materials, it is natural for facilitators to spend more time in imparting literacy skill.

## **6. ECD Facilitators**

The Education Regulations 2002 requires “at least two helpers” as a prerequisite for the establishment of an ECD centre. In practice most of the government supported ECD centres are run by one facilitator with educational attainment of eighth grade or more. It is very taxing to handle 20 or more children alone. The facilitator has to clean the centre herself. Moreover, she is required to maintain contact with the governmental and non-governmental agencies, management committee members and the parents, among others.

There is a general feeling that 8th grade of education is not adequate to be able to meet the children’ physical, social, emotional and mental\intellectual needs. The training provided to the facilitators has been appreciated as helpful but inadequate. The demand for frequent exposure to refresher training programs has not been met.

For lack of attractive pay, job security and other reasons motivation to give continuity to their job as facilitators is low. A number of

facilitators leave their job to continue their education or because they get married and move to a new location.

## **7. Parental Care and Concern**

Unlike in urban areas where educated and conscious parents get their children enrolled in an ECD centre or pre-school classes, often run as a private enterprise, parents in some rural communities feel that they are doing a favor to the local ECD centre by releasing their children for enrolment. They take it as a burden to give their time and material support to ECD centres. For lack of promotional activities, parents from remote and disadvantaged areas are not well aware of the meaning of an ECD program for their children. Their low economic status does not permit them to contribute cash to improve physical facilities of the centres or to supplement the remuneration of the facilitators.

## **8. Financing**

Financing ECD program has not been a priority concern of the Government of Nepal. The facilitators are provided with a small amount of remuneration (Rs.1,800 a month) and nominal amount to cover the cost of stationery and supplies. Schools and communities are expected to arrange for additional fund themselves to cover the cost of the centres including top up for the facilitator's remuneration. Studies indicate that only a few ECD centres have been able to mobilize additional fund. District Development Committees, municipalities and Village Development Committees have contributed mainly to supplement the remuneration of the facilitators. Some ECD centres have been able to take advantage of matching fund but the fund thus collected has rarely been utilized to generate income. In some cases a small amount of fee is collected from the parents. On the whole, the financial status of most of the ECD centres is precarious.

## **9. Management**

ECD management Committees and facilitators have been primarily responsible for management of an ECD centre. The committee

members, especially the chairmen are actively engaged in maintaining contact with outside agencies basically to mobilize support for ECD centre physical facilities. They have been able to mobilize parents and other community members to contribute voluntary labor for the construction of a building \room, toilet or drinking water facilities. It may be due to lack of sufficient orientation programs that the management committees are not so much concerned with the learning experiences of the children.

Although the national ECD policy encourages for mobilization of local NGOs and CBOs to meet the needs of the ECD centre, there is little evidence of such efforts. At the district level the District ECD Coordination Committee is not functioning well due largely to lack of earmarked fund and lack of sensitization programs for the committee members. At the national level MOE's Department of Education seems to have taken sole responsibility for policy development as well as implementation of the school-based and community-based ECD programs. Close coordination with such ministries as the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, who could make a significant impact on the quality of the ECD programs, is not evident.

## **Conclusion**

Within a period of less than two decades Nepal made an impressive gain in quantitative growth of ECD program. In a bid to meet the EFA goal within the next seven years, the pace of expansion of ECD centres is likely to accelerate. While this growth should be taken as a positive development, the need for bringing an improvement in effective functioning of individual ECD centres cannot be ignored. Given the significant role that an ECD program plays in reducing the colossal wastage in education by reducing dropout and repetition rates, measures to cover all 3-4 years old children by an ECD program and strategies to upgrade the qualities of such program are urgently needed.

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## **Parents'/Guardians' Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) on Early Childhood Development in Disadvantaged Communities of Nepal**

- Kishor Shrestha, PhD.

### **Background**

Most of the plans and programs developed so far with respect to early childhood development in Nepal have put stress on promoting parental education for the purpose of ensuring better care and education of young children (NPC, 2002; MOES, 2003; DOE, 2004).

It is important that parents and guardians have adequate knowledge of providing education and proper care to their children. In addition, their attitude towards providing education and take care of children needs to be favourable. More importantly, knowledge and attitude have to guide behaviour in real life to ensure that children receive the care and education they require to grow up happy and healthy. With these considerations in focus, various organizations including UNICEF Nepal have been involved in awareness-raising and capacity-building programmes for parents/guardians aimed at the holistic development of children.

Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID) of Tribhuvan University, in consultation with an advisory committee comprising representatives of the Department of Education, UNICEF Nepal, Save the Children Alliance, Tribhuvan University's Faculty of Education, and the Innovative Forum for Community Development, has recently completed a *Baseline Survey of the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) of Parents/Guardians on Early Childhood Development and Primary Education in Nepal* for UNICEF Nepal.

This paper is based on the report of this survey. It includes only the parents'/guardians' Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) on Early Childhood Development.

The main aim of this survey was to establish a baseline of parents' and guardians' knowledge, attitude and practice on various aspects of ECD for assessing the progress and changes in their KAP over the years.

### **Focus of the survey**

The focus of the survey was the 15 key messages related to 5 different aspects of ECD, namely child rights and importance of ECD, physical development, cognitive development, social development, and emotional development. The key messages were developed after a review of literature, basically parental education program packages, and were finalized after a series of meetings with the advisory committee and experts, and following a consultative workshop.

A list of key messages covered by the survey were as follows.

### **Child rights and importance of ECD**

1. Every child has a right to survive, grow and develop to his or her full potential.
2. Since the first 5 years of life are crucial, parents and the government are responsible for providing necessary support for the all-round development of children.

### **Physical development**

3. Infants need to be breastfed from soon after birth for at least 6 months. From the age of 6 months children should be fed freshly prepared energy-and nutrient-rich complementary foods along with breastfeeding which should continue till they are of 2 years of age (at least).
4. Children should continue to be fed and offered more fluids during sickness.



5. Children should be taken for a full course of immunizations (BCG, DPT, OPV, and measles) within one year of birth.
6. Faeces should be disposed of safely, and hands should be washed with soap after defecation and before preparing meals and feeding children.
7. Sick children should be taken to trained healthcare providers, as or when necessary.
8. Children should be protected from accidents, corporal punishment and other risks or threats.
9. Children need to be involved in physical activities such as running, climbing, jumping, throwing, cutting, painting, pasting for their gross and fine motor development.

### **Cognitive development**

10. Parents/guardians should encourage their children for independent learning, problem-solving and creative activities through games, songs/rhymes, stories and interactions.
11. Parents/guardians should accept, appreciate and recognize the individual differences of children (pace of learning, development of abilities, etc).

### **Social development**

12. Parents/guardians should encourage children to ask questions, express ideas and feelings and participate in social activities.
13. Parents/guardians should encourage children to interact with their peer group, family and neighbours.

### **Emotional development**

14. Children should receive love, affection and positive encouragement, and opportunities to express and balance their emotions.

15. Parents/guardians should answer children's questions, listen patiently to what they say and observe what they do.

### **Survey methods adopted**

The survey used both qualitative and quantitative research tools. The survey tools included (1) Structured knowledge test/questionnaire items, (2) Attitude scale, (3) Observation form and checklist, (4) Structured and semi-structured interview schedules, and (5) Focus group discussion (FGD) guidelines developed in line with the key messages.

The survey tools were finalized (after revisions) on the results of a pre-test. For knowledge tests and attitude scales, the difficulty level of each item was analysed and the reliability of each test was calculated. The tests were finalized after they reached an acceptable level of reliability. For the knowledge tests and attitude scale, the difficulty level of each item was analysed and the reliability of each test was calculated. The attitude scale was considered to be highly reliable because the reliability coefficient measured after a pre-test of the tool was at an acceptable level. The Kuder–Richardson method of determining reliability was used for this purpose. The  $r$  value for the ECD knowledge test was 0.998. For the attitude scale, Pearson's raw score formula (for the split-half method) and Spearman–Brown's formula were used to estimate the reliability of the scale. The  $r$  value for the ECD attitude scale was 0.917.

Five of UNICEF's 15 education focus districts (Parsa, Dadeldhura, Siraha, Rupandehi, and Bajhang) were selected, which represented all ecological zones, development regions and types of UNICEF programme districts. In each district, three programme VDCs were selected and, within each VDC, one disadvantaged community was taken.

The data and information collected through the use of the various survey tools were analyzed by using statistical devices as well as qualitative measures, and disaggregated by gender, district, and ethnic/caste group. Information related to knowledge and attitude

were analyzed quantitatively, using the SPSS package. Quantitative and qualitative data and information were cross-examined, using triangulation methods.

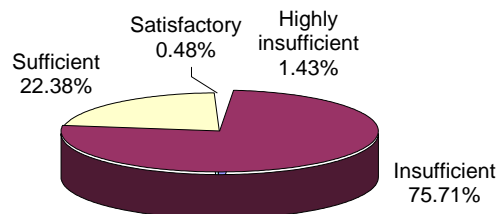
The analysis of parents'/guardians' KAP was made in two ways by calculating the total mean scores in each aspect of ECD and by categorizing the level of KAP into five subdivisions: 20 per cent and below: highly insufficient; 21–40 per cent: insufficient; 41–60 per cent: sufficient; 61–80 per cent: satisfactory; and above 80 per cent: highly satisfactory.

### Major Findings

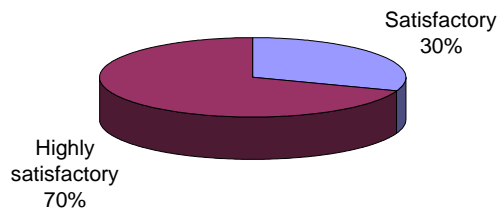
On all aspects of ECD covered by the survey (child rights and importance of ECD, and physical, cognitive, social and emotional developments of young children), the level of attitude among parents/guardians in all districts was found higher than their levels of knowledge and practice. The level of knowledge in all aspects was poor compared to the level of attitude or practice.

The distribution of parents/guardians with respect to their level KAP in all aspects of ECD revealed that only a small percent of parents/guardians (0.5 per cent) had a satisfactory level of knowledge although 22 per cent had a sufficient level of knowledge. All parents/guardians included had a either a satisfactory or a highly satisfactory level of attitude with 69.5 per cent having a highly satisfactory level. And none of the parents/guardians had a satisfactory level of practice; only about 7 per cent had a sufficient level of practice.

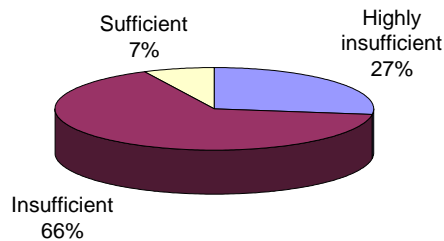
**Distribution of parents/guardians by level of knowledge on all aspects of ECD**



**Distribution of parents/guardians by level of attitude on all aspects of ECD**



**Distribution of parents/guardians by level of practice on all aspects of ECD**



Parents’/guardians’ level of knowledge was higher (43 per cent) in the area of emotional development than in other aspects of ECD. In particular, the level of knowledge on the key message about children receiving love, affection and positive encouragement and opportunities to express and balance their emotions was 49 per cent. The levels of knowledge on cognitive and social development were similar, around 35 per cent, and the level of knowledge on physical development was 30 per cent. The lowest level of knowledge was on child rights and importance of ECD, 20 per cent.

Parents’/guardians’ level of attitude was higher in the area of child rights and importance of ECD (90 per cent) than in other aspects of

ECD, despite that the level of knowledge in this was the lowest. The level of attitude on social development was 86 per cent, the level of attitude on physical development was 84 per cent, and the level of attitude on cognitive development was 78.5 per cent. The level of attitude on emotional development was the lowest, 78 per cent, although the level of knowledge in this area was the highest.

Parents'/guardians' level of practice was higher in the area of child rights and importance of ECD (36 per cent) than in other aspects of ECD, in spite of the fact that the level of knowledge in this area was the lowest. A high level of attitude seems to influence practice. The level of practice on physical development was 34 per cent, the level of practice on social development was 29.5 per cent, and the level of practice on emotional development was 27 per cent, which was lower than the level of knowledge in this aspect. The lowest level of practice was in cognitive development, 16 per cent. Overall, a large percentage of parents/guardians lacked adequate practice in all aspects of ECD. Qualitative information revealed that a major reason for the low level of practice was the poor economic condition of the families. For example, although parents/guardians were aware about the importance of toilets, they took their children out for defecation because they did not have enough money with which to construct toilets.

A districtwise comparison showed that parents/guardians in Bajhang had the highest overall level in knowledge and parents/guardians in Siraha the highest overall levels in attitude and practice.

A comparison of male and female parents/guardians in all combined aspects of ECD showed that females had a slightly higher overall level of knowledge than males (35 per cent compared to 34 per cent). Males had a slightly higher level of knowledge than females in child rights and importance of ECD (21 per cent compared to 20 per cent), and cognitive development (37 per cent compared to 35.5 per cent). Females had a slightly higher level of knowledge than males in physical development (35 per cent compared to 33.5 per cent). Males and females had a similar level of knowledge in social development, 37 per cent, and emotional development, 43 per cent.

A comparison of male and female parents/guardians in all combined aspects of ECD showed that males had a slightly higher overall level of attitude than females (85 per cent compared to 84 per cent). Males had a slightly higher level of attitude than females in child rights and importance of ECD (91 per cent compared to 88 per cent), physical development (84.5 per cent compared to 84 per cent), social development (88 per cent compared to 85 per cent), and emotional development (79 per cent compared to 77 per cent). Females had a slightly higher level of attitude than males in cognitive development (79 per cent compared to 78 per cent).

A comparison of male and female parents/guardians in all combined aspects of ECD showed that males and females had a similar overall level of practice, 27 per cent. Males had a slightly higher level of practice than females in child rights and importance of ECD (39 per cent compared to 35 per cent) and physical development (35 per cent compared to 33.5 per cent). Females had a slightly higher level of practice than males in cognitive development (17 per cent compared to 15 per cent) and social development (30 per cent compared to 29 per cent). Males and females had a similar level of practice on emotional development, 27 per cent.

A comparison of KAP levels of parents/guardians with and without exposure to PE revealed that parents/guardians with PE exposure had a slightly higher level of knowledge and practice than parents/guardians without PE exposure. There was no difference in the levels of attitude. Parents/guardians with PE had higher levels of knowledge in physical and social development than parents/guardians without PE. Parents/guardians with PE exposure had a higher level of practice than parents/guardians without PE exposure in all aspects except cognitive development.

## **Recommendations**

The survey clearly indicates that there is a need to undertake a comprehensive study of the effectiveness and impact of PE programmes currently being implemented coupled with the (possible) need to revise the PE packages. Data show that the levels of

knowledge and practice in various aspects of ECD were extremely low in parents/guardians with PE and without PE both although exposure to PE did show some positive impact on knowledge of physical and social development and practice in physical development. The level of knowledge in all aspects of ECD was low, which suggests that the PE packages need enhancing, particularly on child rights, importance of ECD and physical development.

Parents/guardians with PE exposure are expected to benefit from a refresher programme after a defined period of time.

Unavailability of facilities such as toilets and play materials in the families has lowered the level of practice in parents/guardians. So the PE programmes should include components of development of skills for parents/guardians on the construction of low-cost toilets and children's play materials.

Children need support and services from both male and female members of the family, but findings suggest that PE programmes have not been able to include males and females to the same extent--especially in Bajhang and Dadeldhura. Strategies aimed at equal participation of males and females in the PE programmes should be designed and implemented.

Key messages developed for the survey should be used for wider advocacy and in communication efforts. They should also be incorporated in adult education programmes so that they could reach a wider audience.

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## **Expect Male Involvement**

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At the World Forum in Montreal, Canada (2005) Don P. of Hawaii approached me and placed a promotional pin on my shirt which read "Expect Male Involvement – Gender Balance is Good for Young Children". Mr. P's explanation of the phrase on the pin was that all change starts with the expectation of change. That pin and the ensuing conversation began an interesting journey for me. My hope is that in sharing this journey, you too will find your expectations and the way you do your work changing.

If, as an owner/manager of a program for young children, I were to ask you whether or not you really expected men to be involved in the care and education of young children, what would you say? My guess is that, although you would dearly love to have a male staff and might answer "yes", you really do not think of it in terms of "something important is missing in our environment and it is my job to fix this problem". This became very obvious to me a few years ago while having a staffing conversation with my assistant (Donna). For a moment it looked like we would need to place three male staff in a classroom that only had three staff. Donna looked at me with all sincerity and asked this probing question, "Do you really think that is a good idea? There are a lot of little girls in that classroom." Instantly I found myself responding to her comment in two ways. First I quickly agreed with her. At the same time, I felt my heart sink as I realized in 25 years, no one, not even myself, had ever raised a similar concern when there were only female staff placed in a room. Even though each of the classrooms is occupied by 50% boys, the question was never asked, why? Could this possibly reveal the truth that we do not expect male involvement the way we expect female involvement? I believe it does.

The previous thoughts express some of the early events that started a journey for me: from a place where I simply accepted things the way they were, to a place where I considered it my responsibility to remove the obstacles that exist around me - obstacles that hinder the recruitment and retention of male staff.

“Wait,” you say. Let’s back this discussion up a little bit. Why is it important to have male staff in our Early Childhood programs? Why does it even matter that children are being raised in an almost totally female environment in Early Childhood programs in Canada (and most parts of the world)? Does it matter for boys only? Or for girls as well? As I am not an academic, I have little clue if research has much to say on this topic. However, after 30 years of observation I would say that it is very important to have both male and female staff present in the classroom. If boys are to grow up to be productive and healthy men, they will need to have many good male role models. This is true especially in countries like Canada, where the divorce rate is about 50% and 75% of mothers with young children are in the workforce away from home. I believe that it is important for both girls and boys to regularly see men and women working cooperatively together. This demonstrates how men and women can together share roles of decision making, child rearing, domestic duties and even disagreeing with each other, while finding peaceful ways to work out their differences. The demonstration of these values will help enforce the belief that all children can grow up to be whatever they want to be. Many also believe that role modeling non-violent problem solving between women and men will help eliminate violence towards women. Watching healthy male/female relationships shows girls how they should expect to be treated by a man and shows boys how to treat women in respectful ways.

In our culture, as I suspect in other parts of the world, men and women are quite different in the way they act. We see these differences in how they build relationships with each other as men, how they solve problems, how physically active they like to be and how they feel about engaging in risky and exciting activities. My experience is that having men on staff broadens the range of normal

human behavior children will experience and thus adds to the richness and diversity of the learning environment. Further, my experience has shown that it is more likely that laughter will abound, children will be touched more often in positive ways (due to the rough and tumble play men love to engage in) and children will experience more highly emotional (excitement, surprise) times when men are present. As male staff engage children in play fighting, chasing, surprising and teasing behaviour, children will experience a broader range of emotions than if the child-adult experiences are more limited in variety. Although these behaviors are not exclusive to male staff, my experience is that they happen to a much lesser degree and frequency amongst female staff. Let me be clear, I am not trying to place a higher value on “male” behavior. I am simply trying to make a case for a balance to exist. I would no more want to have all male staff than all female staff.

I trust you might now agree with me that gender balance is good for young children and that our past expectations need changing. I also hope that you will not fall into the trap that many in Canada have fallen into, where we simply believe that we will secure male staff the same way we secure female staff. I am absolutely convinced that this is not true. Much like fishing, you will need to carefully evaluate the type of hook you use to catch the male staff you want to hire. My friend Kenny S. from Scotland would say, "You must target your advertising." Because child rearing has traditionally been work for women in North America, it is assumed that an advertisement for workers in our Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs is an advertisement aimed exclusively towards women. If we simply used the traditional means of advertising for staff vacancies, we would continue to receive 98% to 100% female applicants for our staff vacancies. Men rarely respond to a typical advertisement for work in a “child care” or “early childhood education” centre. It is as if an invisible sign hangs above the entry doors of all of our programs, flashing out the message, “only women need apply”. My own experiment with targeting advertising took place in May of 2007 when

the following advertisement was placed in the General Help Wanted section of our local newspaper.

*Looking for a few good men with the courage to work in child care. Discovery Centre believes gender balance is good for young children. Interested? Call ...*

Thirty men replied to the advertisement. This is in stark contrast to a typical response rate of 40 women and perhaps one man to the types of advertisements I used in the past. The shocking realization that there are many kind and mature men who are interested in our line of work has empowered me to believe that I can do something about improving the gender balance in my world. This lesson was reinforced by one of the male staff we hired. Luke S. shared with his colleagues that secretly he had wanted to apply for work at an early childhood program for two years, but feared being labeled as a sexual predator. After discovering that our centre had male staff, he built up the courage to do so. Luke S. saw our advertisement as an open door and proudly walked in. Through the use of these strategies, our Centre presently employs 12 male staff (27 per cent). This is more than seven times the Canadian average of three to four per cent.

Aside from using the concept of targeted advertising I have made the following efforts to aid in the recruitment and retention of Men in Early Childhood Education:

1. In an effort to challenge the expectations of employers and bring attention to this issue, I have initiated a group which I have named "Club 2-10". I am inviting all Canadian owners/managers to join by committing to employing at least two male staff. Members of the club are also asked to work towards having 10 per cent male staff by the year 2010. To date, over 55 directors in centers across Canada have embraced the idea and have committed themselves to these targets.
2. I have started an MECE (Men in ECE) Support Group in Winnipeg, Canada. We gather regularly and provide a meeting place for men who usually work in isolation in our sector. Providing a connection with other men encourages these males

to stay in the ECE profession and offsets the isolation that most men in our sector experience.

3. In 2006, I joined the *Working Forum on Men in Early Childhood Education* (MECE) leadership team. Composed of 10 members from all continents, the leadership team is working on creating a worldwide movement towards a more gender-balanced workforce in the ECE sector. One of our first tasks was to initiate an international gathering to discuss various aspects of men in early childhood education, which took place in Hawaii in May of 2008. An absolute thrill it was to be in the presence of about 100 men and 40 women (from 14 countries) committed to making a difference in the lives of young children by addressing this issue.

If you would like to be connected to this MEC (Men in Early Childhood Education) movement, you are invited to explore the following websites:

[www.worldforumfoundation.org](http://www.worldforumfoundation.org);      [www.menteach.org](http://www.menteach.org);  
[www.mencare2.com](http://www.mencare2.com);  
[www.meninchildcare.com](http://www.meninchildcare.com); [www.ecmenz.org](http://www.ecmenz.org);  
OR e-mail the writer at [rblatz@discoverycc.com](mailto:rblatz@discoverycc.com)