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Contributions

The journal invites articles and book reviews from academicians, researchers and practitioners from both Nepal and abroad. Manuscripts should be sent to one of the joint editors:

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Preface

ECD Resource Centre established at the Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID), Tribhuvan University with the support of 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 editors of the journal.

This volume consists of six articles written by academicians, professionals and experts in the area of ECD. The articles cover a wide range of areas—Hearing the voice of the child, Minimum standard of early childhood development centers, Holistic early childhood development of young children and noteworthy practices in Asia-Pacific region, Relationship between effective performance factors and teacher retention in pre-primary and primary grades, Quantity versus quality early childhood development services in Nepal, and A case of early identification of visual imparity of ECD children: One of the strategies for holistic development.

The papers were contributed by the distinguished writers both from in country and abroad. We hope the readers will find the articles included in this volume interesting and useful.

I appreciate the collaborative spirit of Dr Kishor Shrestha, Dr Wayne Eastman and Dr Jacqueline Hayden to bring out this volume. On behalf of CERID, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Mr Shiva Bhusal of UNICEF Nepal for the support received in publishing this journal. I acknowledge the contributions made by all the writers whose articles have appeared 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.

January 2013

Prof. Krishna Chandra Sharma, PhD.
Executive Director
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Are we listening? Hearing the voice of the child

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“Very early in life, children demonstrate that they have a voice, but above all that they know how to listen and be listened to” (Rinaldi 2001, p.82).

Introduction

In most countries the term ‘child’ is defined as a person under the age of 18 years, with the exception of those countries where young people are regarded as adults in legislation from an early age. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) aims to define and promote the political, cultural, health and social rights of children by embracing these rights within a monitored treaty.

A designated United Nations committee monitors those countries that subscribe to the Convention to assure compliance. Upon signing the treaty each country becomes answerable for its application - the way in which the treaty is applied and subsequently impacts the life and experiences of the child.

A number of provisions written into the Convention on the Rights of the Child support a child's right to participation. As a guiding principle of the convention, Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have a right to participate in the decision-making processes that are relevant to them, their lives, their family, and that influence decisions taken in their school and community. Theoretically simple, it is a principle that presents us with one of the greatest challenges, that is, the challenge of providing opportunities through which the child's voice can be heard, allowing, in turn, full and meaningful participation. It is in this context that the following article explores the Action Research used in one setting as a vehicle for listening to and hearing the voice of the child.

Action research and the reflective educator

Action Research is a qualitative, storytelling methodology that originated in experimental intervention in organizations and communities (Adelman 1993).

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It is not intended to be absolute in outcome, more an approach that enables participants to draw upon the knowledge and experience gained from active participation and reflection in the study (Cunningham 1999). In the context of this study Action Research provides a meaningful way in which adults and children, as participants, engage in experiences that are documented and assessed. The study adopts a constant evaluative approach to participation (Carr and Kemmis 1986) through which children's experiences are captured and through which active listening is applied to all communication modes and the voice of the child is heard.

The participants

Participants in this investigation attended Boulder Journey School in Boulder, Colorado, USA. Since 1995, the philosophy, pedagogy and practice of the school have been transformed through ongoing reflective practice and Action Research. While the schools for young children in Reggio Emilia, Italy inspire and support the work of the school, it is important to recognise that the values and principles providing the foundation for the work can be broadly applied. Central to the philosophy of the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education is the right of all children to participation, not only as citizens of the future but also as citizens of the present. It is a notion that strongly resonates with the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in which the right to participation was included alongside the rights of protection and provision.

Children's rights addressed through four principles

The work of Boulder Journey School focuses on promoting children's rights through the adoption of four principles.

The first principle is that children's rights deserve open and honest consideration amongst the community of adults (Hall & Rudkin 2011). This principle highlights the central premise that to effectively promote children's rights, adults must be prepared to listen to children, welcome the perspectives of the child, and actively engage with children using a range of communication methods that are age and stage appropriate to the child.

While central to good early years education, active listening can challenge an adult's perception of the place of the child in a community, while at the same time opening opportunities to challenge the beliefs and values of the adult: it can necessitate a need and willingness to "accommodate disturbances to one's own views," a willingness to "learn and change as a result of encounters with children" (Hall and Rudkin 2011). Superficially, this would appear to be a challenge to the more didactic approach to working with children; however, to truly engage with children at a meaningful level, active

listening presents a challenge to all educators. Requiring a sound knowledge of child development, and a skillful ability to differentiate the requirements of individual and groups of children, active listening is an essential communication tool (Graham 2011). The question it raises, particularly when working with very young children, is what are we listening to?

Given the breadth of communication skills used by young children, spanning a significant developmental range, it is clear that an active listener must be wholly conversant with a range of verbal and non-verbal communication cues. This emphasises not only the importance of taking time to listen but also the importance of facilitating dialogue so that context, conflict and exploration can be developed. It is through engaging in themes of shared interest that a community of respect for a diversity of opinion is developed alongside a broadening and deepening understanding of communication.

The second principle challenges those working with children to replace images of children as vulnerable, unformed, and untrustworthy with images of children as capable and competent people. Treating children as capable and competent supports them in both expressing and enhancing their competence and reinforces their value and place in a caring community. This principle must be afforded equal weight with active listening (Principle 1) as it requires of educators an ability to respond appropriately to children, having heard their message, retaining open avenues of communication that are supported through practices of inclusivity, equity and respect.

Both principles underpin the third principle of supporting and enhancing a child's ability to participate. In adopting this principle, adults are required to balance the value attributed to the individual and collective voices of children and in so doing cultivate the spaces that support meaningful participation.

The fourth principle determines that children's rights are not conditional, nor are they a zero-sum entity. Brought together, the four principles encompass a philosophy of practice that provides the conditions in which children's rights are promoted in ways that do not necessitate taking rights away from adults. On the contrary, as this study aims to show, there is a symbiotic benefit in supporting children to exert their right to be heard.

Children's dramatic play performances – theory to practice

Children's dramatic play performances begin in the toddler years when children are able to emulate what they see around them in order to make sense of their world. As they begin to imitate the world around them they can be seen barking and meowing like dogs and cats as they move throughout the classroom. As their play develops, the children pretend to be various people in their lives – mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters – and scripts

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emerge as they blend their pretend characters with those of their friends and turn exploration into performance. The audiences for these emerging performances are often other children in the class, who may ask to join in, adding both characters and new story lines to the play. The process of creating plays and performing them for audiences provides an opportunity for children to give voice to their feelings and ideas while others watch and listen.

The following narratives of children's dramatic play performances provide examples of ways in which the voice of the child can be promoted and heard without reliance upon costly resources, such as purchased costumes, elaborate props, and large, fully equipped stages. Notably, in these examples children use what is available in their environment to articulate thoughts, opinions, emotions and experiences. The applications of the principles are therefore broad and can be applied to any setting. As the descriptions of children's performances below illustrate, it is often what is unsaid that children desire to be heard.

The Ballet of Heaven

In *The Ballet of Heaven* the children find ways to exert their preferences for expression, while also providing ways to comfortably and safely express a choice not to engage in ballet class. As the story develops, death appears to be used as a way of leaving behind adult directed activity, as conversely, heaven symbolises the freedom of children to make decisions free of constraint.

The story grew out of a conversation among three prekindergarten-age children about a ballet class, which many of the children attend outside of school. Two of the girls expressed their dislike of this class. They wanted to dance in their own ways. The third child, who respected her friends' opinions, but still enjoyed ballet class herself, reminded the others that at school they could dance any way they wished and suggested they create their own ballet. After many months of work that included selecting sounds and music, making costumes, painting the backdrop, designing posters, and selling tickets, the ballet was performed before an audience, composed of families, children, and faculty.

The Ballet of Heaven opens with a woman's voice saying, "Girls, it's time for ballet." The girls leave their homes in a neighborhood on earth and chant, "We're not going to ballet," as they march six blocks toward class. Upon reaching the sixth block, they are shot by an unknown assailant and fall to the floor. They scoot away and die. Two heavenly fairies emerge from behind the scenery and wave their wands over the girls, who rise from their prone positions. The girls awaken in heaven and dance the way they wished to

dance all along. They twirl, tiptoe, spin, and smile. The performance ends with cartwheels and bows.

Teachers' observations include:

The role of the mother is portrayed in voice only, and the role of the assailant in instrument only - both are unseen adults.

The dancers' bodies move stiffly on earth, but fluidly and softly in heaven.

The children describe heaven:

Heaven is calm, and calm is silver.

Heaven has gold with rainbows and flowers.

Fairies live there and magical things, maybe angels

Heaven is in the sky but with no birds; birds cannot fly that high to get to heaven.

There is a Queen of Heaven, and she makes the dead people get up and dance with magic. She's very beautiful. She's really calm.

There's a lot of magic in our heaven.

Teachers also noted that when the dancers made their transition from earth to heaven, they moved to a slightly elevated platform. For the music of heaven, instruments were tested for their qualities; beauty, calm and magic were paramount. The girls insisted that there were to be no sounds on earth, except human voices and the gunshot.

The description of The Ballet of Heaven illustrates the children's effectiveness in finding appropriate vehicles through which to exercise their right to make choices. In this example they have worked together to describe their emotional responses to choice making through the vehicle of movement and music. The limited use of language serves to emphasise the value of a dominant non-verbal mode of communication in young children, and the importance of teacher observation to hearing the voice of the child. As described earlier, heaven represents a place free from adult intervention, marked by a sense of calm, magic and beauty - a freedom expressed primarily and effectively through non-verbal modes of communication.

The Song of the Lonely Tree

The articulation of thoughts and experiences through multiple modes of communication is present in The Song of the Lonely Tree. In this narrative, children explore feelings, beliefs and perceptions about friendship. Originating in conversation and focusing on explorations involving the use of

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concrete materials, this narrative evolved over time to incorporate different forms of expression that provided a stronger vehicle for expressing the developing social and emotional experiences of the children.

The Song of the Lonely Tree culminated a yearlong investigation of trees by 4- and 5-year-old children that began with their curiosity about the tree outside their classroom. The children drew many pictures of trees. Reflecting on their drawings, the teachers realized that the children weren't just expressing the tree's physical characteristics, but also the tree's emotions. The teachers offered the children paint and clay as additional mediums through which to express their ideas, and provided them with cameras to photograph their special tree.

The children's representations and conversations indicated that they were making connections between their own lives and the lives of trees. Every child had a story to tell about a special tree in his or her own life. One of the children sculpted clay trees, inspired by her relationship with a tree in her neighborhood park. She said that the tree was made for children. During a group excursion to visit this tree, the children expressed that the tree made them feel joyful, brave, strong, and safe. Following the trip to the park, another child formed a clay tree, stating, "I want my tree to do ballet." This led to the exploration of the relationship between the children's tree representations and body movements. As the investigation evolved, the children said they wanted to make their work public; they wanted to create a show. They worked together, sharing their individual expertise, while planning, producing, and performing, The Song of the Lonely Tree. Sculptures, drawings and stories inspired costume and scenery design, choreography, and song lyrics. The children's work moved from small to large scale, a task that required much engineering and mathematical thinking.

The song lyrics illustrate the children's desire for friendship to protect them from loneliness and from "getting lost" and their belief that trees desire friendship as well.

Lonely Tree (standing on a platform above a group of trees)

I just don't have anybody.

I wish I had somebody who's running free.

I just want somebody to keep me from getting lost.

Group of trees (in unison)

You're not so lonely.

Do you want to play with us?

Lonely Tree

Of course I would like to.

How would you get me down?

Group of trees

We'll carry you down.

The process leading to the performance of *The Song of the Lonely Tree*, confirms, as stated in the opening of this article, that “very early in life, children demonstrate that they have a voice, but above all that they know how to listen and be listened to” (Rinaldi 2001, P.82). Made equally clear in the narrative is that children’s voices can only be truly heard if adults around them commit to hearing these voices (Marshall 2006), and if they skillfully help children exercise their right to be heard.

All Things Magical

The multiple modes of communication evident in *The Song of the Lonely Tree* are also found in the story of *All Things Magical*. In this story, perceptions of good and evil are explored as children work together to design a safe world. As they create and convey messages about good and evil, the children exhibit a willingness to adopt a variety of persona, to experience the sense of inhabiting a particular role, and finally the desire to experience safety and reward, 'the good' in bringing to life the slain Prince, contrasted with a desire to combat fear and uncertainty 'the evil'. They succeed in being heard, actively promoting the desire for goodness by ensuring that the Dragon remains slain.

All Things Magical, a musical, was inspired by the children’s construction of a clay castle. Princesses and knights, also created from clay, would dance in the castle, protected from an evil dragon by tall walls, a lookout tower, and a drawbridge.

The dancing figures in the children’s castle led to a desire by the children to become princesses and knights and to dance in the school’s theater – and the making of a performance began. The children’s story about knights and princesses included an intrusion by the dragon that slew the prince and was then slain by the knights. The prince came to life again, but the dragon remained slain. Children created the musical score for their presentation by listening to tracks of music and deciding which phrases represented the actions and emotions of the story. They understood that the story needed only music to deliver its message of good conquering evil. “The music is magic because it tells the story of the ballet. The people don’t talk, they just listen to the music” (Mac, age 3). The audience for this performance

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consisted of families, children and faculty, who attended the evening event in full costume.

As children explored the difficult concepts of life and death, good and evil and permanence they clearly worked to communicate thoughts, ideas, assumptions and experiences. They showed remarkable communication skills for children of a young age, clearly evidencing that children have a voice - we just need to hear it - to listen.

Listening and learning

The children described in this article demonstrate their ability to listen to the ideas of others while creating their performances, simultaneously demonstrating both their desire and their willingness to be listened to - to make their ideas known to others through story, dance and song. It is important to note that performances emerged from the children's work – conversations about ballet class, an investigation of trees, and the creation of a clay castle and a story about a dragon intruding on a dance.

What of the adults? The adult's role is to provide skilled scaffolding and support; understanding children bringing together knowledge and experience, enabling children to extend their learning, to develop from what they know and understand to the new, to build and create the conditions in which the community thrives and evolves and in which social and emotional skills provide a solid foundation for a broader education.

In the stories shared, the adult role is one of sensitively and expertly adopting and adapting guidelines for listening that include offering opportunities for the children to communicate using verbal and non-verbal languages and listening patiently, offering the children the space and time to participate. Adults illustrate their images of children as capable and competent by conveying to them that their voices are important and respected, and by encouraging the children to engage in their own processes of discovery and meaning making. They support and encourage developing peer relationships by providing opportunities for the children to offer collective, as well as individual voices and by cultivating spaces that support the children's participation (Hall & Rudkin 2011).

In more traditional schools, teachers determine the content of children's performances. Scripts are written for children, who audition for their roles and memorize their lines. Teachers choose the music and costumes and scenery are designed and made by adults. Contrast this with the participation that stems from involving children in every aspect of a performance, from the writing of the script to the creation of costumes from found and recycled materials to the selection of musical scores from other musical compositions.

The Boulder Journey School narratives describe long-term investments in improving professional practice that support freedom of expression for children that is unhindered by manipulation or pressure from adults. It is clear that the philosophy and practice of the school serve to provide the conditions in which educators are enabled to hear the voice of the child, and in which deep and meaningful opportunities are offered to children that encourage freedom of expression. As the narratives reveal the actions and experiences of adults and children, the reader is provided with powerful messages about how theory translates into strong frontline practices. The narratives' overarching message is that adults can contribute positively to encouraging freedom of expression by providing the conditions for childhood participatory experiences that build social skills and emotional resilience.

The four principles of participation (described in the concluding chapter of the book, *Seen and heard: Children's rights in early childhood education*) are designed to guide adult practices that take into account the individual and collective rights, age, maturity and abilities of children. This means finding ways of encouraging and supporting expression. Children cannot actively participate in civil meetings or write letters to the editor, but they can perform asking of the audience 'open and honest consideration' being treated as capable and competent individuals (Principles 1 and 2 (Hall and Rudkin 2011, page 112)).

Reflecting on both the principles and observations of skillful and competent educators reminds us that an educator's understanding of the holistic requirements of the child, an ability to adapt to a child's growing capacity for decision-making, is critical to ensuring that the child becomes, and remains, confident to express him or herself. When practised well, as described in the narratives, the skills of the adult scaffold (Vygotsky 1978) the learning of the child. However, when practice is poor the outcome can potentially be damaging. The danger is that an ill-informed educator can reduce the process of listening to children to that of the simple expectation of a verbal response to a series of questions. The unfortunate outcome is that applying limitations to the range of communication methods a child may desire to draw upon can result in the child being, and/or feeling, manipulated (Hamer 2010). In turn, the child comes to an understanding that their contributions are of little consequence or matter.

Skillful educators understand the importance of active listening (Alderson 2008) adapting to the child and to the environment, thus establishing the conditions in which the child or children can express themselves fully. These educators engage with the individual child, often within a group, and adapt to their individual interests, age, experience and maturity. More, they understand that this process, as described in the Boulder Journey School experiences, can take time, and that listening to children and promoting

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participation does not necessarily equate to the child making decisions. They understand the necessity of helping children negotiate their own contributions to decision-making, in skillful and sensitive ways that do not compromise the right of the child to free expression.

Skill development is embedded in the third principle that draws together adults and children in a community of learning (Graham and Williams 2009). Through observation, coaching and mentoring, the skills of effective participation can be developed for the adult and child, and, as the conditions for free expression are cultivated, an understanding of democracy is promoted. The description of the fourth principle provides a timely reminder that the child/adult community of decision-making is not about negotiation of power or responsibility. It is more about engaging in appropriate, differentiated activities that support freedom of expression and the development of skills, maturity and confidence that are enabling factors when making and influencing decisions. What becomes evident from the Boulder Journey School narratives is that true participation is simply an extension of the provision of positive learning experiences that fulfil the emotional and social requirements of children in the school community.

The descriptions of the performances bring to life evidence of the positive impact that collaboration, creativity and community can have on a child's developing self-confidence, self-esteem and self-belief. The descriptions of performances provide the reader with evidence that the community of children at the school are confident that they will be heard. Narratives describing children's experiences suggest that they understand the importance of the audience when communicating their thoughts and ideas that they have learned to tailor their communication to the audience, and that they have learned to trust that the audience will listen.

While the focus of the article is about the experiences of the child, it is evident that careful and particular attention must be paid to the role of the adults in the scaffolding of these experiences. The community of adults involved in the lives of these young children have clearly come together to provide the conditions that encourage and promote expression, and that champion the voice of the child across the school, family and community.

For these children, the collective audience provide a powerful message: they are learning that their contributions are respected and that they and their contributions are valued. Equally, they are learning how to express themselves, the importance of self-investment in developing skills of self-expression, the importance of listening to and negotiating with peers, and different methods of negotiating and expressing an opinion with adults.

Reflections upon the inter-weaving of adult and child experiences that contributed to the performances reinforce the belief that leadership is key to developing the quality practices of the 'skilled, intuitive practitioner' (Graham 2010) in the childcare and education community, that skilled educators are key to the positive experiences of the child, and that the combined efforts of skilful leaders and skilful educators are essential in promoting a learning community in which continually improving competency matters and from which children benefit.

The power of audiences listening to children's messages, delivered through their performances, is enhanced by the audiences' responses. Adult members of the audience have the responsibility to reflect with the children on what they hear and see – the interpretive meanings behind individual and group choices of words, songs, musical scores, sounds, choreography, actions, costumes etc. These conversations offer adults critical insights into children's thoughts and feelings about their world: the stage becomes the child's platform to be heard.

What these narratives illustrate is the symbiotic benefits brought about by investing in communication "Just as love is self-perpetuating – the more we give away, the more we find available – so, too, can a world exist in which respect grows to encircle us all, children and adults alike" (Hall & Rudkin 2011, p. 114). These performances provide a cyclical model of respect for adults by children and children by adults; children make their ideas and feelings audible and visible to adults because they respect them; in turn, adults respect children by supporting their interest in performance, offering opportunities for making the children's ideas and feelings audible and visible. Additionally, adults respect children by assuming the role of audience - watching, listening, and reflecting on the messages the children convey through performance.

When a program is built upon the philosophy of deep and meaningful engagement with children, such as that found at Boulder Journey School, we can be assured that the voices of children will be heard and respected, not just in performance but in all aspects of their lives. When we reflect upon the quality of that learning, we are reminded that quality is 'something people do' (Alexander 2010, p117) and that children are our present and our future: we reap what we sow.

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Minimum standard of early childhood development centers: Status, issues and challenges

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Background

Enabling environment available at home and ECD centers contribute to the quality of physical, social, emotional and cognitive development and learning performance of children. The World Declaration on 'Education for All' refers quality as prerequisite for achieving the fundamental goal of equity, inclusion and access (UNESCO,2005). Quality education is the right of every child, which is determinant of enrolment, retention and achievement in formal education (UNESCO, 2005). It also refers to the set of desirable characteristics of learners (healthy, motivated students), processes (competent teachers using active pedagogies), content (relevant curricula) and systems (good governance and equitable resource allocation) (UNESCO,2005). Quality standard differ on the basis of needs, context and values of nation. The notion of quality education has been better addressed in an integrated and comprehensive view of learning as the pillars of education which are popularly known as "Learning to know, Learning to do, Learning to live together and Learning to be (Delors et al.,1996 cited in UNESCO). The importance of ECD has been addressed in 'Education for All' and states: " Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged childhood should be a policy objective" (EFA 2000). Since then the community based ECD and preprimary classes has been growing in our country. There are 31089 ECD centers all over the country benefitting 1018543 children (Girls-488916) out of 1454046 children four years of age (DOE,2011/2012).It shows 30% of children are still in exclusion.

Early Childhood Development (ECD) program is increasingly being popular day by day due to its vitality in the formation and development of foundation in children's later life. 'The rate of returns of pre-school programmes on Human Development Investments are greater than those on other areas of education' (Heckman & Masterov, 2004 cited in Dybdahl, 2011). However, there is hardly any authentic report on the status of ECD centers functioning in districts. There are various queries on its access, actions, achievement, appraisal of environment, pedagogy, resources and so on. The present scenario necessitate to explore the status of ECD centers, issues, challenges and the area to be improved to foster quality in ECD centers. In

Minimum standard of early childhood development centers

this response, the National Minimum Standard for ECD center was developed to specify the quality practices of ECD in the country. National Minimum Standard for ECD Centers (2010) intend to bring uniformity among ECD/PPC, improve quality, expand effectively and guide in monitoring and evaluation to ensure the quality standard. There are eight major areas namely (a) Physical infrastructure of the ECD centers (b) Health, Nutrition, safety and Sanitation (c) Learning materials at ECD centers (d) Outdoor environment (e) ECD Management committee (f) Human resource (g) Quality learning materials in center and (h) document management. These major areas include twelve important sub standard areas. This paper, therefore, presents the status of ECD centers, issues and the challenges with respect to the notion of EFA goals and National minimum standard (2010).

Objective: The purpose of this paper is to explore the status, issues and challenges of early childhood development centers.

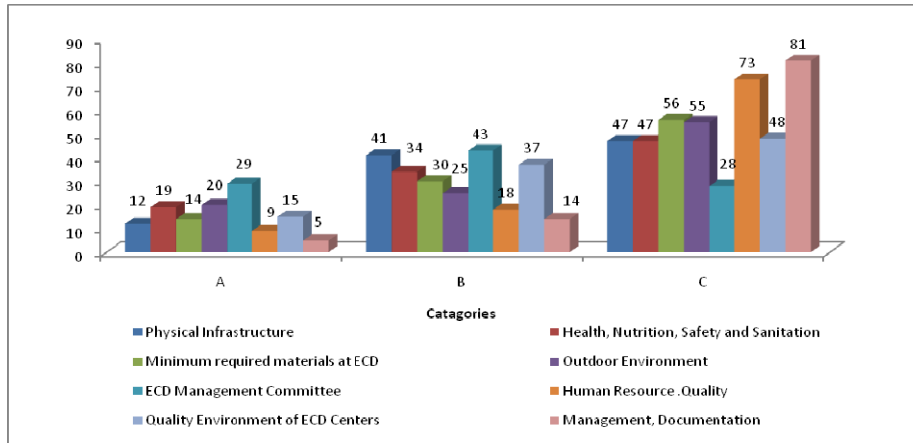
Methodology

A survey was carried out in 1925 randomly selecting ECD/PPC centers from 21 districts¹ of Nepal. Facilitators, members of management committees, parents of the selected ECD/PPC centers were the respondents of the study. A checklist based on the ECD National Minimum Standard was developed to elicit data from the field. The checklist with the Likert Scale rating consisted of the indicators from eight different standard areas among others. The data obtained from the field were computed and analyzed through SPSS device. The Centers /PPCs were ranked as A, B and C referring Good, Satisfactory and Poor among national minimum standards.

¹ Districts covered for the study: Nawalparasi, Siraha, Udaypur,.....

Data Presentation and Description

Figure 1: Status of ECD/PPC centers based on National Minimum Standard



The above diagram categorizes the 1925 ECD centers into A, B and C. The status of ECD centers in each aspect mentioned in the diagram has been presented as a percentage. The diagram above reveals that maximum number of ECD centers come under the category 'C' and only a few fall into the category 'A'. This shows a large number of ECD centers lack the requirement as mentioned in the minimum standard for quality ECD centers. The status, in terms of the areas mentioned above, need increased attention in order to be strengthened. Some of the districts like Baglung, Kailali, Siraha, Udaypur, Tanahu, Nawalparasi, Mugu and Mahottari have achieved 'A' categories of ECD minimum standards in each area/ aspect. But districts like Kanchanpur, Bardia, Achham, Kalikot, Rolpa, Rukum, Saptari, Sunsari, Dhanusa, Doti, Sindhupalchok, and Bajura have achieved a large number of B categories in ECD standards. Most of the observed communities and ECD centers in the districts were reported to be politically affected and socio economically deprived. Out of ECD centers studied 7% (131nos), 29% (558nos) and 64% (1236nos) of them appeared into category 'A', 'B' and 'C' respectively. Again, of all the ECD centers in category 'B' only 18% are average in human resource and 14% of them are average in documentation. Similarly, the ECD management aspect showed 43% of the ECD centers in category 'B' as average.

Major Findings

In eight areas of the ECD National Minimum Standard, 'Human Resource' was found to be very weak. There are some major issues related to human

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resource at the ECD centers in the country. The low morale of human resource is supposed to be the consequence of low remuneration of facilitators, which causes high turnover of facilitators in the ECD centers. The facilitators at ECD centers also have inadequate opportunity to strengthen their competence in line with the complexity of the subject matter. Many facilitators were found untrained (UNICEF, 2009).

The study also showed that the practice of documentation related to centers' financial and administrative activities was very poor. Since only one facilitator is assigned for one ECD center, it became very tough for the facilitator to maintain the documentation of ECD centers along with doing other responsibilities. The other reason behind the very weak documentation of the ECD centers is that the facilitators are not adequately trained in proper documentation of the activities.

Similarly, the outdoor environment of the center rarely met the standard in most districts. Likewise, the quality learning materials in the ECD/PPC were scarce and outdated. The study also showed that there is a close association among all the eight major areas and twelve sub-areas, and more than 150 indicators and nine ideal indicators.

Issues and challenges

1. Policy guideline and accountability dilemma
2. Sustainability of community-based ECD having low minimum standard
3. Curriculum, pedagogy and learning resources constraints
4. Knowledge, skills and attitude on ECD and sense of commitment in ECD facilitators and management committee
5. Parents' involvement in maintaining quality ECD
6. Resources mobilization and management
7. Recognition, identity and remuneration of ECD facilitators
8. Accountability, authority and appraisal systems
9. Inter-ministry and sectoral coordination and resource duplication

Conclusion

Quality Early childhood development contributes to human development and educational performance. The National Minimum standard of ECD centers (2010) provides a vision to the ECDs for planning, programming, implementation and evaluation. The indicators referred to in the eight major

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areas, and twelve subareas, ensure the quality of ECD centers /PPCs through strategic planning. The observed ECD centers in the study showed their status at various levels of the recognized standards. Most ECD/PPC need to go forward to maintain their status defined by National Minimum Standard Guidelines (2010). There is a need to revisit the document to make it more specific.

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Holistic early childhood development of young children and noteworthy practices in the Asia-Pacific region

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Early Childhood Development (ECD) addresses young children from age birth-8 years old and their overall development. Development is holistic. This means that each area of development (e.g. physical, socio-emotional, cognitive, etc.) is dependent on the other to ensure that the child will develop to his/her full potential. A wide body of research in the fields of anthropology, developmental psychology, medicine, sociology, and education points to the critical impact of development in the early years of childhood on the formation of intelligence, personality, and social behavior (UNICEF, 2012). The importance of early childhood development is underscored by the UN Convention on the Rights of Children (1989), World Declaration on Education for All (UNECOSO, 1990), Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000) declaration for access of the poorest and vulnerable groups (UNESCO, 2006) to quality education, and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000.

Early childhood development means providing all necessary support to every child to safeguard his/her right to survival, protection, care and education that will ensure optimal development from birth to age 8 (Evans et al, 2007). Early childhood years of life is a critical window to laying the foundations of positive physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development (EFA, 2007).

Early Childhood development is the period from prenatal development to eight years of age. Early childhood development (ECD) is a generic term that refers to a child's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. The same term is often used to describe a range of program which has the ultimate goal of improving young children's capacity to develop and learn, which may occur at many different levels such as child, family and community, and across different sectors such as health, education, and social protection.

The impact of early childhood care and education interventions is highlighted in a series of articles in the well-known medical journal--The Lancet (Engle et al, 2007; Grantham-McGregor et al. 2007; Walker et al. 2007) (Also refer to a follow-up series in Lancet in 2010). Research strongly indicates that during the first three years the brain undergoes rapid and complex development

characterized by key sensitive periods, along with declining plasticity after this period. In addition, delays are increasingly difficult to reverse after age 3 (Mustard, F., 2007).

Based on new research and a new understanding of the complete well-being of the child, early child development is increasingly being focused in the agenda of governing bodies. Ensuring the physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of young children merits the highest priority of every responsible government, organization, community, family and individual for the sake of raising healthy children worldwide (UNICEF, 2012). Bose (2010) stated that during this period, children develop very fast and use all their senses and, as a result, the potential gains are tremendous. At this stage, an appropriate stimulation is necessary that can improve their motor skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, enhanced mathematical thinking, increased creativity, higher level of language development and motivation (Nastasi & Clements, 1993) as well as various socio-emotional skills and healthy life styles.

Early intervention and provisioning make it possible for children to grow and develop to their full potential. Reaching children in a holistic manner and incorporating health, nutrition, water and sanitation, education and interventions that support their full development is crucial (UNICEF, 2012). Early childhood development services provide education and care to children even in the temporary absence of their parents or adult caregivers. These services should be holistic and demonstrate the appreciation of the importance of considering the child's health, nutrition, education, psychosocial and other needs within the context of the family and the community (UNICEF, 2006). Focusing exclusively on targeted intervention that addresses only health and nutrition aspects without considering the holistic nature of Early Childhood Development, overlooks the hindrance to children's complete growth and development (UNICEF, 2012). In order to minimize the need of remedial services to address developmental delay and social problems later in life, it is necessary to establish a proactive measure, or well planned ECD Programme and Services that could cater to the development of physical, cognitive, social and emotional aspects, leading to an overall development of young children.

Rapid advances in biological and behavioral research show early childhood as a time of tremendous brain growth. It is during a child's first few years that the neural connections that shape physical, social, cognitive, and emotional competence develop most rapidly and show the greatest ability to adapt and change. Connections and abilities formed in early childhood form the foundation of subsequent development. As a result, providing the right conditions for healthy

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early development is likely to be much more effective than treating problems later in life (Center on the Developing Child, 2007).

It has been established from a growing body of research that children who participate in early childhood programs do better in school, are healthier, and fare better as adults in terms of being economically productive, emotionally balanced and socially responsible. Research has confirmed this in the context of countries in the Asia and Pacific region (Aboud, F., & H, Kamal, 2005; Plan Bangladesh, 2005; Arnold, C., 2005; ICDS, 2008.).

The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CG-ECCD), a consortium of international groups who work to support ECD activities around the world, have emphasized the ECCD Cornerstones to secure a strong foundation for young children through Cornerstone Working Groups.

- 1) to produce an evidence-based review of ECCD interventions and practices that demonstrated beneficial impact for the development of children 0-3 and that have the potential to inform policy and programming
- 2) focus on quality in early learning programs including measuring quality
- 3) focus on transitions to school and quality in the lower grades of primary school
- 4) development of a policy database.

“Early learning begets later learning and early success breeds later success, just as early failure breeds later failure. Success or failure at this stage lays the foundation for success or failure in school, which in turn leads to success or failure in post-school learning.” (James Heckman, Nobel Prize winning economist, Source, The Science of ECD, 2nd edition (2008) Red River College, Winnipeg, Canada.

Children who participate in early childhood development programs, particularly those that come from disadvantaged backgrounds, are more likely to make successful transition to primary school and to complete the primary education cycle. Also, participating children enjoy better health, learning achievements and socialization skills. Despite these multiple benefits, ECD programs are not a priority for child development and education policy in many countries in this region.

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Children have the right to be listened to, respected, protected, educated and cared for (UNICEF, 2006). Children also have responsibilities towards others. They have to listen to others, care for and respect their peers, siblings, parents and other members of the community. ECD services that address children's rights and responsibilities as part of their developmental programmes ensure that the child develops into a confident, well-balanced and secure person.

A quality ECD service is an important support system within the community. Parents, families and communities have a responsibility to complement the services provided at early childhood development centers. In order to address the child's needs holistically, it is important that there should be close collaboration between the family and the ECD practitioner(s).

Early childhood development is also a specialized field. Knowledge of and insight into child development is vital. An ECD practitioner will show positive attitude towards caring for children. A practitioner shall be sensitive to the needs of children and therefore needs specialized training. The training needs to be of an ongoing nature, and practitioners must be prepared to expand their knowledge.

The needs of children and their families are complex and diverse and cannot be addressed by an organization or department working in isolation. Inter-sectoral collaboration and an integrated approach value the contribution and role different service providers play in ensuring the well being of children. A holistic approach places the child at the centre of a protective and an enabling environment that brings together the elements needed for the full development of that child. (UNICEF 2006)

Integrated early childhood development starts within the family. Within each family, the young child and caregiver should be able to receive necessary psychosocial support and care to promote learning and development. Parents, or primary caregivers and the family, need access to basic social services such as primary health care, adequate nutrition, safe water, basic sanitation, birth registration, protection from abuse and violence, psychosocial support and early childhood care.

According to ARNEC (2011), a noteworthy practice is a programme, initiative or project that has shown initial promise and effectiveness in responding to a particular need of young children (conception to 8 years) and that can serve as an inspiring model for other actors.

ARNEC (2011) defines specific characteristics of **noteworthy practices** as following:

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- Noteworthy practices are useful and practical; they answer a specific need;
- Noteworthy practices show initial effectiveness in addressing the need;
- Noteworthy practices promote holistic responses and empower disadvantaged and excluded groups of children;
- Noteworthy practices mobilize parents and communities to support children's care and development;
- Noteworthy practices are cost-effective and are sustainable over time; they have a clear and realistic sustainability plan

Despite differences in culture, religion and government, countries in the Asia-Pacific region have a shared interest and growing passion transcending ethnic and national groups and boundaries in expanding ECD programs and services. A detailed discussion on each country's efforts and the challenges it faces in universalizing ECCD programs and services without compromising quality is presented in the 2011 SEAMEO INNOTECH Report on ECCD Quality Assurance in Southeast Asia. ARNEC (2011) has recognized a few noteworthy programmes in the field of ECD. There are certainly many more noteworthy practices in the Asia-Pacific region. Each of these programmes has a unique strength.

In Sri Lanka, Plantation Rural Education and Development Organization (PREDO) works for children and parents in the plantations of central Sri Lanka which state services do not reach. The objective of the programme is to educate the parents, especially pregnant mothers, in the importance of ECCD, preschool education, and health and nutrition of the child. Preschools have been set up in the plantations and children between the ages of 2.5 and 5 years are enrolled.

In India, Mobile Crèches focuses on services/programmes for children under 6 years, with special emphasis on the urban poor child and the migrant child in slums and construction sites. People face challenges like uncertain wages, lack of identity, no family support systems for childcare, poor provisions of potable water, sanitation and access to health care. In such situations, Mobile Crèche intervenes to ensure holistic development of the young children with a special focus on 0-3 years.

Bodh Shiksha Samiti is a Rajasthan NGO pioneering innovative approaches in education for the most disadvantaged people in urban slums and rural areas. They work both through their own *bodhshalas* (Bodh's urban non-formal schools, now viewed as a model for

replication elsewhere in urban slum areas of Jaipur) and government schools. Classrooms include plenty of low-cost/no-cost learning materials and there is intensive peer support amongst teachers. Teachers undertake continuous assessment of all students across academic subjects, the arts, and social interactions. The impact of Bodh's approach continues to be documented (AKF, 2006; Gowani and Tiwari, 2006) and is particularly strong for girls and other marginalized students. The *bodhshalas* offer a remarkably seamless integration for students from preschool into primary (Govinda, 2006). Bodh-supported primary schools have had four times less drop-out in primary schools than non-intervention schools in Rajasthan (AKF EMIS, 2004).

In Bangladesh, Save the Children has been implementing a Transition Program Approach for 2002 to 2015 in its different projects. The first project was 'Strong Beginning' piloted in 2002 to 2004 in 70 Primary Schools. The second project 'SUCCEED' from 2005 to 2010 and scaled up in 600 Primary Schools. The existing project is popularly known as 'PROTEEVA' which has been expanding among 2560 Primary Schools within 2010 to 2015.

The Transition Program Approach (TPA) is a package of activities practiced with grades 1 and 2 children in and outside classroom that improves quality of learning and makes each stakeholder aware about his/her roles and responsibility towards children's holistic development. The transition activities take place in close collaboration of community and school. The TPA package consists of Parenting Education for the parents of grades 1 and 2 children, Reception and Welcome Event for Grade 1 children and their parents, Reading Buddy and Mentoring, School health and Nutrition, Community After-school Circle and Teachers Training on Literacy Boost for grade 1 and grade 2 on Reading Development and instruction for young children.

In Philippines, a Save the Children program, called Positive Deviance/Hearth, aims to decrease current and future child malnutrition cases by empowering mothers and families through integrated community-based ECCD interventions. Their objectives are: 1) rehabilitate malnutrition cases among children aged 0 to 3 years through sustained practice of identified positive behaviors; 2) prevent child malnutrition through access to maternal and child health and nutrition services and behavior change; and 3) build the capacity of families and communities in integrating ECCD.

In Pakistan the Releasing Confidence and Creativity Program (RCC) supported by the Aga Khan Foundation and USAID works in poor rural communities in Sindh and Baluchistan. Initial discussions were around addressing issues at primary school level as a whole. However, high early drop-out and repetition rates as well as the government's formalizing of the "katchi" classrooms (which cater to pre-school age children within primary schools) within the primary school system led AKF and implementing partners to re-think. The RCC partners undertook the following: awareness raising about the early childhood period, working with communities to identify local women to train as katchi and lower primary teachers, establishing katchi classes, provision of a 'katchi kit of activities' developed by a local NGO partner (the Teachers' Resource Center) and encouraging parent and community involvement in the local school (e.g. in resourcing to teach local songs and stories, demonstrating specific skills, assisting construction, etc.). The katchi classes within the government schools in the program are now the beacons within the schools – a hub of color and enthusiastic activity. As children enter higher grades, parents continue to expect that their children are taught in an engaging learning environment and children's increased learning engagement. Teachers teaching in higher classes are interested in the methods introduced in the katchi classes.

In Cambodia, 'A New Day for Kids' places special emphasis on adult and child reflect circles, to promote caregiver/parent development and empowerment, even going beyond good principles and practices of ECCD to cover health, agriculture, and financial management.

In Kyrgyz Republic, Aga Khan Foundation, working with its local partner, the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme has a goal to improve early learning opportunities for children in remote areas of the Kyrgyz Republic by enhancing their knowledge, skills and attitudes to help them become contributing members of society. Their work emphasizes parents, community, and government involvement by employing cost-effective and sustainable approaches to addressing the specific needs of target communities.

In Indonesia, Tanjungsari Model Integrated ECCD empowered families and communities to take care of their own health and their children's and provide a stimulating environment for young children.

In Myanmar, ECCD Network Project provided basic integrated ECD services to disadvantaged children (under 5) in 51 selected

communities of the peri-urban areas of Yangon in Myanmar, to establish childcare networks at the community level including school-based pre-kindergartens and to raise public awareness about the importance of a holistic and integrated approach to ECCD through advocacy and social mobilization.

In Thailand, The Life Skills Development Foundation (TLSDF) mission is to improve the quality of life for vulnerable children and families in northern Thailand. One of their programmes focuses on improving ECCD by establishing a rights-based “child-friendly community model” that promotes holistic care and development of young children (0-4 years old) of ethnic minority communities. This includes recruiting and training community parenting volunteers; conducting participatory situational analysis of day care centres; building the capacity of the caregivers on the whole child care and development; and collaborating with local community and partners to establish ECCD centres in remote areas to ensure access.

In China, Early Childhood Curriculum: A Hybrid of Traditional Chinese and Western Ideas, early educational concepts and practices which originated in Europe (e.g., the Project Approach from Reggio Emilia, Italy), North America (High Scope) and Japan have now been embraced in the early childhood national curriculum. These are, in some ways, at odds with the traditional Chinese educational notions (such as teacher authority, discipline and acquisition of knowledge through memorization) which are considered important for both early learning and cultural transmission. As a result, China has been seeking a balance between adopting the Western ideas and maintaining Chinese traditions in early childhood education. Tobin et. al. (2009) observed kindergarten classroom activities and interviewed kindergarten teachers in China, Japan, and U.S.A in 1980s and in 1990s. They found evidence of a hybrid form of Chinese early childhood education, which fuses constructivist, child centered principles with Chinese emphases on social mindedness, skill and subject mastery, and the use of critical feedback for self improvement. In a similar vein, Rao and Li (2008) found that Chinese kindergarten teachers have a unique way of fusing constructivist notions of development and learning promoted in the national early childhood curriculum and its traditional beliefs.

In Sweden the carefully designed education policies and political and financial support enabled primary schools to be more responsive to children’s individual learning needs, in many ways mimicking preschool learning pedagogies. “The Swedish experience shows that

this link has potential to galvanize a country's efforts to make schools more learner-centered, to bring a paradigm shift in education, in which *care, development, and learning* will no longer be foreign concepts alongside *education*" (UNESCO Policy Brief, 2002).

In USA, the Child-Parent Center Program was part of the Chicago Public School system and often housed at the local primary school. The pre-school and primary school components worked in sync with each other and assured a high level of learning continuity for child and family. The preschool program was able to wield more influence on the primary school system, resulting in smaller primary school classrooms, additional resource teachers and low student: teacher ratios. Parental involvement was central - parents dedicating at least half a day a week in the child's classroom. Results included high levels of educational attainment, low rates of repetition and low levels of delinquency (Barnett, 1995, Promising Practices Network, 2003). **In Canada**, a similar type of integration of ECD – local primary school and involvement of parents was a key recommendation of the final report of the Early Years Study to the Government of Ontario, a province in Canada (McCain and Mustard, 1999).

In Nepal, a Save the Children supported transition program introduced children (during their last few months in the ECD centers) to some of the activities and skills that would be emphasized once they entered school. The program also arranged visits to the school and ensured that the Grade 1 teacher visited the children in the center. The primary school interventions included working with the whole school to develop a commitment to children's rights. This involved particular emphasis on providing a welcoming and non-punitive atmosphere for all children (especially girls and dalits). And, while general teacher training in child-friendly active learning approaches were provided to total teachers, particular attention was given to those working in the first two grades. For the later, focus was on ensuring a maximum 50:1 child: teacher ratio in Grade 1. Grade 1 textbooks were used as the basis for creating a hands-on practical teacher training package which facilitated teachers putting active learning into practice. Ensuring that the activities with children were recognized by teachers as helping children learn skills and concepts in the textbooks was seen as critical in getting the buy-in of teachers who had little in the way of education or professional development support. Low-cost/no-cost learning materials kits were provided as well. Results include a significant improvement in school attendance, pass rates, promotion and a corresponding

reduction in drop-out and repetition (Bartlett et al, 2004; Arnold, 2003).

In Jamaica, the pilot 'Pre-Primary to Primary Transitions Program', begun in 2001 with support from UNICEF to the government's Basic Education and Early Childhood Education (BEECD) is another emerging example that is linking pre- and primary schools as well as tracking children (ages 4-8) moving between them. The objectives are to improve the quality of teaching and learning in preschools and grades 1 and 2, as well as coordination between the levels, increase parental support for children's learning, and improve attendance and enrolment. The pilot deliberately focuses on literacy through an integrated curriculum (e.g. science activities are incorporated into literacy ones). In-service workshops are attended jointly by both levels of teachers and include modeling for promoting early literacy using a combination of approaches appropriate for young learners. Workshops on supporting early literacy in the home are provided to parents. Early results suggest differential impact on children due to differences of ability, developmental levels, and attendance. The authors note "We are only beginning to understand the magnitude of the task that education and developmental agencies face in providing learning opportunities for children in disadvantaged areas such as those in this study" (UNESCO, 2006).

In Kenya, Zanzibar and Uganda the Madrasa Community-Based Early Childhood Program, has worked with Madrasa Resource Center (MRC) support for more than 15 years in Kenya, Zanzibar and Uganda in response to families' desire to give their children a good start – enabling them to succeed in school and at the same time reaffirming local cultural and religious values and knowledge. The community owned preschools offer children (Muslim and non-Muslim girls and boys) a rich learning environment full of locally made manipulative, active learning and supportive adults. Early on, the MRC staff received reports from their preschool teachers, parents and children that when children enrolled in Grade 1 they experienced a serious 'jolt' with the change in learning environment.

The MRCs began to organize annual Open Days and workshops for Grade 1 teachers and head teachers from the schools the preschools feed into. During these sessions, the MRC staff had displays of and hands-on experience with many of the Madrasa preschools' learning materials. This proved effective in engaging their primary colleagues in discussion on 'active learning' principles – key for those who view activities in the preschool as "only play". Requests now regularly come from the early primary teachers for

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training and support in developing their own teaching and learning materials. Including the head teachers has been critical - as has the Madrasa preschool teachers visiting their local primary schools. MRCs are looking forward to expanding their efforts in the area of transition including through sharing of effective practices and advocacy with their government colleagues across the three countries.

In Mali, where early childhood provision is almost non-existent, a “Pedagogue Convergent” is being introduced. For the first years of schooling, teaching is in the local language, and French is introduced slowly as a foreign language bringing pupils to nationally expected levels in French, by the end of year 6. Initial results during the pilot phase showed that after a year of program implementation, the children were able to do things – read with understanding and apply calculations beyond simple memorization – which many third year pupils had not been able to do. Use of local language was seen as the critical factor. “Children understand what they are learning, therefore they can learn” (DFID, 1999)

Escuela Nueva, operating since the '70s as a system of community schools in rural Columbia, had by the '90s expanded to 18,000 schools, increasing primary school participation by around 60% (Rugh and Bossert, 1998). The active curriculum encourages children to participate in their learning. In multi-grade classrooms, teachers are trained to work with students using participatory methods and plan lessons responding to students' different abilities and interests. Parent and community involvement are central and participation in adult education, agricultural extension, athletic competition, health campaigns and community celebrations are much higher in Escuela Nueva schools than in neighboring government schools (Psacharopoulos, Rojas, and Velez, 1993). Compared to students in traditional rural schools, students from Escuela Nueva scored considerably higher on tests given on socio-civic behavior, 3rd grade mathematics, and 3rd/4th grade Spanish. Children in Escuela Nueva schools were also found to be more confident than their counterparts in government schools and the self-esteem of primary school girls paralleled that for boys, a testament to the holistic, child-centered philosophy used in Escuela Nueva (Coordinators Notebook, 1997). Escuela Nueva does not specifically target lower grades. However, because of the welcoming atmosphere, informal structure, self-paced curriculum and flexible time schedules lower primary children have the inclination to

continue with their education, while their counterparts in traditional schools are dropping out from 1st and 2nd grade in droves.

The thirty Central Eastern European and CIS countries implemented Step by Step Transition - Primary School Program which establishes an intentional connection and overlap in teaching and learning styles between two normally distinct levels. Where possible, Step by Step transitions children together from pre-school into the same primary classrooms. In preschool, children participate in role activities like 'Play 1st Grade'. Conversely, children from first grade are invited to the preschool to talk about their experiences. Parents and community are also actively involved in the transition between preschool and grade 1. Collectively, preschool teachers and parents review the primary school curriculum and discuss the child to make sure he/she has the necessary skills for first grade. Additionally, the primary school teachers are trained in the same pedagogic framework as the preschool. The teachers use the same 7 core modules (individualization, learning environment, family participation, teaching strategies for meaningful learning, planning and assessment, professional development, social inclusion), and are expected to demonstrate identical competencies, but through different observable examples. The Step by Step curriculum is also organized based on age, not grade, since primary school entrance age varied between locations/countries. Non-graded classrooms for the first four years (ages 7-10) of primary education ensure continuity of teaching and learning - teachers use the materials with children in a meaningful way and students thus develop strong foundations in their knowledge of the subject.

Early childhood development (ECD) programs are considered one of the most promising approaches to providing more equitable outcomes, if these are covering deprived and at-risk children and families. While the number of children and families served by ECD programs has grown, research shows that without a concurrent commitment to program quality, potential gains for children may be lost and glaring disparities in outcomes maintained. Globally, in the field of social policies and programming, ECD is a fairly new entrant, yet one that comes with much promise supported with compelling scientific evidence (Britto, 2011). The noteworthy approach put forward in this article provides recommendations to ensure that all children have access to quality ECD programs that will improve multiple domains of development. The conceptualization and improvement of quality in ECD is the key to achieve individual potential for children, families and societies.

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Relationship between effective performance factors and teacher retention in pre-primary and primary grades

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Abstract

Teacher retention is to provide a programme to maximize children's learning and holistic development and is critically important in creating a stable learning environment for all students. The present study was undertaken to study the relationship between effective performance factors and teacher retention in pre-primary and primary grades. The objectives of the study were to determine the effect of school boards and age of the teachers on performance factors like personal life, salary, assignment and credential, classroom, school and students' performance, and correlation among the various performance factors. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the samples which included pre- primary and primary teachers who had worked in more than one school in the past. The sample consisted of 22 administrators and 100 teachers of which 48 were pre-primary teachers and 52 primary teachers. Data were collected, with the help of questionnaires to know the causes of leaving the school. Results indicated that the school board in which the teachers work shows a significant difference at the level of 0.05 with the performance factors. The age of the teacher shows a significant relationship with the assignment and credential and classroom factors. The performance factors have a significant correlation with each other. 54% of the schools provide on-the-job training, benefits and a healthy working environment in order to retain the teachers in the school.

Introduction

Teachers play a very important role in the life of young children. The high rate of teacher turnover is a concern for children's growth and development today. Several factors have been linked to high levels of teacher turnover like high job stress, inadequate compensation, lack of adequate training and qualification, and meager salary increments. It is important for preschools to reduce the turnover rate and increase the retention rate of qualified preschool teachers to provide a programme to maximize children's learning and holistic development. The government of India has discontinued the study of the teacher attrition rate from 1986, and hence not much research work is done on the teacher turnover issue in India.

Relationship between effective performance factors

Certo and Fox (2002) focused on teacher attrition and retention. Focus group interviews and telephone interviews of teachers were conducted to know about organizational influences on teacher attrition and retention. The study showed that insufficient salary, lack of administrative support, and lack of planning time are the top reasons for teachers to leave the school. Lack of opportunity for job sharing and policies related to high-stakes testing were also found to impact attrition.

Ingersoll (2001) carried out a study on teacher turnover using data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) nationally representative Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and its supplement, the Teacher Follow up Survey (TFS). This analysis examines both teacher migration and teacher attrition. 42% of all departing teachers report as a reason either job dissatisfaction or the desire to pursue a better job, another career, or to improve career opportunities in or out of education. The data show that teacher turnover is a significant phenomenon and a dominant factor driving demand for new teachers and, in turn, creating school staffing problems.

Method

Teacher retention is an important way to reduce teacher turnover. It is important to know the factors that affect the teachers' decision to leave schools. The present study was conducted to identify the reasons for teacher turnover in order to develop an appropriate programme to retain the teachers. The objectives of the research were: To see whether the school board affects the teachers performance factors, to understand the effect of age of teacher on the teacher performance factors, to determine the correlation among the performance factors, and to determine the retention measures and turnover information of the schools with respect to causes of teacher turnover and measures taken by schools for teacher retention.

The sample for the research consisted of 100 teachers of whom 48 were preschool teachers and 52 were primary school teachers. Purposive sampling technique was used to select teachers who have worked in more than 1 school, with prior permission. Teachers were selected across Mumbai from central, western and harbor line. The Teacher Follow Up Survey tool was adapted and used for the research. The tool consists of a questionnaire with questions about the various performance factors that have been a reason for the teachers to leave the last school taught by them. A separate questionnaire for administrators was developed by the researcher, which was distributed to 22 principals or supervisors of the preschools and primary sections. The questions in the administrator questionnaire were about the information of teacher turnover, causes for teacher turnover and measures taken by schools for teacher retention. An intervention program was

conducted for the teachers for 10hours and administrators for 4hours to guide them about the strategies of teacher retention.

Results and Discussions

The results present the findings of the research with quantitative analysis. Based on the data collected through the questionnaires filled by the teachers and supervisors, the results were presented in accordance with the objectives of the study. The results shown are on the basis of the objectives i.e. effect of school board and age of teacher on teacher performance factors, correlation between the various performance factors, causes of teacher turnover and measures taken by the schools for teacher retention. The following are the results and discussion for each objective.

1. Effect of school board on teacher performance factors

Table 1
Mean, Standard Deviation, and ANOVA between teacher performance factors and the school board of pre-primary teachers

Effective performance factors	Board of school	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig
Personal Factors	SSC	28	17.79	8.162		
	CBSE	4	13.50	4.933	0.73	0.48
	ICSE	16	18.69	7.162		
	Total	48	17.73	7.618		
Assignment and Credentials Factor	SSC	28	14.29	3.287		
	CBSE	4	14.25	3.500	1.01	0.37
	ICSE	16	15.50	1.265		
	Total	48	14.69	2.799		
Salary & Other Job Benefits Factors	SSC	28	10.54	4.023		

Relationship between effective performance factors

	CBSE	4	11.00	4.243	3.83	0.03**
	ICSE	16	7.19	4.004		
	Total	48	9.46	4.267		
Classroom Factors	SSC	28	12.93	3.620		
	CBSE	4	12.75	3.686	5.42	0.01**
	ICSE	16	9.75	1.770		
	Total	48	11.85	3.415		
School Factors	SSC	28	26.43	4.476		
	CBSE	4	25.00	4.320	0.81	0.45
	ICSE	16	27.88	5.084		
	Total	48	26.79	4.658		
Student Performance Factors	SSC	28	15.96	5.015		
	CBSE	4	18.75	1.893	3.47	0.04**
	ICSE	16	19.13	1.500		
	Total	48	17.25	4.215		

*If the P-value (Sig.) is < 0.05 the difference between groups is significant.

Table 1 represents mean, standard deviation and one-way ANOVA between teacher performance factors and school board. The ANOVA results showed that, there is a significant difference between salary and other job benefits and the school board.

The reason for this might be that at the beginning of their careers, teachers give more importance to the school board. Teachers working in an international school or school with CBSE / ICSE boards have higher salary. It is stated in the article on 'Why does your teacher like ICSE?' by Rao. Y, 2008 that teachers in ICSE schools earn almost twice as much as their SSC schools. This supports the result that there is a significant difference between salary and the school board.

The hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the school board and teachers' performance factors of the pre-primary teachers is rejected for the salary and other job benefits, classroom factors and students' performance factors.

Relationship between effective performance factors

The hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between the school board and teachers' performance factors of the pre-primary teachers is accepted for the personal life, assignment and credential and the school factors. The preschool teachers have less emphasis on assignments, subjects and grades which may be the reason for no significant difference between school board and assignment factors. The mean scores for ICSE school teachers show higher score for the personal factors (18.69) and assignment and credential factors (15.50) and school factors (27.88). This shows most of the ICSE School teachers leave the school because of personal life and assignment and school factors.

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation, and ANOVA between teacher performance factors and boards of the schools of primary teachers

Effective performance factors	Board of school	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig
Personal Factors	SSC	20	17.05	8.568		
	CBSE	4	22.75	3.096	1.47	0.24
	ICSE	28	15.89	7.041		
	Total	52	16.87	7.577		
Assignment and Credentials Factor	SSC	20	14.50	1.878		
	CBSE	4	13.25	3.403	0.53	0.59
	ICSE	28	14.61	2.699		
	Total	52	14.46	2.445		
Salary & Other Job Benefits Factors	SSC	20	9.40	4.604		
	CBSE	4	10.75	4.272	0.25	0.78
	ICSE	28	9.07	4.413		
	Total	52	9.33	4.414		
Classroom Factors	SSC	20	11.80	3.548		
	CBSE	4	12.50	2.380	1.51	0.23

Relationship between effective performance factors

	ICSE	28	10.54	2.502		
	Total	52	11.17	2.975		
School Factors	SSC	20	27.10	5.160		
	CBSE	4	25.00	4.320	0.35	0.70
	ICSE	28	26.43	4.476		
	Total	52	26.58	4.683		
Student Performance Factors	SSC	20	17.60	4.070		
	CBSE	4	12.75	6.131	2.43	0.09
	ICSE	28	16.93	3.681		
	Total	52	16.87	4.135		

*If the P-value (Sig.) is < 0.05 the difference between groups is significant.

The table 2 represents mean, standard deviation and ANOVA between school boards and primary teachers. No significant difference is found between the boards of the schools and the performance factors. Based on the findings, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between the school board and teachers' performance factors of the primary teachers is accepted.

The mean scores are higher for the CBSE school teachers for personal (22.75), salary factors (10.75) and classroom factors (12.50) while for the school (27.10) and students' performance factors (17.60) and mean score are high among the SSC school teachers.

2. Effect of age of teacher on teacher performance factors

Table 3: Mean, Standard deviation and ANOVA between teacher performance factors and age of pre-primary and primary teachers

Effective performance factors	Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Personal Factors	<20-30	36	16.14	7.507		

Relationship between effective performance factors

	31-40	36	18.33	8.401	0.76	0.47
	41-50	28	17.39	6.511		
	Total	100	17.28	7.571		
Assignment and Credentials Factor	20-30					
		36	13.39	3.036		
	31-40	36	14.89	2.025	7.30	0.00**
	41-50	28	15.68	2.109		
	Total	100	14.57	2.61		
Salary & Other Job Benefits Factors	20-30					
		36	9.53	4.411		
	31-40	36	9.42	4.332		
	41-50	28	9.18	4.347	0.05	0.95
	Total	100	9.39	4.323		
Classroom Factors	20-30					
		36	12.53	3.517		
	31-40	36	11.25	2.719	3.51	0.03**
	41-50	28	10.5	3.049		
	Total	100	11.5	3.196		
School Factors	20-30					
		36	26.5	4.13		
	31-40	36	26.92	4.819	0.8	0.93
	41-50	28	26.61	5.188		
	Total	100	26.68	4.649		
Student Performance Factors	20-30					
		36	16.64	4.396		
	31-40	36	17.11	4.419	0.34	0.71
	41-50	28	17.5	3.543		
	Total	100	17.05	4.157		

*If the P-value (Sig.) is < 0.05 the difference between groups is significant.

Relationship between effective performance factors

Table 3 shows the effect of age of the teacher on teacher performance factors that affect the decision to leave the school. The result shows that there is a significant difference seen between age of teachers and assignment and credential factors, and classroom factors.

The hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between the age of the teacher and teacher's performance factors is rejected for the assignment and credential, and classroom factors but the hypothesis is accepted for personal, salary and job benefits, school and students' performance factors.

A similar result showed in the study by Ingersoll (1995), who found that teachers who are 31 or older when they enter the profession and the teachers with graduate degrees are significantly less likely to depart. This research supports the finding that, the older the teacher, the higher is the dedication to the school and teaching. Thus, older teachers give more importance to the assignment and credential factors like the subject/ grade taught by them, and classroom factors like autonomy over the classroom, use of classroom resources.

The study by Harris & Adams, (2004) indicated that teacher turnover occurs less often at younger ages. This supports the result that teachers between 31-40 years show highest mean score. Teachers in the age group of 31-40 years have high mean score for school factors (26.92) followed by personal factors (18.33) and students' performance factors (17.11) and the teachers of age group more than 40 years with assignment and credentials (15.68). The teachers of less than 30 years show least mean score of 9.53 with salary factors.

3. Correlation between various teacher performance factors

Table 4: Correlation between students 'performance factors of pre-primary school teachers and personal life, salary, assignment and credentials, classroom, school and student performance factors.

Performance factor		Personal Factors	Assignment and Credentials Factor	Salary & Other Job Benefits Factors	Classroom Factors	School Factors	Student Performance Factors
Student Performance Factors	Pearson Correlation	-.42(**)	.39(**)	-.42(**)	-.40(**)	-0.02	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0.001	0.003	0.001	0.002	0.44	.
	N	48	48	48	48	48	48

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed). Those marked with (-) negative sign show negative correlation and the others are having positive correlation.

The above table shows that student performance factors have a negative correlation of (.423) with personal life factors, (.42) with salary and job benefits and (.40) with classroom factors. This means, if teachers gives more importance to personal life factors than they will give less importance to student performance factors and vice versa. The reason for this result may be that teachers who feel personal life is more important are very much family oriented and may leave the school for any family related reasons and may feel students performance do not matter for them. While those giving more emphasis to student performance factors are dedicated to teaching and are affected by their performance. The performance is not good or the assessment techniques may affect the teacher and be an important reason to leave.

The higher is the priority given to salary, lower priority will be given to student performance factors. The reason may be that few teachers work for the purpose of finance and are not very keen on the student performance. They may not show interest in the students' performance, thus it may not affect their decision to leave the school. The reason for the correlation between students performance and classroom factors may be that those teachers who

Relationship between effective performance factors

are satisfied with their teaching and position in the class and may not bother for the school factors.

The student performance factors have a positive correlation with assignment and credential factors of (.39). This shows that teachers giving higher priority to assignment factors give higher priority to student performance and vice versa. The reason for this may be that the teachers who are dedicated and are more involved in teaching give more importance to the subject, grade and assignments and also give higher priority to performance of students which is dependent on their teaching.

Table 5: Correlation between assignment and credential factors of pre-primary teachers and personal life, salary, assignment and credentials, classroom, school and student performance factors

Performance factor		Personal Factors	Assignment and Credentials Factor	Salary & Other Job Benefits Factors	Classroom Factors	School Factors	Student Performance Factors
Assignment and Credentials Factor	Pearson Correlation	-0.21	1	-.36(**)	-.44(**)	-0.04	.39(**)
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0.08	.	0.01	0.001	0.40	0.003
	N	48	48	48	48	48	48

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed). Those marked with (-) negative sign show negative correlation and the others are having positive correlation.

The assignment and credentials factor has a negative correlation with salary and other benefits of .36 and classroom factors of (.44). The result shows that the teachers who give more importance to assignment and credential factors give less importance to salary and classroom factors and vice versa.

The reason for this result may be that teachers who are more dedicated to teaching are affected by the assignment factors like the subject and the grade to be taught but not give importance to salary and classroom factors. They may have less importance to salary as earning may not be their main motive; it may be work for satisfaction or interest in teaching. The teachers will give less importance to classroom factors than autonomy over the class or using all resources; quality teaching is more important. Since the result is for preschool teachers it can also be that the teachers may not give higher priority to the grade and assignment given to them, and subjects are also not there in the preschool education. These teachers may give higher

Relationship between effective performance factors

importance to salary and classroom factors as at the beginning of the career-earning money can be important and getting autonomy over classroom can be prestigious.

Table 6: Correlation between salary and job benefits factors of pre-primary teachers and personal life, salary, assignment and credentials, classroom, school and student performance factors

Performance factor		Personal Factors	Assignment and Credentials Factor	Salary & Other Job Benefits Factors	Classroom Factors	School Factors	Student Performance Factors
Salary & Other Job Benefits Factors	Pearson Correlation	0.17	-.36(**)	1	.50(**)	0.03	-.42(**)
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0.13	0.006	.	0	.41	0.001
	N	48	48	48	48	48	48

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed). Those marked with (-) negative sign show negative correlation and the others are having positive correlation.

The salary factor shows a positive correlation with classroom factors of (.50), and negative correlation with student performance factors of (.42) and assignments and credentials factors of (.36). The result shows that the higher the priority given to salary by the teacher, the higher is the priority given to classroom factors and lower importance given to salary; also lower will be the importance given to classroom factors. The reason for this result may be that many teachers prefer having comfort in working – older teachers would ask for high salaries and ease in working.

Table 7

Correlation between students' performance factors of primary teachers and Personal life, salary, assignment and credentials, classroom, school and students performance factors

Performance factor		Personal Factors	Assignment and Credentials Factor	Salary & Other Job Benefits Factors	Classroom Factors	School Factors	Student Performance Factors
Student Performance Factors	Pearson Correlation	-.34(**)	.39(**)	-.44(**)	-.44(**)	.23(*)	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0.008	0.003	0.001	0.001	0.047	.
	N	52	52	52	52	52	52

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

The above table shows correlation between students' performance factors of the primary teachers and personal life, salary, assignment and credentials, classroom, school and students' performance factors. The result shows that personal life factors have a negative correlation of (.34) with student's performance factors. The students' performance factors have negative correlation of (.44) with both salary and classroom factors. The reason for the result may be that many teachers give higher priority to the personal and family life rather than to the students' performance. They give less importance to teaching, the assessment and students' performance affecting their teaching. The result indicates that the higher the priority given to salary, lower will be the priority given to students' performance. The reason for the result may be that those teachers who are dedicated to the academics and to the profession also are working for the salary. Many times in our context, there are dual earner families so for them salary may or may not be important. If teachers are working because of dedication and interest, they may not think about the salary as the important part of their decision. Those who are very dedicated will give high importance to assignment as well as student performance.

Students' performance has a positive correlation of (.23) with school factors. This shows that teachers who are dedicated and passionate about teaching concentrate more on the students' performance; as many times the benefits are dependent on the students' performance.

Table 8: Correlation between classroom factors and students' performance factors of preschool teachers and personal life, salary, assignment and credentials, classroom, school and student performance factors

Performance factor		Personal Factors	Assignment and Credentials Factor	Salary & Other Job Benefits Factors	Classroom Factors	School Factors	Student Performance Factors
Classroom Factors	Pearson Correlation	0.15	-.55(**)	.42(**)	1	-0.11	-.44(**)
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0.14	0	0.001	.	0.23	0.001
	N	52	52	52	52	52	52

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed). Those marked with (-) negative sign show negative correlation and the others are having positive correlation.

The above table shows correlation between classroom factors of the primary teachers with personal, assignment, salary, classroom, school and students' performance factors. The classroom factor has a positive correlation with salary and a negative correlation with assignments factors.

Administrator's perception on causes of teacher turnover

Figure 1

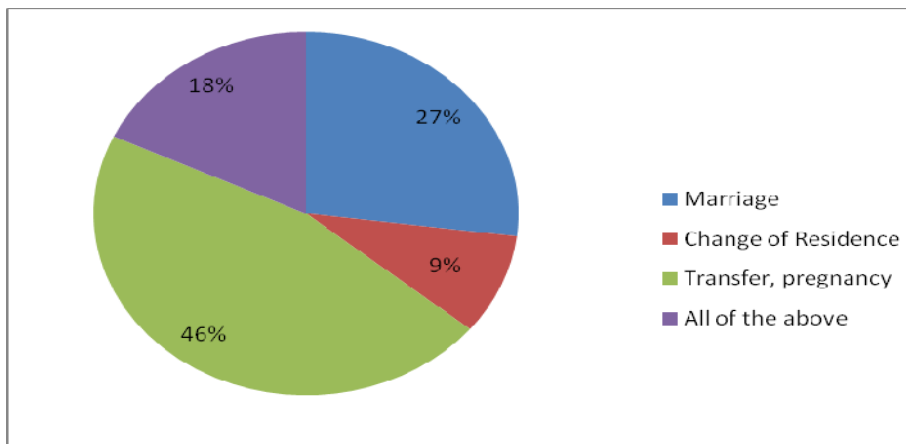


Figure 1 Percentage of causes of teacher turnover

Relationship between effective performance factors

Administrators state that 46 percent of the factors like pregnancy, transfer were the reasons for them to leave the school. Women being the majority of the teacher population, pregnancy is an important reason for the teacher to change jobs. Change of residence usually accompanies marriage, and women prefer working close to their residence as they have to manage household and family responsibilities. Transfer of family members accompanies change of residence in order for the teacher to change schools.

Administrators' perception on measures taken by schools for teacher retention

Figure 2

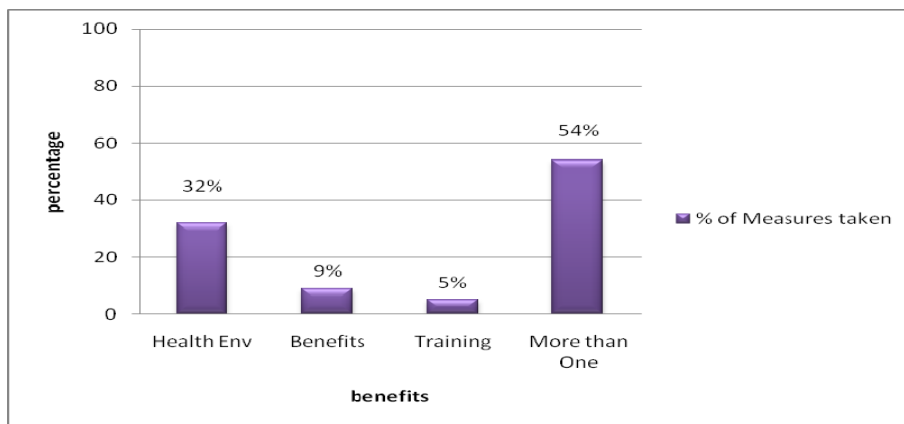


Figure 2 shows the percentage of measures taken by the schools to retain the teachers.

Fifty four percent provide more than one of the above mentioned facilities in order to retain the teachers.

When teachers are provided with a healthy environment, benefits like provident fund and gratuity, and training to update their knowledge, chances are higher that they will be satisfied with the job and not leave the position. Supporting the above result, a research shows that professional development is most effective in improving teacher satisfaction and teacher effectiveness when it is offered regularly, takes place in the building where teachers work, and is driven by clear goals, useful data, and teacher input (Supovitz and Christman 2003; Education Trust 2005; Gareth et al. 2001).

Conclusion

This study reveals various aspects of the teaching profession that influence teacher retention. It is clear from the study that various factors make

teachers leave the school. The age of the teacher shows an effect on the teachers' decision to leave the school environment. The school board has been known as having an impact on teacher while changing the school. The schools that provide teachers with training, healthy working environments, and benefits can be seen as taking efforts to implement strategies to reduce the loss of teachers. This examination of the causes of teachers' dissatisfaction and reasons for leaving the school helped to prepare booklets for teachers and administrators on teacher retention as well as provide positive experiences for the teachers; and the program helped the administrators with strategies to retain teachers. This in turn will aid in minimizing teacher turnover and will help in teacher retention.

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Quantity versus quality early childhood development services in Nepal

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Expansion of early childhood education and development (ECED) service to improve holistic development of every child is a concern for all of us (MOE, 2009). Holistic development refers to social, physical, cognitive and emotional improvement and its balance from the very beginning (conception) to the age of 8 years (Plan, 2010). Parents' education, home-based care and early stimulation constitute an important factor. School readiness is another major vehicle that ensures every young kid access to early childhood development service. Parents' education and home-based care and parent-to-child early stimulation scheme have improved home environment and learning skill of young kids, and prepared them for enrollment in ECED centers (Plan, 2012). Nepal has made a good progress in the expansion of ECED centers. The operation of a total of 29,277 ECED centers – both school and community-based in the country is the evidence of rapid expansion of the services (DOE, 2012).

The purpose of this paper is to look critically at the existing situation of quality versus quantity of ECED centers which are running in the communities and also to draw attention of policy makers, planners and implementers in regards to quality issues and rapid expansion of ECED centers. The article focuses on 3-5 year kids' existing early education and development activities being provided by the ECED centers. The findings have been drawn from the ECED Center Quality Mapping Survey 2011, facilitated by Plan Nepal in partnership with the Department of Education. The survey was carried out in six districts: Morang, Sunsari, Rahutahat, Bara, Makwanpur and Banke. It included a total of 3715 (12.6%) ECED centers.

Relevant insights

A total of 2458 (66%) ECED centers are operating satisfactorily. The centers have trained facilitators. They have their own activity room and learning/playing materials. However, none of them has met all the quality indicators set. The 12 best ECED centers of the six districts showed lack of the first aid box (and its use), which is one of the minimum quality indicators of the ECED (Pandey, 2012).



Availability of learning materials and their proper use is better in the centers operated outside the school premises, whereas child readiness for enrollment in grade 1 is better in school-based ECED centers. Regular follow-up and monitoring of school-based ECED centers by school supervisors and resource persons are comparatively

satisfactory but monitoring of community-based ECED centers is almost nil. NGOs monitored the community-based ECED centers and rarely monitored the school-based ones.

Resource allocation for the expansion of ECED centers was impressive, but the mechanism of distribution of ECED centers was found weak. In Morang, for example, Biratnagar Municipality received 139 ECED centers, in Dangighat VDC 25 ECED centers and in Katahari VDC just 4 ECED centers. The following diagram clearly indicates how the ECED centers are being distributed; the dots in the map denote the number of ECED centers in the district.

Further, some schools received up to 5 ECED quotas whereas some schools got almost none. There is no ECED center in 88 wards of some VDCs of Sunsari, whereas there are 7 ECED centers in one of the wards of the same district. This fact indicates that the ECED distribution process, criteria and follow-up are very weak.

The number of community-based ECED centers is higher but the number is decreasing gradually, whereas the school-based ECED is being increased. For instance, 12883 ECED centers (52%) were community-based in 2009 (Ravens, 2009). The mapping of six district ECED centers (3715) showed only 45% of the centers are run by the community (Plan, 2012). The reason is that community-based ECED centers are shifting into schools after mainstreaming as per the government system. Thus, the school is gradually

Quality versus quality early childhood development

being motivated to implement activity-based learning technique in pre-primary classes and even in grades 1 and 2 – which is a good impact.

The monitoring system does not work effectively for the optimum use of ECED resources. The survey found that 369 (10%) of ECED centers are not in the field, they are only in the records of DEOs. Further, 529 (17.76%) of the ECED centers are in operation combined with grade one or two. Similarly, 359 (10%) of the facilitators have never received ECED basic or refresher training. Thus, the data indicate that 37% of ECED resources are either poorly managed or the funds are used for other purposes (Plan, 2012).

The expansion of ECED centers created a good opportunity for children to have access to ECED services. However, only 65% of the age appropriate (37-59 months) children are in the ECED centers.



In Banke district, 18% children below 3 years, and 17% of the children between ages 5-6 years were found in the ECED centers. The situation either has discouraged enrollment of age-appropriate children in the centers or been a

challenge to managing age-appropriate learning activities– pedagogy outside ECED activities in the rooms. The appropriate facilitating technique, for example, according to child development stages, should be applied for their functional coherence in pedagogy if children below 3 to 6 years are in the center (Koirala, 2009).

Some of the ECED management committees are more active and are able to collect funds locally, for example, from *Muthi Dan*, fee, collection in the visitor donation box, etc. The funds have been deposited in their own bank accounts. Some VDCs/ DDCs are also funding for the development of ECED centers. However, such good practices have remained limited and have not been increased. Thus, financial sustainability is another area for improvement.

All these findings conclude that although ECED centers have been increasing rapidly in Nepal, community participation, policy for expansion, regular supervision, continued technical support to the teachers/facilitators have been weak. Political influence at district and community levels for getting the ECED quota is very high, whereas their participation is very weak (almost zero). The motive of influence seems to be just on appointing facilitators who are closer to political parties. Performance accountability is yet a demand from all who are directly associated with the running of the ECED center. Hence, there has to be a mechanism of reward and punishment in place if the centers are to run efficiently. There should be more investment for enhancing knowledge and skills of the parents and caregivers at the family level. For this purpose, the District Child Development Committee (DCDC) should advocate for better coordination of district development committee, district education office, district public health office, district women/child development office and other support organizations for improving quality and activity practices in the early childhood development program.

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A case of early identification of visual imparity of ECD children: One of the strategies for holistic development

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Abstract

Physical, emotional, social and mental developments of children cannot be compartmentalized. Each of these domains is equally important; furthermore, the development of each of these domains occurs simultaneously. However, problems in vision, auditory ability, physical capacity and mental capability will be visible at an early age in some children. If these problems are not identified and cared for at an early age, the child may have severe problems later in life. Among other problems in early childhood development, visionary problems are among the most common which impacts the holistic development of children. Eye and vision screening in children under the age of five helps in detecting eye problems in the early stages. Existing health services do not help in detecting eye problems in some children whereas eye and vision screening could help to identify difficulties in these children. Difficulties with vision make it hard for children to succeed in education. Visual impairment is a common condition that affects 7% to 8% of children. The most common forms of visual impairment in children are refractive errors. Approximately one out of every 4.2 children below 5 years of age has a vision problem in Morang, Nepal while in the world only 1 out of every 20 children below 5 years of age has an eye problem that can permanently affect vision if left untreated.

Eye and vision screening in children under the age of five helps in detecting eye problems in the early stages. Existing health services do not help in detecting eye problems in some children whereas eye and vision screening could help to identify difficulties in these children. Difficulties with vision make it hard for children to succeed in an educational environment. Vision problems do not reflect a child's academic ability. Children may not be capable of articulating the state of their visual impairments; similarly, teachers and parents may not be aware of a child's visual problem. A child's visual development commences prior to birth and is supported by visual centers in the cerebral cortex. Thus difficulties need to be detected shortly

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after birth; many vision concerns can be cured if identified in their early stages.

Visual impairment is a common condition that affects 7% to 8% of children (Kemper, Harris, Lieu, Homer, & Whitener, 2004). The most common forms of visual impairment in children are refractive errors (nearsightedness, farsightedness, anisometropia, and astigmatism), amblyopia (reduced visual acuity without a detectable organic lesion of the eye), and strabismus (ocular misalignment). Uncorrected amblyopia may be a risk factor for blindness in later childhood and adulthood (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2001). Uncorrected amblyopia may be detrimental to a child's school performance, ability to learn, and later, to adult self-image (Packwood, Cruz, Rychwalski, & Keech, 1999). Furthermore, the lack of binocular vision disqualifies individuals with amblyopia from many occupations. Early detection and treatment is essential for amblyopia, as treatment is highly effective in early childhood. Because visual impairment in children is common as well as this sensory problem has an early sensitive period when interventions lead to better outcomes, much interest has focused on primary care vision screening tools for early detection, referral, and treatment.

The Nepal Blind Survey is able to detect the prevalence of blindness in Nepalese children by using the World Health Organization's criterion for blindness. Brilliant et al. (1985) explain:

On the basis of the present national population, visual impairment in Nepal is estimated to be 0.84% that have a visual acuity less than 3/60 in the better eye. There are 210,000 people who are blind mostly due to cataracts, and 230,000 people who are visually impaired. However, visual impairment was usually acquired later in life, about 59% having acquired this disability after 20 years of age. (p. 378)

Among the whole population of children in Nepal under the age of 16 years, 30,240 children are blind and 90,720 have problems with visual impurity (N. J. Sangh, personal communication). If visual impurity is left untreated, it can lead to blindness. Some types of visual problems can be curable if identified at an early age. If ignored, schoolchildren can be affected with long lasting eye and visual problems. When identifying visual imparities, young children are seen as the age group that benefits the most from early testing. During these early years, visual scanning must be done. If visual impairments can be identified during these early years, they may be addressed by referring the child to seek proper treatment. In this light, the ECD section (Nepal) organized an eye examination camp with the support of the DOE, BP Eye foundation, DEO Morang, and Setogurash Morang.

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Realizing that vision is a sensory difficulty that greatly impacts a person's future endeavors and that eye problems can be a negative factor in the learning achievement of children, immediate remedial action can be the first step in discovering and treating vision problems in the young of our nation. Keeping this in mind, the ECD section has initiated a collaborative effort with the BP Eye Foundation. Initially the ECD section communicated with DOE, which ultimately led to an understanding with Netra Jyoti Sangh and the BP Eye Foundation. As a result of that discussion, the ECD section further communicated with the BP Eye Foundation who then took the responsibility to coordinate, with its partner organization, for the eye checkup program. Furthermore the BP Eye Foundation met with the Ramlal Golchha Eye Hospital, Biratnagar, to provide technical service to the young children.

The ECD section coordinated with its partner organization Setogurans, Morang; Setogurans is the local NGO working for ECD in Morang, Nepal. This association is the partner organization for the eye checkup program. DOE delegates the responsibility for managing the program to this NGO who then collaborates with the Early Childhood Center; the Center is subsequently tasked with the collection of children for the program. The organization managed to gather the children and identify the venue for providing the eye examination service. For this work, Setogurans collaborated with DEO Morang, and identified three ECD centers around the Sidraha VDC of Morang to finalize the venue. Children were invited for eye examination day in the selected ECD center. The program was conducted at 2067 Chaitra on April 10th, 2011. One hundred and thirteen children (60 girls and 53 boys), ranging in ages of 6 months to 11 years, benefitted from this eye examination program. The following information was gathered from the children who attended the program.

**Table 1
Children Observed**

< 3 years of age			3 – 6 years of age			>6 years of age		
Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
9	11	20	34	35	69	17	7	24

Table 1 shows that of the 113 children examined, 12 types of eye problems were found in 27 of the 113 children. Furthermore, nineteen children were found to have refractive error; as shown in Table 3. Table 2 illustrates the pattern of eye problems in the 27 affected children.

Table 2:Patterns of Eye Problems

S.N.	Pattern	No. of Children with the Problem	Layman Description	Effect on Future
1	Corneal opacity (traumatic)	1	'Fulo' in eye –white opacification in the front layer of eye.	If not treated immediately, corneal opacity makes the eye lazy because of obstruction of vision.
2	Sub Conjunctival Hemorrhage (traumatic)	1	Bleeding and collection of blood under the membrane and on the white part of eye ball.	It generally resolves by itself without any treatment but may need to do a blood test to exclude bleeding disorder.
3	Conjunctival xerosis	1	Dryness on the white part of eye. If severe dryness extends to the front part of the eye (cornea), it is due to vitamin A deficiency.	Night blindness (Ratandho) if vitamin A supplement is not given in diet.
4	Squint(dedho ankha)	2	One eye is deviated (squinting), commonly due to defect in the sight.	Early detection and correction is important to prevent laziness of eye.
5	conjunctivitis	4	Infection of the anterior membrane in the white part of eye.	May sometimes complicate as corner ulcer and corneal opacity.

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6	Amblyopia (anisometropic)	1	Maximum vision in eyes is less than 6/6 and called "lazy eye".	As this develops due to a defect in the vision of eyes, it will lead to less development of the brain (visual part). The result is a lazy eye for the entire life.
7	Exophoria	3	Imbalance in the control of eye muscle.	Difficulty in focusing and discomfort in eyes.
8	Ocular allergy	4	External allergen causing itching red eye.	Recurrent itching red eyes that will lead to reading and writing problems.
9	Congenital Nasolacrimal Duct Obstruction (NLDO)	1	Tearing eye (Runche Ankha) due to a blockage of the tear drainage duct.	May get recurrent redness and purulent discharge and abscess formation.
10	Foreign body	1	External effect due to dirt and dust particles in the eyes.	Pain, pricking sensation, redness, watering and later develops into corneal ulcer and opacity.
11	Blepharitis	5	Infection of eye margins.	Recurrent redness of eyes and loss of eye lashes.
12	Refractive Error (significant)	3	Unable to see clearly due to defect in focusing mechanism of eyes.	Difficulty in seeing clearly leading to Amblyopia in children; some children experience headaches.
Total		27		

Table 3 illustrates the pattern of refractive error in children and found that 19 of the 48 children refracted.

Table 3
Pattern of Refractive Error

S.N.	Refractive Error	No. of Children	Layman Description
1	Hyperopia (>0.50 DS)	14	Small eye, long sighted (door dristi)
2	Hyperopia (>1.50 DS)	2	Small eye, long sighted (door dristi)
3	Myopia(>0.50DS)	1	Large eye, near sighted
4	Astigmatism(> or =0.50DC)	2	Defect in focusing due to defect in focusing meridian
5	No significant error	31	
Total Refracted		48	

Table 4 shows visual acuity in all 113 children.

Table 4
Visual Acuity

Visual Acuity	RE(right eye)	LE (left eye)	Remarks
6/6	72	74	
6/9	4	3	
6/12	1	1	Hyperopia (>1.50 DS)
6/18	1	1	Hyperopia (>1.50 DS)
6/24	1	X	Anisometropic amblyopia
Follows light	34	34	
Total	113	113	

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Following the observation of these problems, remedial help was provided to a number of children. Consequently, four children with visual problems were assisted by dispensing medicine to them while three were provided eye glasses by the Golchha Eye Hospital after a PMT was completed. Five parents of children, aged 2 to 9 (2 male and 3 female), were given advice for special care under a referral service.

The above results show that approximately 24% of children have different patterns of eye problems and about 40% have refractory problems. The preceding data reinforces the reality that there is a high risk germane to child visual impurity. Approximately one out of every 4.2 children below 5 years of age in the screening sample of Morang have an eye problem that can permanently affect vision if left untreated as compared to the global statistic that shows 1 out of every 20 children below 5 years of age has an eye problem that can permanently affect vision. Loss of vision impacts on everyday tasks, especially for the very young of our society. Eye problems need to be identified early in life so that timely corrections can be implemented in order to reduce the long lasting effects of this sensory difficulty. Screening could identify vision problems of the majority of preschool-age children during the critical period of visual development and lead to treatments that could improve this sensory problem. Early identification is extremely important as early intervention is the most effective strategy. Sometimes it is unclear whether a child has vision problems or not. Physical signs of vision problems include eyelids drooping over one or both eyes or eyelids that do not completely cover the eyes when the child closes them. If a child has a clear squint, has jerky eye movements, or has eyes that do not move together, parents should see a pediatric ophthalmologist. Early identification of visual problems is essential and can be a successful venture with the help of the different sections of DOE and other organizations like Golchha Eye Hospital, DEO Morang, Seto Guransh Morang, BP Eye Foundation – and optometrists.

Visual impairment is a common childhood sensory problem. Although early intervention is important for the prevention or treatment of visual impairment, treatment of certain refractive errors in children younger than 3 years of age may interfere with the development of the eye. Expansion of eye examination programs with appropriate services, allocation of budgets for future programs of this category, and checking hearing impurities would contribute greatly to Nepal's educational intervention initiatives.

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