

Education in the Asia-Pacific Region:
Issues, Concerns and Prospects 35

Hui Li
Eunhye Park
Jennifer J. Chen *Editors*

Early Childhood Education Policies in Asia Pacific

Advances in Theory and Practice



ASIA-PACIFIC EDUCATIONAL
RESEARCH ASSOCIATION



Springer

EDUCATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION: ISSUES, CONCERNS AND PROSPECTS

Volume 35

Series Editors-in-Chief

Professor Rupert Maclean, *Office of Applied Research and Innovation, College of the North Atlantic-Qatar*

Dr Lorraine Pe Symaco, *Centre for Research in International and Comparative Education (CRICE), University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

Editorial Board

Professor Bob Adamson, *The Hong Kong Institute of Education, China*

Dr Robyn Baker, *New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Wellington, New Zealand*

Professor Michael Crossley, *University of Bristol, United Kingdom*

Ms Shanti Jagannathan, *Asian Development Bank, Manila, Philippines*

Dr Yuto Kitamura, *University of Tokyo, Japan*

Professor Colin Power, *Graduate School of Education, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia*

Professor Konai Helu Thaman, *University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji*

Advisory Board

Professor Mark Bray, *UNESCO Chair, Comparative Education Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong, China*; **Professor Yin Cheong Cheng**, *The Hong Kong Institute of Education, China*; **Professor John Fien**, *Swinburne University, Melbourne, Australia*; **Dr Pham Lan Huong**, *International Educational Research Centre, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*; **Dr Chong-Jae Lee**, *Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI), Seoul, Republic of Korea*; **Ms Naing Yee Mar**, *GIZ, Yangon, Myanmar*; **Professor Geoff Masters**, *Australian Council for Educational Research, Melbourne, Australia*; **Margarita Pavlova**, *The Hong Kong Institute of Education, China*; **Dr Max Walsh**, *Secondary Education Project, Manila, Philippines*; **Dr Uchita de Zoysa**, *Global Sustainability Solutions (GLOSS), Colombo, Sri Lanka*

More information about this series at <http://www.springer.com/series/5888>

Hui Li • Eunhye Park • Jennifer J. Chen
Editors

Early Childhood Education Policies in Asia Pacific

Advances in Theory and Practice

 Springer

Editors

Hui Li
Faculty of Education
The University of Hong Kong
Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong

Eunhye Park
Department of Early Childhood Education
Ewha Womans University
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Jennifer J. Chen
Department of Early Childhood
and Family Studies
Kean University
New Jersey, USA

ISSN 1573-5397

ISSN 2214-9791 (electronic)

Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues, Concerns and Prospects

ISBN 978-981-10-1526-7

ISBN 978-981-10-1528-1 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-1528-1

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016945719

© Springer Science+Business Media Singapore 2017

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made.

Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer Science+Business Media Singapore Pte Ltd.

Series Editors' Introduction

This important book by Hui Li, Eunhye Park and Jennifer Chan, on *Early Childhood Education Policies in Asia Pacific*, is the latest volume to be published in the long-standing Springer Book Series 'Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues, Concerns and Prospects'.

The first book in this Springer series was published in 2002, with this volume by Hui Li et al. being the 35th volume published to date. The subject of this book is a very important one because early childhood education (ECE) is widely accepted as being the foundation upon which all aspects of formal schooling and education is built, with the quality and effectiveness of primary, secondary and post-secondary education all very much depending on the strength and relevance of this key foundation. As the authors of this volume clearly demonstrate, the vital importance of ECE is keenly understood by governments in the Asia Pacific, with funding allocations and policy initiatives reflecting this importance in countries.

The various topics included in this Springer Book Series are wide ranging and varied in coverage, with an emphasis on cutting-edge developments, best practices and education innovations for development. Topics examined include environmental education and education for sustainable development; the reform of primary, secondary and teacher education; innovative approaches to education assessment; alternative education; most effective ways to achieve quality and highly relevant education for all; active ageing through active learning; case studies of education and schooling systems in various countries in the region; cross-country and cross-cultural studies of education and schooling; and the sociology of teachers as an occupational group, to mention just a few. For full details about books published to date in this series, examine the Springer website <http://www.springer.com/series/5888>.

All volumes in this book series aim to meet the interests and priorities of a diverse education audience including researchers, policymakers and practitioners, tertiary students, teachers at all levels within education systems and members of the public who are interested in better understanding cutting-edge developments in education and schooling in the Asia Pacific.

The reason why this book series has been devoted exclusively to examining various aspects of education and schooling in the Asia-Pacific region is that this is a challenging region which is renowned for its size, diversity and complexity, whether it be geographical, socio-economic, cultural, political or developmental. Education and schooling in countries throughout the region impact on every aspect of people's lives, including employment, labour force considerations, education and training, cultural orientation and attitudes and values. Asia and the Pacific is home to some 63 % of the world's population of 7 billion. Countries with the largest populations (China, 1.4 billion; India, 1.3 billion) and the most rapidly growing megacities are to be found in the region, as are countries with relatively small populations (Bhutan, 755,000; the island of Niue, 1600).

Levels of economic and socio-political development vary widely, with some of the richest countries (such as Japan) and some of the poorest countries on earth (such as Bangladesh). Asia contains the largest number of poor of any region in the world, the incidence of those living below the poverty line remaining as high as 40 % in some countries in Asia. At the same time, many countries in Asia are experiencing a period of great economic growth and social development. However, inclusive growth remains elusive, as does growth that is sustainable and does not destroy the quality of the environment. The growing prominence of Asian economies and corporations, together with globalisation and technological innovation, is leading to long-term changes in trade, business and labour markets, to the sociology of populations within (and between) countries. There is a rebalancing of power, centred on Asia and the Pacific region, with the Asian Development Bank in Manila declaring that the twenty-first century will be 'the Century of Asia Pacific'.

We believe that this book series makes a useful contribution to knowledge sharing about education and schooling in the Asia Pacific. Any readers of this or other volumes in the series who have an idea for writing their own book (or editing a book) on any aspect of education and/or schooling, which is relevant to the region, are enthusiastically encouraged to approach the series editors either direct or through Springer to publish their own volume in the series, since we are always willing to assist prospective authors shape their manuscripts in ways that make them suitable for publication in this series.

Office of Applied Research and Innovation
College of the North Atlantic-Qatar

Rupert Maclean

CRICE
University of Malaya
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
March 2016

Lorraine Pe Symaco

Preface: From ‘Sound Bites’ to Sound Solutions: Advancing the Policies for Better Early Childhood Education in Asia Pacific

Abstract This book comprises 12 interesting case studies on early childhood education (ECE) policies in the Asia Pacific. The selected works individually analyse the target education policies in a specific country or region, based on the theoretical framework of ‘3A2S’ – affordability, accessibility, accountability, sustainability and social justice. Collectively, they provide a multifaceted account of the merits and limitations of the ECE policies implemented or proposed in 12 countries/regions. In an effort to provide a greater understanding of the current policy trends, all the contributors analyse the education policies in their respective socio-economic and political contexts and suggest new research agenda for early childhood education in this rapidly developing region. This introduction chapter presents the ‘3A2S’ framework and briefly summarises the theoretical advances and practical improvements in ECE policies in the Asia Pacific.

Introduction

At the turn of a new millennium, early childhood education (ECE) has increasingly become a prominent focus in education reforms all over the world. Many nations have tried to reform ECE system to better prepare their young children for the local fitness and global competitiveness of manpower resources (Li et al. 2014). The Asia Pacific, with the most rapidly developing economies in the world, has particularly witnessed noticeable changes and remarkable advances in ECE policies and practices. In Greater China, for instance, free ECE has become the ‘sound bite’ in national debates. Macau and some provinces in Mainland China have already made ECE free to young children in addition to the 12-year free education. Other Chinese societies, however, are still debating about and struggling with why and how to implement a 3-year free ECE (Lau et al. 2014; Li and Fong 2014; Li and Wang 2014; Li et al. 2014). And similar debates and dilemmas are also observed in other Asian countries, such as Korea and Singapore. All the debates should be carefully addressed and supported by empirical evidence from systematic studies and with

reference to other countries' experiences and lessons so that we can achieve a greater understanding of ECE policies in many parts of the world. This book is devoted to analysing ECE policies in the Asia Pacific.

The Asia-Pacific region, in this book, refers to a group of nations in East Asia, Southeast Asia, Australasia and the Pacific Islands in the ocean itself (Oceania). East Asia, for example, is the eastern part of the Asian continent and includes the Greater China (Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan), Japan, Korea, Mongolia, etc. Southeast Asia, conventionally, includes Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and so on. In this book, the Pacific Islands countries/areas include Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Australasia comprises [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#) and Papua [New Guinea](#).

It seems that this region is really diversified and complicated in terms of economic and social developments, ranging from the most developed countries (such as Japan) to the least ones (i.e. Nepal). But it occupies a far more important place today than it did only a decade ago, as the consequence of shifting the centre of gravity of global economy to the Asia Pacific from Europe and America. It is home to about half of the world's population. Just China and India alone, the two population giants, have a combined population of 2.4 billion. And 9 of the 20 largest metropolitan areas in the world are located in the region, i.e. Tokyo, Jakarta, Seoul, Delhi, Shanghai and Manila, growing considerably in size as a result of their profound economic developments and massive migrations from rural areas. About one third of the Group of Twenty (G20) is Asia-Pacific countries, indicating that this region is gaining prominence in many aspects. Their diverse education systems and changing ECE policies, however, have not been systematically studied and analysed. European countries can share their information on ECE through the European Commission Network and OECD, whereas most of Asia-Pacific countries (except Japan, Korea, New Zealand and Australia) don't have such international platform to share their data. As discussed earlier, there are more reasons to not neglect this region, which is the home to almost half of the young children in the world.

Therefore, for the first time, this book endeavours to address the literature gap by systematically studying and analysing the ECE policies in the region. The current edition has successfully collected critical analyses of ECE policies in 12 countries/regions contributed by renowned researchers, young scholars, policymakers and the experts from international NGOs. Although unique to their specific contexts, all the chapters share the common theme of evaluating new ECE policies in the Asia Pacific with the '3A2S' framework, which refers to accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability and social justice. This framework provides a reliable, comparable, appropriate and consistent measure to assess the advances of ECE policies in Asia-Pacific countries. The following section will delineate this framework in detail.

The ‘3A2S’ Framework

We understand that there is a variety of theoretical frameworks that could provide meaningful perspectives and approaches to developing our knowledge of ECE policies, such as postmodernism, socialism and even Marxism. In this book, however, we just limit our analyses and discussions to a new theoretical framework that has just been employed in our recent empirical studies in Asian contexts – the ‘3A2S’ framework.

This ‘3A2S’ theoretical framework is applied to the analyses of all ECE policies reviewed in this book. Originally, Li et al. (2010) proposed the ‘3As’ theoretical framework to evaluate ECE policies: accessibility, affordability and accountability. They defined ‘accessibility’ as that every preschool-age child could easily attend the nearby early childhood settings. ‘Affordability’ was defined as that every family could easily afford the fees of their chosen ones, and some exemptions/subsidies could be offered to needy families. ‘Accountability’ denotes that the extra fiscal input provided by the policy should be accountable to the government for improving education quality. Li et al. (2010) used this ‘3As’ framework to analyse the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS) launched in Hong Kong in 2007. They surveyed 380 kindergarten teachers and principals and found that the majority of the respondents perceived positive impacts of PEVS on the 3As of ECE.

Later on, Li and Wang (2014) proposed the ‘3A1S’ theoretical framework to evaluate the free ECE policies in China: accessibility, affordability, accountability and sustainability. They believe that a truly scientific and appropriate free ECE policy should also be ‘sustainable’. This criterion is critical because implementing a 3-year free ECE policy in China requires strong financial support, which should be well calculated and sustainable. Otherwise, the fiscal deficit will make the policy impossible to sustain. In Western China, for instance, many counties have launched 3-year ‘free’ ECE policies since 2010. Li and Wang (2014) sampled four counties from Shanxi and Shaanxi province and found that: (1) the ‘free’ education policies are neither ‘all kids free’ nor ‘all fees free’, thus could only partially solve the problem of affordability; (2) the policies did not solve the problems related to school place allocation, which in turn tended to exacerbate the issue of accessibility and inequality in educational opportunities; (3) no monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms were launched to improve the accountability of kindergartens; and (4) the policies are unlikely to be sustainable as the ECE budget entirely relies on the fiscal investment at the county level. In addition, they also found that so-called ‘free’ ECE policies in China were neither fair nor upholding social justice. Poor families had to send their children to low-quality private kindergartens, whereas wealthy or powerful families could enrol their children in high-quality public kindergartens for free. This finding implies that social justice should be considered a very important dimension for ECE policy evaluation.

Accordingly, believing that a truly scientific and appropriate free ECE policy should also be sustainable and should uphold social justice, Li et al. (2014) further developed the 3A1S into the 3A2S framework, adding the last dimension (social

justice) into the equation. Social justice refers to the idea that all young children should have equal access to and fair treatment of ECE, without any discrimination against their gender, race, religion, age, belief, disability, geographical location, social class and socio-economic circumstances. The ECE policies should advocate the notion of fairness and equality in both procedures and outcomes. The 12 chapters in this book have jointly demonstrated that this 3A2S framework is a potent and powerful theoretical tool to use for analysing education policies.

About This Book

Following this introduction chapter are the 12 chapters reviewing the ECE policies and developments in the Asia Pacific, with each chapter devoting to one country/area using the '3A2S' framework. They are arranged alphabetically, starting with Australia. Since the turn of a new millennium, Australia has been reforming and changing its ECE system and policies, and an ambitious reform agenda is still in process. In this chapter, Raban and Kilderry introduce, explore and analyse these developments, systematically and historically. They found that the major change of early childhood setting was departing from a sanctuary for children's health and safety to a setting advocating for young children's educational development. This shift shows that ECE is no longer viewed as a 'cost' to government and families; instead, it is regarded as an 'investment' for the future of the social and economic growth of the country. Last, they also share their concerns about the future development of ECE policies and practices in the country.

In Chap. 2, the developments of ECE policies in Mainland China were thoroughly analysed by Hong and Chen. They first reviewed the four-decade history of ECE development, with a particular examination of phase I (2011–2013) and phase II (2014–2016) of the 'Three-Year Action Plan'. Their analyses of national data from statistical reports and educational agencies indicate that although many achievements have been made, China is still wrestling with different aspects of '3A2S' problems in ECE. Thus, more work is needed to develop a more appropriate and stronger ECE system in China.

Chapter 3 is a case study on the Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China – Hong Kong – by Yang, Wang and Li. They used the '3A2S' framework to analyse all the ECE policies that have been implemented (or proposed) over the span of nearly two decades from 1997 to 2015. They found that the totally privatised ECE market was well regulated by the supply and demand mechanism, and the subsidy measures were promoting children's equal access to affordable ECE. In addition, the educational authorities have successfully established a self-evaluation and school improvement mechanism to promote the accountability of ECE. Currently, Hong Kong is developing the 'free ECE' policies, a process in which sustainability and social justice of ECE are highly valued. They conclude that Hong Kong has achieved a balance in 3A2S of ECE. Accordingly, Hong Kong might provide a model or at least a good case of study for policymakers in other countries.

In Chap. 5, Park and her colleagues introduce the two different systems of early childhood education in Korea and the recent developments. First, they presented a brief introduction of the history and context of ECE in Korea. Second, they analysed the trends, policies and issues of accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability and social justice. Their analyses on the recent 10 years data indicated that the educational authorities have improved a lot in the accessibility, affordability, accountability and sustainability. And they have also begun to address the social justice issues in 2012 by starting to integrate the early child care and education sectors.

Chapter 6 presents a case study on the second Special Administrative Region of China – Macau – by Lau. Macau is the first region in Greater China to provide 15 years of free education to its residents. Its free education policy has successfully and strategically solved the problems with 3A2S. However, Macau is facing some challenges with the sustainability and social justice, as discussed in the chapter. In particular, its solely depending on gambling economy has cast doubt on the sustainability of the 15-year free education policy.

In Chap. 7, Khanal, Paudyal and Dangal have systematically and historically reviewed the developments of ECE policies in Nepal. In recent years, the government of Nepal has recognised ECE as an important catalyst for early childhood development and thus has introduced many ECE programmes. In this chapter, the review of these policies with the ‘3A2S’ framework revealed mixed results. The accessibility to ECE has been improved, but some structural and methodological challenges are still observed. Furthermore, the problems in affordability, accountability, sustainability and social justice also need to be solved with important innovations. This case study on Nepal, however, may provide some useful lessons about how to develop national-level policy and strategic plans for establishing an effective ECE system in developing countries.

Chapter 8 is about the development of early childhood care and education (ECCE) system in Aotearoa New Zealand, which is contributed by Everiss, Hill and Meade. They reviewed the major developments of ECCE in the country and evaluated the market-driven policy approaches employed by the government. Their analyses indicated that there were steady growth and improvements in the accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability and social justice in ECCE. For more details about New Zealand, please see Chap. 8.

Chapter 9, for the first time, collects and reviews the ECE policies in the Pacific Islands, a neglected area in the literature. In this chapter, Rich-Orloff and Camaitoga systematically review ECE policies and practices in Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. In these countries/areas, ECE was regarded as a community-based, privately run initiative with very little governmental involvement. In 2010, the Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Care and Education (PRC4ECCE) was established. Subsequently, some guidelines and frameworks were issued by PRC4ECCE in 2013. This chapter provides a summary across individual specific island countries/regions and some

insight on how the process of working regionally on the *Pacific Guidelines* may have impacted individual countries.

Chapter 10 is a chapter on the examination and evaluation of ECE policies in Singapore, by Jing. Since 2012, the country has placed unprecedented emphasis on the development of ECE in order to raise its status in a world ECE ranking system. To promote quality ECE, the educational authorities have moved from the local traditions of efficiency and standardised-oriented ECE to a cosmopolitan outlook for the future. However, this shift and the accompanying educational reforms may have generated tensions among participants in this particular socio-cultural milieu. In this chapter, Jing reviews all the ECE policies that have been proposed and implemented since 2000. While the existing issues and the current trends are analysed, the author raises questions for further research.

Taiwan, the last member of the Greater China family, is reviewed in Chap. 11, by Leung and Chen. In this chapter, they report the ECE policies that have been proposed and implemented in Taiwan from the years 2000 to 2014. Their review indicates that the postmillennial governmental policies in Taiwan have vastly improved early childhood education for its future generations. The trends of policy changes, current problems and future research questions are also discussed in the chapter.

Chapter 12 is a report on the history and evaluation of early childhood education policies in Vietnam, contributed by Boyd and Thao. First, they reviewed the historical developments of early childhood care and education (ECCE) in Vietnam. Second, they evaluated the policies, laws and documentation on ECCE through the 3A2S framework. They concluded that Vietnam had made significant progress in meeting accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability and social justice goals in ECCE. Some problems and concerns regarding the accessibility and accountability are also discussed.

Chapter 13 presents a summary of this book. The different problems encountered by the 12 countries/areas were thoroughly analysed, and the common themes were discussed. Last but not least, the most important country in the Region, Japan, was reported in Chap. 4. We are very grateful to the authors, Satomi Izumi-Taylor and Yoko Ito, for having successfully managed to submit the chapter on such short notice. They reviewed the governmental documents and ECE policies and analysed how the four abilities (accessibility, affordability, accountability, and sustainability) had resulted in social justice in Japan. This is exactly one of the foci of this edited book.

Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong
Seoul, Republic of Korea
Union, NJ, USA

Hui Li
Eunhye Park
Jennifer J. Chen

References

- Chen, E. E., & Li, H. (in press). Early childhood education in Taiwan. In N. Rao, J. Zhou, J. Sun, & H. Li (Eds.), *Early childhood development in Chinese societies*. Springer.
- Edelman, M. (1988). *Constructing the political spectacle*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lau, M. M. Y. L., Li, H., & Leung, S. O. (2014). A multiple case study on the perceived impacts of the 15-year free education policy in Macau. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 3(2), 223–249.
- Li, H., & Fong, R. W. (2014). Implementing 15-year free education in Hong Kong: Dilemmas and practical solutions. *Hong Kong Teachers’ Centre Journal*, 13, 1–14.
- Li, H., & Wang, D. (2014). Understanding the 15-year free education policies in China: An online study of four cases. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 3(2), 250–267.
- Li, H., Wong, M. S., & Wang, X. C. (2010). Affordability, accessibility, and accountability: Perceived impacts of the pre-primary education vouchers in Hong Kong. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 25(1), 125–138.
- Li, H., Wang, D., Fong, R. W. (2014). Editor’s note – Sound bites won’t work: Case studies of 15-year free education in greater China. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 3(2), 161–170.

Contents

1	Early Childhood Education Policies in Australia	1
	Bridie Raban and Anna Kilderry	
2	A Critical Analysis of the Changing Landscape of Early Childhood Education in Mainland China: History, Policies, Progress, and Future Development	31
	Xiumin Hong and Jennifer J. Chen	
3	Achieving a Balance Between Affordability, Accessibility, Accountability, Sustainability and Social Justice: The Early Childhood Education Policies in Hong Kong	51
	Weipeng Yang, Jingying Wang, and Hui Li	
4	Japanese ECE: Four Abilities (Accessibility, Affordability, Accountability, and Sustainability) that Result in Social Justice	73
	Satomi Izumi-Taylor and Yoko Ito	
5	Early Childhood Education Policies in Korea: Advances in Theory and Practice	87
	Eunhye Park, Minyoung Jang, and Seenyoung Park	
6	A Postcolonial Analysis of the Free Kindergarten Education Policy in Macau	109
	Michelle Marie Lau	
7	Early Childhood Development Policies in Nepal: Achievements, Learning, and Implications	135
	Sanjaya K. Khanal, Bimala Rai Paudyal, and Sabita Dangal	
8	A Story of Changing State Priorities: Early Childhood Care and Education Policies in Aotearoa New Zealand	163
	Liz Everiss, Diti Hill, and Anne Meade	

9 Understanding the Early Childhood Education Policies in Pacific Islands..... 187
 Wendy Rich-Orloff and Ufemia Camaitoga

10 The ECE Landscape Being Shaped by Cosmopolitanism: An Examination and Evaluation of Policies in Singapore..... 221
 Mengguo Jing

11 An Examination and Evaluation of Postmillennial Early Childhood Education Policies in Taiwan..... 245
 Suzannie K.Y. Leung and Eva E. Chen

12 Early Childhood Education in Vietnam: History and Evaluation of Its Policies..... 263
 Wendy Boyd and Thao Dang Phuong

13 Different Problems, Same Themes: A Summary of This Book..... 285
 Hui Li, Eunhye Park, and Jennifer J. Chen

Erratum E1

Contributors

Wendy Boyd School of Education, Southern Cross University, Lismore, Australia

Ufemia Camaitoga Fiji Early Childhood Teachers' Association, Suva, Fiji

Eva E. Chen Division of Social Science, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Jennifer J. Chen Kean University, Union, NJ, USA

Thao Dang Phuong Early Childhood Education Department, Lam Dong Education and Training Agency, Dalat, Vietnam

Sabita Dangal Department of Education, Government of Nepal, Madhyapur Thimi, Nepal

Liz Everiss Open Polytechnic of New Zealand/Kurātini Tuwhera, Lower Hutt, New Zealand

Diti Hill Auckland University, Auckland, New Zealand

Xiumin Hong Beijing Normal University, Beijing, China

Yoko Ito Chiba University, Chiba, Japan

Satomi Izumi-Taylor University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, USA

Minyoung Jang Early Childhood Education Department, Ewha Woman's University, Seoul, South Korea

Mengguo Jing Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam, Hong Kong

Sanjaya K. Khanal Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, Government of Nepal, Kathmandu, Nepal

Anna Kilderry School of Education, Deakin University, Geelong, Australia

Michelle Marie Lau Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong

Suzannie K.Y. Leung Early Childhood and Elementary Education Division, Hong Kong Baptist University, Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong

Hui Li The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong

Anne Meade Anne Meade Associates, Wellington, New Zealand

Eunhye Park Early Childhood Education Department, Ewha Womans Univeristy, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Seenyoung Park Early Childhood Education Department, Bucheon University, Bucheon, South Korea

Bimala Rai Paudyal Former Member, National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal, Kathmandu, Nepal

Bridie Raban Graduate School of Education, University of Melborne, Melbourne, Australia

Wendy Rich-Orloff Early Childhood Development Specialist, Consultant (UNICEF Pacific), Washington, DC, USA

Jingying Wang The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong

Weipeng Yang The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong

Chapter 1

Early Childhood Education Policies in Australia

Bridie Raban and Anna Kilderry

Abstract This chapter introduces, explores, and analyzes Australian policies with respect to early childhood education (ECE). It does this by using the 3A2S framework: accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice. The last decade has seen large-scale and significant changes to the Australian early childhood sector, an ambitious reform agenda that is still in process. The major features of these changes have seen early childhood education move from a sanctuary for children’s health and safety while their parents worked to settings advocating for young children’s educational development. Discourse has shifted from ECE viewed as a “cost” to government and families to an “investment” for the future of the social and economic growth of the country, leading to a more highly educated workforce.

However, as governments change and political persuasions alter, the movement between these positions varies across time and impacts the rate and direction of change within the ECE sector.

Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACECQA	Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACT	Australian Capital Territory

The original version of this chapter was revised. An erratum to this chapter can be found at http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-1528-1_14

B. Raban (✉)

Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia
e-mail: b.raban@unimelb.edu.au

A. Kilderry

School of Education, Deakin University, Geelong, Australia
e-mail: anna.kilderry@deakin.edu.au

AEDI	Australian Early Development Index
CCB	Child Care Benefit
CCR	Child Care Rebate
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COAG	Commonwealth of Australian Governments
DEEWR	Department of Education Employment and Work Relations
DoE	Department of Education
ECA	Early Childhood Australia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
LDC	Long Day Care
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council for Education Employment Training & Youth Affairs
NCAC	National Childcare and Accreditation Council
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
NQF	National Quality Framework
NQS	National Quality Standard
NSW	New South Wales
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PC	Productivity Commission
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
QA	Quality Area
QIAS	Quality Improvement and Accreditation System
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
QKFS	Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme
SCRGSP	Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision
TAFE	Technical and Further Education

Overall Context

Australia is the sixth largest country in the world and comprises an area of some 8.5 million square kilometers. It covers a distance of 3700 km north to south and 4000 km east to west. Within these boundaries, there is an extraordinary range of extremes. Australia's landscape ranges from vast deserts in central Australia (deserts comprise 20% of the country) to that of snowfields, with temperatures varying from an average of 30° centigrade in the midsummer of the central deserts to an average of minus 6° centigrade in the highlands during the winter.

Technically, the country is the Commonwealth of Australia, with the Commonwealth being a Federation of six states (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, and Western Australia) and two territories (Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory). Each state and territory has a major city where the majority (89%) of the population lives. Australia's population has tripled since the end of World War II, standing currently at 23.8 million (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2015). However, the population density is 2.8 inhabitants per square kilometer, because of the vastness of the landmass. The

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) population, from the 2011 census, number 548,370 (ABS 2011b).

Most immigrants arrived from the UK and Ireland, but more recently, the 2011 census identified immigration from New Zealand, Italy, Germany, China, India, Greece, and Holland, as well as Vietnam and the Philippines, and, in addition, more recently there has been immigration from African nations and Afghanistan (ABS 2011b). However, in common with other developed nations, Australia is experiencing a demographic shift toward an older population.

Between 30 June 1993 and 30 June 2013, the proportion of Australia's population aged 15–64 years has remained stable, increasing from 66.6% to 66.7% of the total population; however, the proportion of people aged 65 years and over has increased from 11.6% to 14.4% (Productivity Commission 2013).

Australia is referred to as a developed-world country and one of the wealthiest in the world, having the 12th largest economy. It is a market economy, having the fifth highest GDP per capita (US\$67,468 – 2013), and a relatively low poverty rate, although the nation's poverty rate increased from 10.2% to 11.8% from 2000/2001 to 2013. In 2013, Australia ranked second in the world after Switzerland with respect to adult average wealth (US\$402,600) (Credit Suisse 2013). However, this ranged from US\$1,007,165 to US\$130,272, thus identifying a widening gap between the wealthiest people and those with fewest resources (Gini coefficient, 1982, 0.27; 2012, 0.34) (Greenville et al. 2013).

Government in Australia is conducted both at national level and at the level of states and territories. It uses a parliamentary system of government, and all Australian citizens are required to vote by law. Queen Elizabeth II (residing in the UK) is at the top of the governing pyramid and is represented in Australia by the governor-general, and each state has their own governor, with an administrator in the Northern Territory. The national parliament is based in Canberra (Australian Capital Territory), and each state (sovereign entities) and territory also has their own parliamentary systems. State parliaments retain legislative powers over schools, state police, the state judiciary, roads, public transport, and local government, including early childhood education (ECE).

Early Childhood Education

Government involvement in ECE, both at the national and state and territory levels took place formally as a result of the *Child Care Act* (Commonwealth of Australia 1972). The primary purpose of this new legislation was to provide a basis for funding the establishment and operation of childcare centers for working families, given the increased participation of women in the paid workforce (Brennan 2007; Cox 2007). During the 1990s, the provision of accessible, affordable, quality childcare and preschool (preschool in this chapter denotes the year before formal schooling) provision emerged as a policy priority with a clear focus on growing the national economy, using a market model to drive the expansion of services (Elliott 2006). However, Brennan (2013, p. 38) has shown that the market model of this period served parents poorly. Instead of greater diversity, lower costs, and higher quality

Table 1.1 Percentage of children attending ECE (full and part time)

Year	2005	2010	2011	2012
3 years olds	17 %	10 %	13 %	18 %
4 years olds	53 %	52 %	67 %	76 %

Source: OECD (2012, 2013 & 2014)

Table 1.2 Annual expenditure per ECE student

Year	Equivalent USD using PPPs (*) for GDP
2010	8493
2011	8899
2013	10,734

Source: OECD (2012, 2013, 2014)

*Purchasing power parity

promised by governments, families faced escalating fees, greater uniformity, lower quality, and less choice. Nevertheless, 1996 marked a clear shift in government discourse (Irvine and Farrell 2013; Logan et al. 2013). Two documents published in that year reflect this move from “care” to “education”:

- Economic Planning Advisory Commission (1996) Final Report – *Future Childcare Provision in Australia – Recommendations for Systemic Reform*
- Senate Employment, Education and Training Reference Committee – *Childhood Matters: The Report on the Inquiry into Early Childhood Education (1996)*

This decade was a period of intense government policy initiatives within the field of ECE, and there was a dramatic increase in funding and the provision and uptake of places (Tables 1.1 and 1.2).

National Partnership Agreement

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG), the peak government forum for Australian governments across the country, chaired by the Prime Minister and made up of premiers and representatives of all states and territories, continued to initiate changes and developments, leading to the *National Partnership Agreement on ECE* (COAG 2008). This agreement was reached to ensure that all children would have access to a quality early childhood education program in the year before starting school, requiring each early childhood education preschool program be delivered by a 4-year university-trained early childhood teacher, for 15 h a week, 40 weeks a year, to be implemented over a period of time (2009–2013).

To implement this program, the Commonwealth Government committed US\$790 million to states and territories over 5 years from 2008. State governments also agreed to the objective that all children will be enrolled in an early childhood education program (in the year before school) by 2013. The *National Partnership* also included a specific commitment that by 2013, every Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander 4-year-old child in a remote community would have access to a quality early childhood education program. In addition, in July 2009, COAG agreed to a National Early Childhood Development Strategy, *Investing in the Early Years* (COAG 2009) that guided investment in future reforms to support around two million children and their families.

However, despite what looks to be an increasingly healthy investment in ECE, the Australian national government expenditure on pre-primary school education is significantly less than other Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) comparable countries (OECD 2012, p. 264). Consistent with neoliberal motivations, current government expenditure is not all about providing an endless revenue stream for the education of children before formal schooling. Instead, part of the motivation for the Productivity Commission's inquiries (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP) 2013, 2014, 2015) into ECE was to find economic efficiencies and reduce government expenditure. Nonetheless, it is evident that since the 2009 COAG initiatives, a more cohesive, inclusive, and ambitious national policy reform agenda has transpired; consequently, successive governments have inherited a more robust and accountable system, compared to previous years.

Government expenditure currently on education and training, including preschool education, schools, universities, and TAFE (Technical and Further Education) institutes in 2012–2013, was US\$62.5 billion, equivalent to 5.2% of GDP in that year (SCRGSP, 2015, p. B.11). In the same years, 2012–2013, the expenditure for childcare (separate funding source from preschool education) was US\$4.3 billion.

This was equivalent to 0.4% of GDP in that year and up to 0.1% from the previous year, 2011–2012 (SCRGSP 2014, 2015, p. B.11). The US\$61.6 billion government expenditure consisted the following:

- Schools (51.1%)
- Universities (28%)
- TAFE institutes (8.5%)
- Preschool services (5.6%) (SCRGSP 2015, p. B.12)

By the end of 2009, the national government had published a landmark framework document, a first for Australian ECE, entitled *Belonging, Being & Becoming: the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) 2009) replacing a number of state curriculum frameworks (Fenech et al. 2008; Kilderry 2014). It is a framework of principles and practice with which teachers can build their practice leading to five specified Learning Outcomes for all Australian children before starting school (discussed elsewhere (Margetts and Raban 2011; Raban and Margetts 2012)).

The *National Partnership Agreement* was reviewed (Woolcott 2014) in order to assess the extent to which the objectives and outcomes of the *National Partnership* had been achieved. This review reported that the sector was still undergoing transition, and therefore further amendments should not be made until it had been fully implemented and all services had been through the assessment and rating process (see later in this chapter).

National Quality Framework (NQF)

A new *National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* (NQF) (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) 2013a) commenced on 1 January 2012. This new policy initiative aims to deliver better quality services and promote positive educational and developmental outcomes for all Australian children attending long day care, family day care, outside school hours care, and preschool programs. It focuses on:

- Better qualified staff and improved staff-to-child ratios that allow for more quality time to focus on individual children's needs
- Providing national uniform standards in education, health and safety, physical environment, and staffing
- Introducing a new transparent rating system that enables parents to compare services easily and make informed choices about which service best meets their child's needs

This new national approach, the NQF, replaced various licensing and accreditation processes previously undertaken by states and territories. Under the NQF, individual services only account to one organization for quality assessment, reducing the regulatory burden and enabling them to focus more on the children's education and care (ABS 2014).

The *National Quality Standard* (NQS) (ACECQA 2013b) is a key aspect of the NQF and sets a national benchmark for early childhood education services in Australia. As the NQF progresses, every early childhood service in the country is now assessed to make sure it meets the new quality standard. To ensure children enjoy the best possible conditions in their early educational and developmental years, the NQS promotes continuous improvement in quality.

However, there remains a great deal of variation in the way in which ECE is provided in Australia that is largely based on historical, political, and legislative environments. Indeed, the Productivity Commission's (PC) recent report (2014c) states:

The current system for delivering preschool is complex – services are delivered in a variety of settings by a range of providers and each state and territory has a different service delivery profile. (p.490)

This complexity becomes clear when the diversity of provision is identified. Early childhood education is provided through kindergartens, stand-alone preschools, long day care (LDC) settings, and early learning centers, as well as preschool programs within the independent school sector. Early childhood education programs in Australia tend to be delivered along two broad models – one a predominantly government model and the other predominantly a nongovernment model:

Of the more than 8600 preschools in Australia, half are dedicated preschools provided by governments or nongovernment groups, and half are long day care centres with preschool programs. (PC 2014c, p.480)

Preschools (called kindergartens in Victoria and called pre-primary programs in Queensland and Western Australia) deliver a structured educational program to children for a prescribed number of hours per week, in the year or 2 before they start formal primary school. The program is planned and delivered by a university graduate ECE teacher. Preschools can be stand alone, incorporated into LDC settings, or be part of or colocated with a school. Government preschools include those managed by state local governments or by state and territory government schools. Nongovernment preschools include those operated by private for-profit organizations, private not-for-profit organizations (community-managed and other organizations), independent schools, and Catholic schools (ABS 2014).

Long day care (LDC) is a center-based form of childcare providing all-day or part-time care for children from 6 weeks of age to 5 years. Traditionally, LDC was predominantly a service for the care of children, whereas, since the introduction of the NQF and for some time before, education is also viewed as important (DEEWR 2009). A preschool program may be included in this service and attracts preschool funding, varying from state to state. Long day care services are primarily operated by for-profit or not-for-profit organizations, local councils, and community organizations. They have been staffed by both qualified and unqualified staff, with requirements now in place to see all staff with post-secondary school qualifications, with the preschool teacher 4-year university educated.

It should be noted here that the school system in Australia comprises government schools, nongovernment or independent schools, and a separate Catholic school system. Each of these three systems is funded differently at levels of national, state, and territory governments; they have different school term dates, and in addition, each state and territory will have different ages for starting school (Table 1.3).

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)

In view of the variety and diversity within the ECE sector, a national body has been set up to move this new agenda forward. The *Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority* (ACECQA) guides the implementation of the *National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* (ACECQA 2013a) nationally and is charged with ensuring consistency in delivery, as well as ratifying university programs that educate ECE teachers.

ACECQA is an independent national authority, and it reports to the national government. It is led by a CEO and guided by a 12 member governing board whose members are nominated by each state and territory and national governments. One of ACECQA's many roles is to:

educate and inform the wider community about the importance of improving outcomes in children's education and care... (and to also) provide governments, the sector and families with access to the most current research to ensure NQF policy and service delivery is in line with best practice across the country. (ACECQA 2015)

Table 1.3 Preschool year and first year of formal schooling and age of commencement by state and territory^a

State/territory	Preschool year and age in year of commencement	First year of formal schooling and age of commencement
New South Wales	Preschool (age 4 by July 31)	Kindergarten (age 5 by 31 July)
Victoria	Kindergarten (age 4 by 30 April)	Preparatory (age 5 by 30 April)
Queensland	Kindergarten (age 4 by 30 June)	Preparatory (age 5 by 30 June)
South Australia	Kindergarten (age 4 by 1 May)	Reception (age 5 by 1 May)
Western Australia	Kindergarten (age 4 by 30 June)	Pre-primary (age 5 by 30 June)
Tasmania	Kindergarten (age 4 by 1 January)	Preparatory (age 5 by 1 January)
Northern Territory	Preschool (entry after 4th birthday)	Transition (age 5 by 30 June)
Australia Capital Territory	Preschool (age 4 by 30 April)	Kindergarten (age 5 by 30 April)

Source: With kind permission from the Australian Government Productivity Commission: Report to Government Services Vol 1 2013, ECEC 3.3 Table 3.1

^aMost state and territory governments provide for early entry to preschool, usually at age 3, for Indigenous children and children considered to be at risk or developmentally vulnerable

During this later period (from 2009 onwards), there has been an increasing focus on moving toward the *Universal Access* agreement. The development of a national commitment to universal access to ECE for children in the year before full-time schooling began in 2006 when the Council of Australian Governments (COAG 2006) committed to improving early childhood development outcomes. Early childhood education programs that fall within the scope of this universal access commitment are defined as:

A program delivered in the year before full-time schooling in a diversity of settings, including long day care centre-based services, stand-alone preschools and preschools that are part of schools. The program is to provide structured, play-based early childhood education delivered in accordance with the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *National Quality Standard* and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher. However, a key feature of ECE programs is that participation is not compulsory. (COAG 2006)

Accessibility

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2009a) reports data showing that at the time of the *National Partnership Agreement on ECE* (COAG 2008), which committed national and state and territory governments to ensuring that all young children have access to a quality ECE program by 2013 (15 h per week for 40 weeks per year), approximately 50% of children aged 3–5 years attended a preschool

Table 1.4 Hours per week for preschool programs

Length of time per week	State or territory
12 h 30 mins	New South Wales, Queensland
12 h	Northern Territory
11 h	Western Australia
10 h 30 mins	South Australia, Australian National Territory
10 h	Victoria, Tasmania

Press and Hayes (2000), p. 76

program. These programs were provided by separate preschools or preschool programs within long day care programs. A further 30 % attended school depending on school-starting ages, while 20 % of children did not attend preschool at all. At this time, there were over three quarters of a million children in Australia, with around 395,000 attending 3-year- and 4-year-old preschool or preschool programs. These preschool programs, wherever they were accessed, prior to these reforms, were for a number of hours each week, which varied between states and territories (see Table 1.4).

The first national survey to measure attendance at preschool programs in both preschools and long day care settings was published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2009(a). Additional data (ABS 2009b) states that in June 2008, in children aged 3–6 years who did not attend school (552,000), 395,000 (72 %) “usually” attended a preschool or a preschool program in a long day care setting. This data collection also reported that 82 % of school children aged 4–8 years had attended a preschool program in the year before commencing school. In a further report (ABS 2011a), in children aged 4–5 years, who did not attend school (321,000), 85 % “usually” attended a preschool or a preschool program.

Current ABS data (2014) is limited to young children aged 4–5 years of age in the year before formal schooling begins (which varies in different states and territories – see Table 1.3). However, the Productivity Commission Issues Paper (Productivity Commission 2013, p.10) identified 41 % of 3–5-year-old children to be in some form of approved care. This Issues Paper notes that in 2012, 1.3 million children attended at least one childcare service or preschool program (comprising around 15,100 approved childcare services which may include preschool programs and 4300 separate preschools). However, preschool enrolments have increased in every state and territory in recent years. Nevertheless, it is still the case that not all children have access to a preschool program in the year prior to entering school:

New South Wales (59 %) has, by far amongst states and territories, the lowest proportion of preschool age children enrolled in a 15 hour per week preschool program with a qualified teacher. (Productivity Commission 2014c, p. 493)

This report continues, pointing out that Western Australia and Tasmania (the two states with preschools most integrated into schools) have the highest percentage (97 %) of preschool-age children enrolled in a 15 h per week preschool program with a qualified teacher.

In order for ECE services to be considered accessible, appropriate vacancies in ECE services should be available within a reasonable distance of the homes or workplaces of families, and the care and education should be at times that is needed.

However, many submissions made to the Productivity Commission's call for responses to their inquiry (see Productivity Commission 2014a) showed that around 35% (or nearly 250) of the personal comments that the Commission received highlighted problems with accessing ECE services. Problems reported by participants to the inquiry included:

- Long wait times to get ECE places
- Compromises being made in convenience or the type of preschool in order to have a place in any type at all
- Taking up/retaining a place simply because it is available, in order to have the flexibility to work as required in the future
- Altering work arrangements to fit in around what is available

The number of Australian families accessing preschool services for their children is large, and the enrollment rate in preschool programs is high – in 2013, over 90% of children of preschool age attended a preschool program in their year before formal school. This high attendance rate is underpinned by *Universal Access* to preschool delivered under the *National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education* (COAG 2006).

The Productivity Commission draft report (2014a) considers the access benefits of the *National Partnership* are greatest when preschool programs are supported regardless of their setting. For many families, a preschool program delivered by a LDC service represents the most suitable environment for children to undertake ECE. This might be when, for example, care is required outside of preschool hours or when siblings who are not yet of preschool age are being cared for in the same setting. Preschool hours, which are often sessional on a part-day basis for a few days a week, do not facilitate the workforce participation of families and problems accessing suitable care before and after preschool exacerbate this problem. In 2013, of the 8654 preschools in Australia, state and territory governments accounted for just over 21%, the nongovernment sector around 28%, and LDC settings with preschool programs for just over half (51%). However, Warren and Haisken-DeNew (2013, pp. 17–18) quoted by the Productivity Commission report (2014c, p. 506) found that:

children who did not attend any type of preschool program more commonly lived in low income and lone parent households, and children whose parents did not complete high school were less likely to attend preschool.

Indigenous children are also less likely to attend preschool programs. In the year before school in 2013 (SCRGSP 2015, p. 3.38), 66.7% attended in major cities, 73% in regional areas, and 85% in remote areas of the country, increasing by 10% from the previous year (SCRGSP 2014).

A comparison of the number of places in ECE services with usage reveals substantial variations in accessibility across different parts of Australia. When compared to the relevant population of children, not surprisingly, it is apparent that on a per child basis, fewer ECE services are available in rural, remote, and very remote

locations than urban centers. This has particular implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and their children who typically do not do as well as other children when they enter formal schooling.

Affordability

The Productivity Commission report (2014c, p. 510) states that approximately 27 % of children who attend a preschool service (during 2013) paid no fees for the programs they attended, while 60 % paid a fee of less than US\$3 an hour, while others paid a small fixed amount voluntary parental contribution. However, given the complex mix of national and state and territory government involvement in early childhood education, levels of expenditure between and within different levels of government are difficult to report in any straightforward manner. Different preschool programs across the states and territories charge different fees and families that are invited to contact each setting directly for this information.

For nongovernment preschool programs, the national government's main financial input to early childhood services at this time is toward the costs through the *Child Care Benefit* (CCB) and the *Child Care Rebate* (CCR) schemes.

The Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate can be claimed by families to support their child's attendance at preschool, while some states and territories additionally contribute to preschool fees in a variety of ways.

Child Care Benefit (CCB)

For families to be eligible for the CCB, they need to meet an income test, use an approved or registered service, and satisfy work, study, or training requirements. The payment is paid either to the service or to the family and adjusted each year in line with the consumer price index. Families also need to meet requirements for immunization and residency. The current approved care rate is US\$3.33 per hour or US\$166.50 per week up to a maximum of 50 h per week (US\$832.50); this is the maximum rate payable (2013–2014) for families with income under US\$34,904 (information current as of January 2015) (Table 1.5).

Table 1.5 Income limits for CCB payments

No. of children	Income limits before CCB reduces to US\$0
1	US\$121,500
2	US\$125,860
3 or more	US\$142,122 plus US\$26,879 for each additional child

Source: Department of Human Services (2015)

Child Care Rebate (CCR)

The CCR is not means tested and is currently based on 50% of a family's out-of-pocket expenses, up to a maximum of US\$6100 per year. This scheme commenced in the tax year 2005–2006 when 30% of out-of-pocket expenses could be claimed.

Additional Payments

Some states (e.g., Victoria and Queensland) make additional payments to families or waive preschool fees altogether. For instance, in Victoria, the *kindergarten fee subsidy* is available to families who qualify because of ill health, asylum-seeker status, or have multiple children in the same program. If a family qualifies for any of the specified reasons, they can attend preschool free for 10 h and 45 min each week. There is a further initiative in Victoria – *Early Start Kindergarten* – to support 3-year-olds to attend preschool free if they are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families or if the family has had contact with child protection services. Children who have accessed an *Early Start Kindergarten* 3-year-old program are also eligible for a free or low-cost 4-year-old preschool place in addition.

In Queensland, the *QKFS “Kindy” Support* program is also available for eligible families. The subsidy is provided directly to the approved program provider for families who have listed health conditions, are a foster family, are identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, or have three or more children of the same age enrolled in the same year.

Phillips (2014) reports on the affordability of childcare in Australia, with many long day care settings including preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-old children. These settings can cost up to US\$138 a day (most expensive), and the average cost has increased by 150% in the last decade, jumping from US\$24.50 a day per child to US\$57.

Preschool Funding and Delivery Models

Model 1 Government Model According to Urbis (2010), the “Government Model” includes Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, Australian Capital Territory, and the Northern Territory. This is where the state government owns, funds, and delivers the majority of preschool services. Preschools are treated in much the same way as primary and secondary schools.

Model 2 Nongovernment Model The “Nongovernment Model” includes New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland and is where the state governments subsidize preschool programs that are provided by nongovernment organizations.

Preschool programs delivered in long day care centers charge some fees and attract national government funding through CCB and CCR. Under this model, these state and territory governments own less than 20% of preschool programs, and these services are generally targeted at disadvantaged communities. This is in contrast to government schools which are comprehensive.

The Productivity Commission (2014c, p.512) reports that for nongovernment preschools and preschool programs in LDC services during 2013:

- Over 75% of children enrolled in a preschool in a LDC setting and 60% of children enrolled in a community preschool paid an average hourly fee (before fee subsidies, CCB and CCR were paid) of between US\$0.75c and US\$3 an hour.
- 7% of children enrolled in a preschool in a LDC setting and 17% of children enrolled in a community preschool received free ECE.

Accountability

During the 1990s, with the inception of the *National Childcare Accreditation Council* (NCAC 2001), quality concerns became a national issue. Prior to this period, local governments took charge of health and safety regulations and licensing matters. With the advent of the NCAC, families, services, governments, and other stakeholders worked in partnership to facilitate and support continuous improvements to the quality of childcare provided for Australian babies and young children during the years prior to them starting school.

During 1994, a national *Quality Improvement and Accreditation System* (QIAS) was introduced throughout Australia, designed to link the achievement of national standards of quality to the payment of the *Child Care Benefit* (Rowe et al. 2006). In addition, early childhood teachers were accountable for their practice according to the QIAS national outcome statements, changing the way they worked (Kilderry 2015). This initiative resulted in Australia being the first country in the world to implement a national, compulsory, quality assurance system for all services, including preschools, and has been adopted by other countries.

Initially, the QIAS consisted of 52 *principles* of quality. After a review (Holmes-Smith 1998), several *principles* were omitted or reworded. Eleven overarching factors, called Quality Areas (QAs), were identified and further refined to ten. During 2000, revision work was undertaken, and 35 *principles* were organized under these ten Quality Areas. Following further work by Rowe and Darkin (2001), a four-category response format was provided for raters that required ordered responses to levels of quality:

- High quality
- Good quality
- Satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory

Data for the final rating was gathered from five different sources: the principal, staff, families, a peer from another service, and external raters, each receiving different weightings. In 2009, following the COAG endorsement of the *National Quality Framework* (NQF), the work of NCAC was taken over by ACECQA in 2012, with the development of the *National Quality Standard* (NQS). Prior to this time (2011), 9866 children's services were registered with NCAC.

Quality into the Future

The NQS is now implemented through a new assessment and rating process (ACECQA 2012) that comprises seven Quality Areas that are made up of 18 standards (high-level outcome statements) and under each standard sit elements which total 58 specific statements concerning practice (ACECQA 2013b pp. 10–11). These Quality Areas, standards, and elements are discussed further by Raban (2012) (Table 1.6).

States and territories take charge of the assessment and rating process, with trained team visiting services, including preschools, to observe, discuss, and sight documentation to provide evidence of practice which is then rated against five levels:

- Excellent
- Exceeds National Quality Standard
- Meets National Quality Standard
- Working toward National Quality Standard
- Significant improvement required

In an evaluation of the pilot assessment and rating process, Rothman and colleagues (2012) found that more than one-half of the sample of preschool services in the evaluation were rated at *Exceeding National Quality Standard* for Quality Area

Table 1.6 Quality Areas and associated number of standards and elements

Quality Area		Standards	Elements
1	Educational program and practice	2	9
2	Children's health and safety	3	10
3	Physical environment	3	7
4	Staffing arrangements	2	4
5	Relationships with children	2	6
6	Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	3	9
7	Leadership and service management	3	13
<i>Total</i>	7	18	58

Source: ACECQA (2013b)

I (*Educational Program and Practice*), compared to no more than 16% of other service types. Across all seven Quality Areas, preschool services had the highest percentage of services rated at *Exceeding National Quality Standard*. Outcomes of the current assessment and rating process are made available to the public via the national ACECQA and *mychild* government websites.

An integral part of the assessment and rating process is the Quality Improvement Plan (ACECQA 2013c). This plan is prepared by each service, including preschools, in preparation for the visit of the assessors. It includes a self-assessment of how far the service is achieving the NQS, identifying areas that require improvement and also contains a statement of the philosophy of the service.

The Productivity Commission (2014b, p. 157) acknowledged the importance of quality, which is widely recognized in early childhood learning and development, but also pointed out that research indicates that “quality” is a complex concept, based on the interplay between a range of factors that is neither easily defined nor measured. In addition, there is a distinction to be made here between *structure* and *process* quality variables. Structure variables are quantitative and easy to account for, including staff-to-child ratios and staff qualifications. Moreover, aspects of the assessment and rating process that evaluate “intentional teaching” (QA 1.2.2), “dignity and rights of the child,” (QA 5.2.3) and “effective self-assessment” (QA 7.2.3) may be more difficult to measure and achieve comparability across assessors.

Raban and colleagues (2003, p. 58) note that it appears we can all agree on, for instance, “safety standards,” but we may well differ on how best to support children’s learning and development. The OECD (2001, p. 63) also comments that “quality” needs to be considered a value-based concept, where it is:

interpreted differently in different places according to the priorities of different stake holders, the cultural and educational contexts and the relative weight given to individual programs, to education, care and other aims.

However, Sylva and colleagues (2004) argue that importantly, it is the structural aspects of quality, particularly child-teacher ratios and child numbers that *underpin* the all-important one-on-one interactions with children and the other process aspects of quality.

Staff-to-Child Ratios

A further aspect of quality provision is the ratio of staff to young children in each of the rooms comprising the service. Prior to the current reforms, these differed between states and territories (Rush 2006, p. 69). See Table 1.7 for varying staff-to-child ratios for preschool children.

There are now specific requirements to be achieved nationally for services to implement across the whole birth to 5 years age range with preschool children to be in groups of no more than 11 (see Table 1.8). This change will take place post 2016.

Table 1.7 Staff-to-child ratios in preschools prior to NQF

States and territories	Staff to child Ratios
New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia	1–10
Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory	1–11
Queensland	1–12
Victoria	1–15

Table 1.8 Staff-to-child ratios by age post 2016

Age of child	Staff-to-child ratio
Birth to 24 months	1:4
Over 24 months and less than 36 months	1:5
Over 36 months up to and including preschool age	1:11
Primary school age	No national ratio (state and territory ratios may apply)

Staff Qualifications

The required qualifications for positions in early childhood services have varied considerably between states and territories. However, the NQF and the *Universal Access* program are beginning to provide greater consistencies across states and territories, requiring all staff to be qualified to Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, in long day care and other care settings and a 4-year degree qualification for teachers in preschools. While between 2006 and 2009, Certificate III and IV qualifications for childcare staff increased from 18 % to 27 %, at the end of this period, 37 % of staff remained unqualified. Table 1.9 below illustrates the changes in staff qualifications across the following 4 years, leaving 18 % still untrained.

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in collaboration with Monash University (Rowley et al. 2011) surveyed all the university qualifications that ECE teachers hold across the country and discovered a remarkable variation in the programs offered across different courses from 3-year degrees to 1-year postgraduate qualifications. There was variability in course content, time spent in practice experiences, and age range prepared for (e.g., birth, 5 years up to 3–12 years, including primary teacher training). Since the inception of ACECQA in 2012, there are now nationally agreed guidelines for the preparation of 4-year undergraduate education degrees, and these courses are required to be accredited by ACECQA.

Table 1.9 Percentages of highest level of ECE-related qualifications

Qualifications	2010%	2013%
Bachelor degree and above	14.0	16.0
Bachelor degree (4 years)	9.8	11.4
Bachelor degree (3 years)	4.2	4.6
Advanced diploma/diploma	24.6	28.4
Certificate III/IV	28.8	36.2
Below certificate III	2.3	1.5
Total staff with ECE-related qualification	69.8	82.0
Total staff without ECE-related qualification	30.2	18.0

Sustainability

The term *sustainability* is now widely used in the early childhood education policy context (e.g., see Dickens et al. 2012 in the UK, and the Productivity Commission 2013 in Australia). The purpose of considering policy in terms of sustainability and developing sustainable measures is to effectively analyze past and current policy strategies and their impact and to look ahead at future policy initiatives to ascertain if they are likely to be socially and economically sustainable.

What is usually missing from the dialogue in the Australian context on sustainability is reference to environmental sustainability, where the environmental impact of ECE infrastructure, travel to and from services, duplication of resources, and so on would be considered. Sustainability in the Australian early childhood education policy context has tended to focus on economic viability; provision of accessible, flexible, affordable, high-quality care, and education; and in more general terms, how sustainable the ECE “system” will be over time (Elliott 2006; Press and Hayes 2000; Productivity Commission 2013).

In terms of the government’s role in maintaining a sustainable system, this has been a challenging task for a number of state and territory governments, as well as the national government. The Australian ECE policy context has changed considerably at both the national and state levels over the past four decades. From the time of the introduction of *The Child Care Act* (Commonwealth of Australia 1972), where bursaries were introduced for the first time, to that of the policy-rich complex regulatory environment and relatively well-resourced sector found today, ECE policies have proliferated (Irvine and Farrell 2013; Ishimine et al. 2009). Despite “high policy activity” periods, particularly in the 1990s–2000s (Irvine and Farrell 2013, p. 102), the Australian ECE regulatory context has been described as fragmented, with the quality of care and education varying considerably across the country. So much so that Press and Hayes (2000) stated that there were:

a number of current policy concerns facing the provision of ECE in Australia....[including] the appropriateness and effectiveness of quality assurance systems, the impact of a range of developments in the field on the capacity of ECE settings to improve or maintain levels of quality, and the number of children who do not currently benefit from investment in ECE. (p. 28)

A similar situation was described 6 years later by Elliott (2006), who identified the Australian regulatory context in the following way:

There is no comprehensive, national early childhood care and education provision. Rather, there is a two-tiered, but multi-dimensional system of ‘care’ and ‘education’ with some blurring of boundaries in some areas. (p. 53)

Future Options for a Sustainable ECE System

To achieve a sustainable ECE system, where equity, high quality, accessibility, economic viability, affordability, and flexibility are addressed, is a substantial, complex, and ongoing task. The direction policy should take depend on whose perspective is taken as to which issues are most pressing and critical. Providing a balanced summary, three main stakeholder perspectives are discussed below. The first perspective is from families and children, the second from *Early Childhood Australia* (ECA), Australia’s peak early childhood advocacy organization, and the third is from the national government. Each perspective will contribute to what they think will make for a sustainable Australian ECE sector in future years.

Families are important stakeholders in ECE, so recognizing their concerns and insights is important when thinking about the sector and its sustainability. Also for some families, additional barriers such as rural and remoteness, economic disadvantage, and language difficulties can prevent access to ECE services, therefore rendering the system inequitable and ineffective for them, particularly when those same families experience multiple disadvantages. Elliott (2006, p. 54) outlines what issues matter most to families and children with regard to ECE and how ECE can be sustainable and equitable. The issues she outlined include:

1. Access and participation
2. Curriculum and pedagogic quality
3. Staff competence, qualifications, and quality
4. Equity
5. Affordability and funding

However, the capacity of parents and families to influence government policy over the past few decades has been underutilized and underplayed, according to Fenech (2013). Fenech argues that parent and family involvement in affecting change has usually focused on influencing individual settings rather than influencing ECE policy more broadly. Moreover, Fenech (2013, p. 96) argues that there is a lot more “potential for early childhood leaders and educators to enhance parents’ capacity to drive demand-led quality improvements...[aiming for an] equitable system of high- quality ECE.”

Similarly, in their analysis, *Early Childhood Australia* (ECA 2014a) agrees with some of the points made above, yet they take a more child-focused view and argue the issues from a “children’s interest” perspective. This perspective is one where

children’s “interests are a paramount consideration when considering flexible practice” (ECA 2014a, p. 8). They advocate that “putting children’s interests into practice may include considering children’s rights and identifying and treating risks associated with flexible approaches” (ECA 2014a, p. 8). In addition, they link flexible practices to the *National Quality Standard* and consider what collaborative partnerships with families and communities could look like. In advocating for children, ECA (2014b) maintains that:

The best interests of children should be at the center of any future reform of the early childhood education system. We have previously argued for the development of an *ECE Outcomes Framework* to clarify the systemic objectives for investing in early childhood services. We continue to believe that this is fundamentally important. It is appropriate to invest substantially in early childhood education but for this investment to be sustained and valued; the economic and social benefits need to be articulated and measured. (p. 5)

Encouragingly, the national government’s objectives for a sustainable ECE sector endorse some of the issues raised by families and ECA, but as expected, they also focus on workforce participation, economic viability and efficiencies, and accountability for public expenditure. Their objectives for a sustainable ECE system acknowledge and support:

- Workforce participation, particularly for women
- Children’s learning and development needs, including the transition to school
- Flexibility to suit the needs of families, including families with nonstandard work hours, disadvantaged children, and regional families
- Fiscally sustainable funding arrangements that better support flexible, affordable, and accessible quality early childhood education and care (Productivity Commission 2013, p. vi)

Considering the views of these three main stakeholder groups illustrates how they are all attempting to enhance the sector and its sustainability through creating the best possible opportunities and experiences for young children and their families. Part of doing so is ensuring that the ECE sector is more than adequately resourced to be able to maintain high-quality, accessible, and equitable services and *not* creating policies that perpetuate inequalities and in turn widen the gap between children who are advantaged and those who are disadvantaged.

In more recent times, there is evidence that national as well as state and territory level governments recognize the importance of maintaining a sustainable ECE system. Nevertheless, the ECE sector in Australia has room for improvement according to the current national government’s Productivity Commission report (2013). They suggest that the following areas require more attention:

- The availability of flexible and affordable early childhood education and care services for diverse family requirements
- Support for children with disabilities, learning and developmental delays, and vulnerable children
- Support for regional and rural families, parents who wish to reenter the workforce or study

- Support and regulation of ECE services to have sustainable business arrangements, including regulation, planning, and funding
- Ensuring that public expenditure on ECE services is both efficient and effective in addressing the needs of families and children (pp. iii–iv)

The challenge of the provision of an effective and sustainable ECE system is to accommodate all children and families across the country fairly and equitably, regardless of which state or territory families reside in. However, disparate and fragmented data collection methods with regard to ECE policy effectiveness measures and indicators remain across these jurisdictions (SCRGSP 2014). The variety of provision that still exists can be tracked through individual websites that are listed at the end of this chapter in Appendix 1. The next section charts some future directions for creating an equitable ECE system in future years.

Social Justice

Social justice in the Australian educational policy context takes into consideration a number of important factors, including participation, universal access, affordability, equity, cultural and family diversity, inclusivity, socioeconomic disadvantage, geographical barriers, and the ability for children to achieve educationally. The concept of *equity* has a particular meaning according to each government, with a recent definition stating that equity “measures the gap between service delivery outputs or outcomes for special need groups and the general population” (SCRGSP 2014, p. xxvii). Moreover, equity of access is where people have suitable access to public services, including ECE (SCRGSP 2014, p. xxvii).

Social justice principles and objectives are evident in Australian education policies, legislation, and educational charters. For example, the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA 2008) included education ministers at the national as well as state and territory levels of government who agreed on two main goals to strive toward:

1. Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence
2. All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens (pp. 7–8).

The *Melbourne Declaration* (applying to the whole country) acknowledges that in the past decade and earlier, Australia has “failed to improve educational outcomes’ for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders” (p. 5). This is a critical insight, and governments continue to strive to address and rectify this situation. In addition, the *Melbourne Declaration* found that “by comparison with the world’s highest performing school systems, Australian students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are underrepresented among high achievers and overrepresented among low achievers” (p. 5). Knowing that children who participate in “quality early childhood education are more likely to make a successful transition to school,

stay longer in school, continue on to further education and fully participate in employment and community life as adults,” governments are keen to ensure that ECE is properly regulated with quality services and is accessible to all families (MCEETYA 2008, p. 11; SCRGSP 2014).

Inequality, Disadvantage, and Indicators

Inequality can arise when policies advantage some groups of people and disadvantage others. Socioeconomic disadvantage for families can include a number of aspects including low income, unemployment and low education attainment, geographical barriers, and lack of access to quality educational services. These issues can contribute to children not being ready for school and obtain lower educational achievement outcomes than their peers in later schooling (Perry and McConney 2010; SCRGSP 2014, p. B.17). Issues of access to ECE services have been a significant barrier for some families to enroll their children in preschool. Australian governments have provided part-time low-cost or free education to children in the year before school but have not extended universal access to education for all 3- to 4-year-old children (OECD 2001; Press and Hayes 2000). In 2000, Press and Hayes stated that

Access to appropriate services for all children with additional needs remains a concern of governments and service providers. For instance the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission’s Report ...noted that in many areas of rural and remote Australia there is no access to preschool education and in a small number of remote Aboriginal communities there is no access to school. (p. 28)

More recently, in 2008, it was reported that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples along with nonindigenous Australians experience disadvantage, but significantly higher proportions of Indigenous people experienced “multiple disadvantages” (SCRGSP 2009, p. 13.1). Multiple disadvantages occur when a number of disadvantage factors are present at the one time, for example, low income, poor health, unemployment, and low education attainment (SCRGSP 2011).

Furthermore, it has been found that lack of access to education due to remoteness, low socioeconomic status, or not fully understanding the benefits of early education can have detrimental outcomes for children’s later educational attainment (Perry and McConney 2010; SCRGSP 2014, p. B.17). With regard to data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s preschool participation, there is limited data available (SCRGSP 2009, p. 3). However, what is known is that PISA (Thomson, et al. 2012) data reports that three groups of Australian secondary students have a lower academic achievement than their peers, and these groups are children from low socioeconomic backgrounds, remote communities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families (Sullivan et al. 2013, p. 354).

There are a number of indicators to determine whether government policies are supporting and reaching all preschool children and their families and providing additional assistance to those who are disadvantaged. One such indicator is school readiness, where children have the necessary skills and resilience to make a smooth transition to formal schooling. Another type of indicator is the *Australian Early Development Index* (AEDI), an instrument that measures “five areas of early childhood development: physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills; and communication skills and general knowledge” (Australian Government 2013; SCRGSP 2014, p. B.23). School readiness and AEDI data allow governments to know how many children are “on track on four or more domains of the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) as they entered school” (Australian Government 2013; SCRGSP 2014, p. B.25). In 2012, data reports that “69% of Australian children were developmentally on track on four or more domains of the AEDI as they entered school, compared with 67% in 2009” (SCRGSP 2014, p. B.A7). Whereas, in 2012 only 47% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were developmentally on track on four or more domains of the AEDI (SCRGSP 2014, p. B.25). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are “twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable on all the AEDI domains” than nonindigenous children (Australian Government 2013, p. 5).

It has been found (Baxter and Hand 2013) that more often than not, children from disadvantaged areas and families are missing out on ECE. The disadvantage can be socioeconomic, and in many cases, children from non-English-speaking background (NESB) families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children who live in remote locations are the children “missing out” on ECE (p. xvii). As researchers, Baxter and Hand (2013) were most interested to know “why” many children who were disadvantaged were not accessing early childhood education. They maintain that existing data on nonparticipation does not adequately answer this question, and further more detailed research is required to better understand the issue.

Part of addressing disadvantage is through early interventions. The efficacy of interventions in ECE, where interventions were “aimed at improving psycho-social conditions linked to child development,” were investigated by Wise and colleagues in 2005 (p. ix). They found that in the short term, there were considerable positive effects of child and family outcomes from interventions, but the long-term effects have not yet been studied with sufficient frequency to draw conclusions. As mentioned previously, the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, who report to the Australian government, is aware of disparate and fragmented data collection methods with regard to ECE policy effectiveness measures and indicators (SCRGSP 2014). However, governments are in the process of improving ECE indicators so that they are nationally comparable. Their objectives in this area are to “report on childcare and preschool service availability; develop indicators to measure the extent to which early childhood education and care services meet children’s needs; and to develop a cost effectiveness indicator” (p. 3.77).

Conclusion

During 2000, OECD (2001) completed a national review of ECE provision in Australia. The review acknowledged that Australia was starting from a low base with low-paid and poorly trained staff in ECE. It was also acknowledged that Australia revealed a range of beliefs and policy directions depending on government philosophy, different departments in charge, type of setting, and community perception. The review team identified real limitations on system coherence imposed by complexities of government and multilayering of administration and regulation.

Other difficulties were identified as arising from the vastness of the country and the distribution of the population. Since that report, the last ten years has seen considerable policy shifts to overcome some of these limitations. Much has been gained, although there is still much to be accomplished.

During the 1980s and 1990s, due to the fast-growing and varied ECE sector across states and territories, it was difficult to be able to “get a clear picture of early childhood provision and participation at a state level, let alone make sense of early childhood programs on a national basis” (Elliott 2006, p. 20). In addition, shifts in policy emphasis, changing demographics, and utilization of ECE services created some “supply, demand, and affordability” issues in the 1990s (Press and Hayes 2000, p. 31). Provision for ECE in long day care settings changed considerably in the years after 1991, as this was the time that “fee subsidies for families using the private sector” were introduced, and it resulted in an increase in private ECE sector investment (Press and Hayes 2000, p. 31). Children with additional needs had access to various government support and specialist resources in the 1990s, and early intervention services offered programs for children with disabilities (Press and Hayes 2000, p. 31). However, state, territory, and national governments support initiatives for families often overlapped with gaps in provision at the state and national levels, and overall ECE policy initiatives were fragmented (Elliott 2006; Press and Hayes 2000). In 2006, it was noted that Australia lacked national measures and a framework to ascertain and evaluate either costs or effectiveness.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, national and state and territory governments have put in place various policy reforms, partnership agreements, and targets to increase access and participation in ECE, particularly for education in the year before school. The current national government acknowledges there is an amount of work to be done to ensure that vulnerable and disadvantaged children can successfully engage in quality ECE and that not all policy initiatives will work as planned and address all areas of disadvantage (SCRGSP 2011, 2014). To address disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, the previous Australian government recommended a “strength-based approach to addressing disadvantage” where local community initiatives that work well can be provided as examples of practices to learn from (SCRGSP 2011, p. 13.2).

In their commitment to creating an accessible and affordable ECE system for the future, the Australian governments since the 2009 COAG agreement have created a number of subsidies and support packages for families and their preschool

children to be able to access and engage in ECE. Inclusion support agencies and specialist funding are available for children with additional needs, whether children have disabilities or are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, from refugee or humanitarian intervention backgrounds, or from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (Department of Education [DoE] 2014, p. 32). Indigenous professional support units are another support service and are able to advise ECE personnel about providing culturally appropriate support and resources (DoE 2014, p. 36). The national government has committed to providing US\$22.7 billion for childcare and early learning during 2016–2017, including US\$10 billion in Child Care Benefit and US\$10.5 billion “in Child Care Rebate to help more than 900,000 Australian families annually with the cost of childcare” (SCRGSP 2014, p. 3.79).

A number of issues have been reported in this chapter to illustrate why it is difficult to measure the number of children not accessing preschool across the country. Some of these issues are due to the variation in service provision types, with different nomenclature used for preschool or the first year of school in different states and territories, leading to confusion about whether a program is a preschool education program or not, particularly if preschool education is held within long day care or schools (Baxter and Hand 2013, p. xv). This issue is exacerbated when there is variation in school-starting age across the states and territories, and the data provides information on who has enrolled in preschool, but data is unavailable on who has *not* enrolled in preschool (Baxter and Hand 2013). Consequently, Baxter and Hand (2013) call for more research into some of the barriers preventing children accessing ECE services across the country.

In conclusion, Australia has moved from a state and territory patchwork provision to a national vision, although difficulties remain which impact on ECE policy. The growing divide between the high and low socioeconomic groups and an aging population that diverts limited resources across differing priorities remain obstacles to fully realizing the vision. Further tensions include providing for differing geographical, social, and economic contexts of all states and territories, the need to increase current participation in the workforce, as well as supporting the longer-term development of a skilled and educated society more generally, whether to focus on the rights of families in the present or those of children for the future.

With respect to the 3A2S model:

Accessibility

- Rural and remote families have difficulty accessing preschool places and insufficient ECE places available overall, especially for low-income families.
- Poor match with requirements of working families.

Affordability

- Costs vary widely across services and between states and territories.

Accountability

- Introduction of the *National Quality Framework* has provided a shared language and purpose to all ECE services.
- Universal assessment and rating through the *National Quality Standard* gives clear and shared objectives.
- National outcomes are publically available on government websites.

Sustainability

- Continuing to develop the means of articulating and measuring economic and social benefits.
- Continued attention is required to mitigate policies that widen the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children.

Social justice

- Inequality remains for marginalized groups: Indigenous communities, rural families, children with additional needs, and NESB families.

Over the years, Australian ECE policies have attempted to address the many barriers families have had in accessing, affording, and acknowledging the benefits of quality ECE for their preschool children. Early childhood education policy has been characterized by the complex and ever-changing interplay between national and state and territory governments' strategies, agendas, and expenditure. However, in the years post the 2009 COAG agreement, states, territories, and national governments on the whole have strived to create a more equitable, accessible, affordable, accountable, sustainable, and socially just ECE system so that more children can have the advantage of engaging in high-quality preschool education, and this work continues.

Appendix

Australian State and Territory Regulatory Authorities



Australian Capital Territory: Children's Policy and Regulation Unit Education and Training Electorate www.det.act.gov.au

New South Wales: Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate, Department of Education and Communities www.dec.nsw.gov.au/ecec

Northern Territory: Quality Education and Care NT, Department of Education www.det.nt.gov.au

Queensland: Office for Early Childhood Education and Care, Department of Education, Training and Employment www.dete.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood

South Australia: Education and Early Childhood Services Registration and Standards Board of South Australia www.eecsrbsa.gov.au

Tasmania: Department of Education, Education and Care Unit www.education.tas.gov.au

Victoria: Department of Education and Training <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/Pages/default.aspx>

Western Australia: Department of Local Government and Communities, Education and Care Regulatory Unit www.dlgc.wa.gov.au

References

- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2009a). *Australian social trends. Document 4102.0*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2009b). *Childhood Education and Care, Australia (CEaCA) Document 4402.0*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2011a). *Childhood Education and Care, Australia (CEaCA) Document 4402.0*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2011b). *2011 Census QuickStats*. Retrieved from http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/0?opendocument&n_avpos=220
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2014). *Preschool education, Australia 2013. Document 4202.0* (updated March 2014). Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2015). *Population clock*. Retrieved on 15 August: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/1647509ef7e25faaca2568a900154b63?OpenDocument>
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2012). *National quality standard assessment and rating instrument*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2013a). *Guide to the national quality framework*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2013b). *Guide to the national quality standard*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2013c). *Guide to developing a quality improvement plan*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2015). *About ACECQA*. Retrieved from <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/welcome/how-we-work>
- Australian Government. (2013). *A snapshot of early childhood development in Australia 2012, Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) national report*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Baxter, J., & Hand, K. (2013). *Access to early childhood education in Australia, research report 24*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- Brennan, D. (2007). Home and away: The policy context in Australia. In E. Hill, B. Pocock, & A. Elliott (Eds.), *Kids count: Better early childhood education and care in Australia* (pp. 57–74). Sydney: Sydney University Press.
- Brennan, D. (2013). For-profit childcare: To market to market. In S. Maddison & R. Denniss (Eds.), *An introduction to Australian public policy: Theory and practice* (pp. 37–38). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Commonwealth of Australia. (1972). *Child care act*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Council of Australian Governments (COAG). (2006). *National partnership agreement on universal access to early childhood education*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Council of Australian Governments. (2008). *National partnership agreement on early childhood education*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. Retrieved from https://www.coag.gov.au/early_childhood
- Council of Australian Governments. (2009). *Investing in the early years—A national early childhood development strategy*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. Retrieved from https://www.coag.gov.au/sites/default/files/national_ECD_strategy.pdf
- Cox, E. (2007). Funding children's services. In E. Hill, B. Pocock, & A. Elliott (Eds.), *Kids count: Better early childhood education and care in Australia* (pp. 272–288). Sydney: University of Sydney Press.
- Credit Suisse. (2013). *Global wealth report*. Zurich: Credit Suisse Research Institute.
- Department of Education. (2014). *Child care service handbook 2013–2014*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Belonging, being & becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

- Department of Human Services. (2015). *Income test for CCB*. Canberra. Retrieved from <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-benefit>
- Dickens, S., Wollny, I., & Ireland, E. (2012). *Childcare sufficiency and sustainability in disadvantaged areas (research report DFE-RR246)*. London: Department for Education.
- Early Childhood Australia. (2014a). *Early childhood flexibility and patterns report*. Canberra: Early Childhood Australia. Retrieved from <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au>
- Early Childhood Australia. (2014b). *Response to the productivity commission's draft report into the inquiry into child care and early childhood learning*. Canberra: Early Childhood Australia. Retrieved from http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003
- Economic Planning Advisory Commission. (1996). *Future child care provision in Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Elliott, A. (2006). *Early childhood education: Pathways to quality and equity for all children*. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Fenech, M. (2013). Quality early childhood education for my child or for all children? Parents as activists for equitable, high-quality early childhood education in Australia. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 38(4), 92–98.
- Fenech, M., Sumsion, J., Robertson, G., & Goodfellow, J. (2008). The regulatory environment: A source of job (dis)satisfaction for early childhood professionals. *Early Childhood Development and Care*, 178(1), 1–14. doi:10.1080/03004430600597222.
- Greenville, J., Pobke, C., & Rogers, N. (2013). *Trends in the distribution of income in Australia*. Productivity commission staff working paper. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Holmes-Smith, P. (1998). *Analysis of the quality improvement and accreditation system applying to long day children's services*. Report to the Commonwealth Child Care Advisory Council, Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Irvine, S., & Farrell, A. (2013). The rise of government in early childhood education and care following the Child Care Act 1972. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 4(38), 99–106.
- Ishimine, K., Tayler, C., & Thorpe, K. (2009). Accounting for quality in Australian childcare: A dilemma for policymakers. *Journal of Education Policy*, 24(6), 717–732. doi:10.1080/02680930903207695.
- Kilderry, A. (2014). Teachers in early childhood policy. *Journal of Education Policy*, 29(2), 242–262. doi:10.1080/02680939.2013.817612.
- Kilderry, A. (2015). The Intensification of performativity in early childhood education. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*. doi:10.1080/00220272.2015.1052850.
- Logan, H., Sumsion, J., & Press, F. (2013). A critical juncture in Australian ECEC and the emergence of 'quality'. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 4(38), 84–91.
- Margetts, K., & Raban, B. (2011). *The early years learning framework in practice* (2nd ed.). Melbourne: Teaching Solutions.
- Ministerial Council for Education, Employment Training and Youth Affairs. (2008). *Melbourne declaration on educational goals for young Australians*. Melbourne: Commonwealth of Australia. Retrieved from http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf
- National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC). (2001). *Putting children first: Quality improvement and accreditation system*. Retrieved from www.ncac.gov.au/qias
- Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development. (2001). *Starting strong I: Early childhood education and care*. Paris: OECD.
- Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development. (2012). *Education at a glance 2012: OECD indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2012-41-en>
- Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development. (2013). "Australia". In *Education at a glance 2013: OECD indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2013-36-en>

- Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development. (2014). *Education at a glance 2014: OECD indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/edu/Australia-EAG2014-Country-Note.pdf>
- Perry, L. B., & McConney, A. (2010). School socio-economic composition and student outcomes in Australia: Implications for educational policy. *Australian Journal of Education*, 54(1), 72–85.
- Phillips, B. (2014). *Child care affordability in Australia*. Issue 35. Canberra: AMP – MATSEM (The National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling), University of Canberra.
- Press, F., & Hayes, A. (2000). *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) thematic review of early childhood education and care policy: Australian background report*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Productivity Commission. (2013). *Childcare and early childhood learning – Issues paper*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Productivity Commission. (2014a). *Childcare and early childhood learning – Draft report*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Productivity Commission. (2014b). *Childcare and early childhood learning – Vol 1 inquiry report no.73*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Productivity Commission. (2014c). *Childcare and early childhood learning – Vol 2 inquiry report no 73*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Raban, B. (Ed.). (2012). *The national quality standard: Towards continuous quality improvement*. Melbourne: Teaching Solutions.
- Raban, B., & Margetts, K. (2012). *Principles and practice driving the EYLF*. Melbourne: Teaching Solutions.
- Raban, B., Waniganayake, M., Deans, J., Brown, R., Ure, C., & Reynolds, B. (2003). Quality assurance in practice: Developing a framework. *Journal of Australian Research in Early Childhood Education*, 10(1), 56–68.
- Rothman, S., Kelly, D., Bramich, M., Cook, J., O'Malley, K., Ozolins, C., Raban, B., & Tobin, M. (2012). *Evaluation of the assessment and rating process under the national quality standard for early childhood education and care and school age care*. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Rowe, K. J., & Darkin, L. (2001). *An examination of options for developing quality assurance measurement instruments for accreditation of long day care centres*. Report to National Childcare Accreditation Council. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Rowe, K. J., Tainton, J., & Taylor, D. (2006). *Key features of the Quality Improvement Accreditation System (QIAS) administered by the National Childcare and Accreditation Council (Australia)*. Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Affairs. Retrieved from <http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/reports/report-documents/key-features-QIAS-Rowe-Tainton-Taylor-June06.pdf>
- Rowley, G., Kos, J., Raban, B., Flear, M., Cullen, J., & Elliott, A. (2011). *Current requirements for tertiary qualifications in early childhood education: Implications for policy*. Final report. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Rush, E. (2006). *Child care quality in Australia* (Discussion Paper No 84). Canberra: The Australia Institute.
- Senate Employment, Education and Training Reference Committee. (1996). *Childhood matters: The report on the inquiry into early childhood education*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision. (2009). *Overcoming indigenous disadvantage: Key indicators 2009*. Canberra: Australian Government Productivity Commission.
- Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision. (2011). *Overcoming indigenous disadvantage: Key indicators 2011*. Canberra: Australian Government Productivity Commission.

- Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service provision. (2013). *Report of government services 2013*. Canberra: Australian Government Productivity Commission.
- Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service provision. (2014). *Report of government services 2014 vol B, child care, education and training*. Canberra: Australian Government Productivity Commission.
- Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision. (2015). *Report on government services 2015 vol B, childcare, education and training*. Canberra: Australian Government Productivity Commission.
- Sullivan, K., Perry, L. B., & McConney, A. (2013). How do school resources and academic performance differ across Australia's rural, regional and metropolitan communities? *Aust Educ Res*, 40(3), 353–372. doi:10.1007/s13384-014-0144-1.
- Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B., & Elliot, K. (2004). *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project: Findings from pre-school to end of key stage 1*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.
- Thomson, S., De Bortoli, L., & Buckley, S. (2012). *PISA: How Australia measures up*. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Urbis. (2010). *Evaluation of the national partnership on early childhood education*. Annual report. Melbourne: Urbis.
- Warren, D., & Haisken-DeNew, J. P. (2013). *Early bird catches the worm: The causal impact of pre-school participation and teacher qualifications in year 3 NAPLAN cognitive tests*. Melbourne: Melbourne Institute, University of Melbourne.
- Wise, S., da Silva, L., Webster, E., & Sanson, A. (2005). *The efficacy of early childhood interventions*, AIFS research report no. 14, July 2005. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- Woolcott. (2014). *Summary of findings from the 2014 national quality framework review consultation process*. Melbourne: Woolcott Research. Retrieved from <http://www.woolcott.com.au/NQFReview/>

Chapter 2

A Critical Analysis of the Changing Landscape of Early Childhood Education in Mainland China: History, Policies, Progress, and Future Development

Xiumin Hong and Jennifer J. Chen

Abstract China's 'reform and opening-up' policy initiated in 1978 has ushered the country into rapid economic development. Early childhood education (ECE) has also subsequently entered a period of monumental development. In this chapter, using the '3A2S' framework (Li et al. *Int J Chin Educ* 3(2):161–170, 2014), we analyse the development and implementation of ECE policies in China within the last four decades, examining particularly Phase I (2011–2013) and Phase II (2014–2016) of the Three-Year Action Plan. Analyses of national data from statistical reports and official agencies indicate that (1) the supply of kindergartens is soaring, but the accessibility problem still persists, especially in destitute areas and for those from disadvantaged backgrounds; (2) funding support for ECE is increasing, but is still not sufficient enough; (3) the government has intensified its involvement in ECE, but objective monitoring and assessment mechanisms have yet to be established; (4) the Three-Year Action Plan has been implemented to enhance sustainability of ECE; and (5) efforts have been made to address educational equality for young children from vulnerable circumstances. These findings collectively suggest that the government is improving accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice of ECE, but more work is needed to achieve a better and stronger ECE system in China.

X. Hong (✉)
Beijing Normal University, Beijing, China
e-mail: xiuminhong@163.com

J.J. Chen
Kean University, Union, NJ, USA
e-mail: jchen@kean.edu

Introduction

Officially known as the People's Republic of China, mainland China is located in East Asia. There are many different dialects spoken in China, but the official language is Mandarin. China is the most populated country in the world, with nearly 1.37 billion inhabitants as of 2014 (China Statistical Yearbook 2015). With such a large populace, China is met with vast opportunities as well as challenges in its development. Within the last four decades, China has experienced substantial transformations in the economic and educational arenas.

These transformations have been galvanised principally by the implementation of '改革开放', *gǎigé kāifàng* (literally 'reform and opening-up'), a policy that was initiated in 1978 by Chinese communist leader, Deng Xiaoping. This policy has ushered the country into a prosperous 'golden time' of rapid economic development, transforming it from planning to actual marketing. Intricately influenced by China's political and economic reform and progress, early childhood education (ECE) there has also undergone transformative development, transitioning its operation from solely governmental to non-governmental or individual based.

ECE in China constitutes two levels: (1) nurseries, catered to children ages 0–3 and (2) kindergartens, serving those ages 3–6. Currently, most children in urban areas of China attend full-day kindergarten, while nursery is disappearing and gradually being replaced by subsidised (i.e. co-paid between government and parents) and commercial (i.e. supported completely by tuition) services with parental involvement for children under age 3.

In this chapter, we provide a critical analysis of the development and implementation of ECE policies in China particularly at the kindergarten level, using the '3A2S' framework (Li et al. 2014): 'accessibility' (whether kindergartens were accessible to all preschool-age children), 'affordability' (whether every family could afford the tuition and fees of their chosen kindergarten for their child and whether governmental subsidies were offered to financially needy families), 'accountability' (whether the policy was accountable for the fiscal resources provided by the government for improving educational quality), 'sustainability' (whether the policy could sustain the development of ECE), and 'social justice' (whether there was equality in the distribution of educational resources and quality across regions and children from various backgrounds). We first contextualise the development and implementation of ECE policies in China within a historical perspective and then discuss our analysis of such policies using the 3A2S framework on the basis of national data garnered from statistical reports and official agencies. We conclude by providing implications for future development of ECE policies in China.

History of ECE Policies in Mainland China (1978–2014)

The year 1978, when the ‘reform and opening-up’ policy was implemented, marked a turning point for transforming the landscape of ECE in China. Particularly during that year, the Ministry of Education (MoE) restored the ECE Department (which was revoked in the chaotic decade from 1966 to 1976) (He 1998), an action that has since led to changes in the level-to-level administrative system (Pang and Hong 2012). Furthermore, since the 1980s, the development of ECE has also been influenced by the introduction of Western theories, such as those of Piaget, Vygotsky, Dewey, Montessori, Bronfenbrenner, and Bruner (Zhu 2010) and the subsequent adoption and localisation of Western-based pedagogical approaches, such as Reggio Emilia, Montessori, and the Project Approach (Li and Li 2003).

The period of 1990s was also a turning point for advancing ECE development in China, when the Chinese government began to show interest in reforming ECE. The most influential measures of ECE reform included 幼儿园工作规程 (试行) (Kindergarten Work Regulations and Procedures [Trial Version] in 1989 (which was later revised in 1996) and 幼儿园管理条例 (Kindergarten Management By-laws) in 1990; both of which were issued by the National Education Committee (now known as the Ministry of Education). These regulations served as a crucial milestone for promoting quality kindergartens and developing a quality rating system at the provincial level (Hu and Li 2012).

In addition, entering the 1990s, with the establishment of a market economy system – an economy that relies chiefly on market forces to allocate goods and resources as well as determine prices – the operational pattern of public kindergartens (that were once run by government, armed forces, public institutions, enterprises, and communities) was demolished (Zeng and Fan 2009). In the planned economic system, as decisions regarding production and investment were embedded in a plan formulated by a central authority, the operating costs of kindergartens were mainly paid for by the county or local governments and communities, which were offered to staff members as labour protection and welfare (Zeng 2006). However, a significant number of kindergartens had to be closed down due to a lack of operating funds with the transformation of economic systems. Consequently, private kindergartens (operated by non-governmental organisations or individuals separately or jointly) were able to make tremendous strides with a steady increase in quantity (Pang and Hong 2012).

As ECE is supported by non-governmental sectors or individuals rather than by the government, in the late 1990s, some local governments exposed kindergartens to the market blindly (i.e. public kindergartens had to be closed down, suspended, merged, transformed, or sold) due to their financial burden derived from the tax reform that tightened local general funding. To provide guidance, the State Council approved the distribution of the 关于幼儿教育改革与发展的指导意见 (Opinions Concerning the Guide for Early Childhood Education Reform and Development) in 2003, which put forward the goal for the next 5 years (2003–2007) to promote a development pattern that would establish public kindergartens as the backbone and

model of ECE and mobilise social forces to run kindergartens as the main management body (Zheng 2004).

Most recently, the importance of ECE has been attached unprecedentedly to the promulgation of 国家中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要 (2010–2020 年) ('The Outline of National Plan for Medium- and Long-term Education Reform and Development', 2010–2020). Another key policy implemented was 国务院关于当前发展学前教育的若干意见 ('The State Council's Several Opinions on the Current Development of ECE') in 2010. To keep terminologies concise, thereafter we will refer to the 'National Medium- and Long-term Outline for Education Reform and Development' simply as the 'National Education Reform', and 'The State Council's Several Opinions on the Current Development of ECE' as 'Opinions on the Current Development of ECE'.

In 2010, the National Education Reform proposed an ambitious goal to achieve universality of ECE by 2020 with a greater emphasis on the development of rural ECE (General Office of the State Council [GOSC] 2010a). The Opinions on the Current Development of ECE further clarified the fundamental nature of and development orientation for public welfare to make ECE more affordable (GOSC 2010b). Since then, there have been pilot projects of ECE reform. Specifically, three influential ones have been successively launched: (1) 学前教育三年行动计划 (the Three-Year Action Plan for ECE), (2) 中西部农村学前教育推进工程试点项目 (The Pilot Project of Central and Western Rural ECE Advancement Programme), and (3) 幼师国培计划 (National-level Training Plan for Kindergarten Teachers). All of these initiatives have demonstrated the Chinese government's efforts to adopt various measures to enhance the quality of ECE for young children.

It is worth noting that, to date, China has not yet implemented any national policy of 15-year 'free' education that includes the 3-year ECE. However, efforts have been made in many counties in western China to apply policies of free ECE. The implementation of free ECE in these areas has prompted research investigation on its outcomes. For instance, Li and Wang (2014) conducted a multiple case study of four counties in Shanxi and Shaanxi province, revealing four major findings: (1) The 'free' education policies could only partially address the issue of affordability because ECE was neither free for all children nor free in all fees; (2) the policies did not solve the accessibility problem; (3) no accountability mechanisms were established to ensure ECE quality; and (4) the policies lacked sustainability due to the fact that the fiscal budget for funding free ECE was drawn solely from the county. Given that the policies of free ECE have not been executed pervasively throughout China, our analysis focuses only on national ECE policies.

A Critical Analysis of ECE Policies in Mainland China

We critically analyse ECE policies at the kindergarten level in China using the 3A2S framework (Li et al. 2014): accessibility (the nature of kindergarten admissions), affordability (the cost of kindergarten attendance), accountability (the mechanisms

for quality assurance), sustainability (the potential of the ECE policies to survive and thrive), and social justice (the equality of rights for children from all backgrounds).

Accessibility

Accessibility refers to whether every preschool-age child could easily attend a nearby kindergarten (Li et al. 2014). Table 2.1 shows some interesting trends about accessibility to kindergartens for young children in China. First and foremost, during the 10-year span between 2003 and 2013, except for 2007, there was a general increase in the supply of kindergartens nationwide, averaging 8216 kindergartens annually. As of 2013, China had a total of 198,553 kindergartens, representing a growth of 17,302 in quantity or a growth rate of 9.55 % from just the previous year. In terms of the number of new entrants to kindergarten, there were 38,946,903 in 2013, representing an upsurge of 2,089,279 from also the previous year. Furthermore, there was an increase in the quantity of kindergartens per 1000 km² over the decade from 12 in 2003 to 21 in 2013.

Table 2.1 also shows that the gross enrolment rate of 3-year kindergarten education for children ages 3–5 grew by 30.1 % from 2003 to 2013. Most significantly, since 2011, the kindergarten enrolment has already exceeded the target of 34 million set for 2015 (GOSC 2010a). This substantial increase in the quantity of kindergartens reflected the implementation of ECE policies. Specifically, from 2011 to 2013, the local governments implemented Phase I of the Three-Year Action Plan for ECE, aimed at solving the accessibility problem for young children by increasing the supply of kindergartens.

As indicated in Table 2.2, kindergartens in China are operated by two entities: public (run by the government, public institutions, army, local state-owned enterprises, and communities) and private (run by non-governmental sectors or individuals). China has witnessed private kindergartens increasing in quantity more steadily and rapidly than public ones in recent years (see years 2009–2013 in Table 2.2). Table 2.2 shows that, as of 2013, there were 133,451 private kindergartens, a jump of 8813 or nearly 7.07 % from 2012. Overall, private kindergartens represented 67.21 % of the total quantity of kindergartens in the country. The rapid rise in the supply of private kindergartens has been met with an escalating demand for them. Most recently in 2013, the total enrolment of young children in private kindergartens reached 19,902,536, constituting 51.10 % of the entire kindergarten population nationwide (see Table 2.2).

ECE policies in China play a significant role in its national kindergarten enrolment. Specifically, Phase I of the Three-Year Action Plan for ECE has promoted public and ‘qualified-and-affordable’ (reaching the basic quality standard and low fees for the public) private kindergartens. The qualified-and-affordable component was an important complement to public ECE, as it aims to combine the advantages of both public and private kindergartens. As a result of the ECE policies imple-

Table 2.1 Total number of kindergartens, kindergartens per 1000 km², kindergartners, proportion of children in urban and rural kindergartens, and gross enrolment rate from 2003 to 2013

Year	Number of kindergartens	Number of kindergartens per 1000 km ²	Number of kindergartners	Proportion of children in urban kindergartens (%)	Proportion of children in rural kindergartens (%)	Gross enrolment rate in 3-year ECE (%)
2003	116,390	12	20,039,061	53.07	46.93	37.40
2004	117,899	12	20,894,002	52.30	47.70	40.75
2005	124,402	13	21,790,290	53.33	46.67	41.40
2006	130,495	14	22,638,509	53.71	46.29	42.50
2007	129,056	13	23,488,300	56.02	43.98	44.60
2008	133,722	14	24,749,600	56.87	43.13	47.30
2009	138,209	14	26,578,141	57.63	42.37	50.90
2010	150,420	16	29,766,695	59.22	40.78	56.60
2011	166,750	17	34,244,456	70.98	29.02	62.30
2012	181,251	19	36,857,624	71.79	28.21	64.50
2013	198,553	21	38,946,903	No data	No data	67.50

The data as well as further calculations were drawn from China Education Statistical Yearbook (Han 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010; Ji 2000; Mu 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004; Xie 2011, 2013a, b), China Population and Employment Statistical Yearbook (formerly known as China Population Statistical Year book), (National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Employment Statistics 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012a, b, 2014), and China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook (Chen 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012; Wu 2013; Yang 2001a, b, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007) which were published by Chinese official agencies (Chinese official websites of Ministry of Education and National Bureau of Statistics). Except where noted, all tables consist of showing annual statistics and corresponding ratio calculations were based on information from these official statistical reports

Table 2.2 Total number of public and private kindergartens, kindergarteners, classes, and kindergarteners per class from 2003 to 2013

Year	Number of kindergartens		Number of kindergarteners		Number of classes		Number of kindergarteners per class	
	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
2003	60,854	55,536	15,236,764	4,802,297	53.99	18.86	28	25
2004	55,732	62,167	15,052,929	5,841,073	53.01	22.73	28	26
2005	55,567	68,835	15,109,365	6,680,925	52.19	25.30	29	26
2006	55,069	75,426	14,881,638	7,756,871	50.30	28.57	30	27
2007	51,470	77,616	14,800,819	8,687,481	48.63	31.28	30	28
2008	50,603	83,119	14,929,262	9,820,338	47.69	34.79	31	28
2009	48,905	89,304	15,236,447	11,341,694	47.28	39.51	32	29
2010	48,131	102,289	15,772,001	13,994,694	48.50	48.66	33	29
2011	51,346	115,404	17,302,366	16,942,090	61.70	63.88	28	27
2012	56,613	124,638	18,330,180	18,527,444	59.39	67.26	31	28
2013	65,102	133,451	19,044,367	19,902,536	61.95	72.35	31	28

The data as well as further calculations were drawn from China Education Statistical Yearbook (Han 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010; Ji 2000; Mu 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004; Xie 2011, 2013a, b), China Population and Employment Statistical Yearbook (formerly known as China Population Statistical Year book), (National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Employment Statistics 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012a, b, 2014), and China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook (Chen 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012; Wu 2013; Yang 2001a, b, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007) which were published by Chinese official agencies (Chinese official websites of Ministry of Education and National Bureau of Statistics). Except where noted, all tables consist of showing annual statistics and corresponding ratio calculations were based on information from these official statistical reports

mented during Phase I of the Three-Year Action Plan, there were changes in the quantity of kindergartens, kindergarteners, classes per kindergarten, and kindergarteners per class between public and private kindergartens during the decade from 2003 to 2013. One noticeable difference is that the quantities of public kindergartens tended to fluctuate over the years, while those for private kindergartens generally soared from year to year (see Table 2.2). It is possible that the public began to change its views on private kindergartens because the qualified-and-affordable private kindergartens were close to matching up to the public ones by achieving the basic standards of kindergartens, pricing within the tuition caps, and accepting quality control and incentives provided by local governments (municipal and county) (MoE 2014a). Consequently, the accessibility problem was preliminarily relieved. However, this issue still lingers especially in central and western rural areas (MoE 2014e).

Affordability of ECE in China

Affordability refers to whether every family could afford the tuition and fees of a chosen kindergarten for their child and whether governmental subsidies were offered to financially needy families (Li et al. 2014). The problem of affordability

for ECE is a pervasive one in China. First and foremost, ECE has never been a part of compulsory education nor has it been widely free. Moreover, the best resources are allocated intensively to few kindergartens, generally public ones, making them higher in quality and affordability; consequently, parents would fight for the available places of public kindergartens using their power or money (Chinese Radio Network 2010a), resulting in the Matthew effect (meaning the strong get stronger and the weak get weaker). Another reason is that private, profit-making kindergartens constitute the majority of ECE programmes in China, with tuition fees ranging from several hundred to several thousand Chinese yuan¹ per month. Some 'noble' kindergartens even charged more than universities (Chinese Radio Network 2010b).

The limited number of high-quality and affordable public kindergartens coupled with highly priced private ones jointly exacerbated the affordability problem of ECE throughout China. Correspondingly, the affordability issue became the focus of the fourth plenary session of the 11th National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference that took place in 2011 in Beijing. The government's work report of that conference indicated the need to increase resources for both public and private kindergartens to help address the affordability problem (Wen 2011). Subsequently, in 2011, the Central Finance dedicated 3 billion Chinese yuan to guarantee the expansion of ECE resources. According to MoE's website (2014a), by the end of Phase I of the Three-Year Action Plan for ECE, 'a 50-billion-yuan ECE project fund from the Central Finance and more than 160 billion yuan from local financial investment at all levels would ensure the rapid development of early childhood education', targeting especially the mid and western regions as well as eastern poverty-stricken regions of China.

Since local governments invested more funding than social investment in ECE, the proportion of social investment decreased from 66.44% in 2010 to 59.19% in 2011 (Educational Statistical Yearbook of China, 2010–2011). Moreover, there is an issue concerning considering the family's income as a criterion for setting a child's cost of kindergarten attendance in China because the tuition and fees paid for by households accounted for the majority of ECE institutional fees.

The tuition and fees for kindergarten attendance had been consistently soaring during the decade from 2000 to 2010 (see Table 2.3): At first, they rose slowly before 2006 and then skyrocketed from \$931 million (in US dollars) in 2009 to \$5.675 billion (in US dollars) in 2010, representing a growth rate of 509.89% or eight times higher than that of 2009. As shown in Table 2.3, since 2000, the proportion of the household per capita disposable income was higher in rural than urban areas, and the difference in tuition and fees per child accounting for household per capita disposable income between rural and urban areas was also widened accordingly. This finding suggests that the cost of kindergarten attendance tended to be more expensive in rural than urban areas. However, it is worth noting that this inference is based only on the proportion of tuition and fees per child and that the kindergarten population in rural areas has been shrinking constantly in proportion to that in urban areas. For instance, the rural kindergarten population represented less than 30% of the total kindergarten population during the year 2011–2012 (see Table 2.1).

Since 2010, with the implementation of relevant policies (e.g. National Education Reform, Opinions on the Current Development of ECE), positive changes have occurred.

Table 2.3 Tuition and fees (in US dollars) and other related data from 2000 to 2011

Year	Tuition and fees	Growth rate (%)	Annual tuition and fees per child	Growth rate (%)	In urban per capita disposable income (fixed price in 2000)	In rural per capita disposable income (fixed price in 2000)
2000	109,000,000	14.85	4,850,000	19.05	0.64	1.78
2001	121,000,000	10.64	5,960,000	22.81	0.72	2.10
2002	133,000,000	10.34	6,530,000	9.58	0.70	2.18
2003	145,000,000	8.77	7,220,000	10.52	0.71	2.30
2004	167,000,000	15.47	7,990,000	10.75	0.74	2.37
2005	183,000,000	9.55	8,400,000	5.04	0.70	2.26
2006	221,000,000	20.79	9,760,000	16.27	0.72	2.35
2007	–	–	–	–	–	–
2008	704,000,000	–	28,460,000	–	1.51	5.00
2009	931,000,000	32.11	35,010,000	23.02	1.67	5.55
2010	5,675,000,000	509.89	190,660,000	444.56	8.34	26.94
2011	7,629,000,000	34.42	222,770,000	16.84	8.59	26.85

The data as well as further calculations were drawn from China Education Statistical Yearbook (Han 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010; Ji 2000; Mu 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004; Xie 2011, 2013a, b), China Population and Employment Statistical Yearbook (formerly known as China Population Statistical Year book), (National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Employment Statistics 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012a, b, 2014), and China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook (Chen 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012; Wu 2013; Yang 2001a, b, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007) which were published by Chinese official agencies (Chinese official websites of Ministry of Education and National Bureau of Statistics). Except where noted, all tables consist of showing annual statistics and corresponding ratio calculations were based on information from these official statistical reports

Specifically, Phase I of the Three-Year Action Plan for ECE has made strong headway during the years 2012–2013 when the central government and local governments invested a total of 6.47 billion yuan to support children from disadvantaged backgrounds including those from poor families, orphans, and children with special needs, accounting for the subsidisation of more than three million children every year (MoE 2014b).

Furthermore, in accordance with the Opinions on the Current Development of ECE, both the central and local governments have been increasing their fiscal investment by:

1. implementing a policy for setting budget for ECE to be included in the fiscal budget,
2. providing financial priority to ECE based on newly added funding for education by specifying the reasonable proportion of investment for ECE in the fiscal investment,
3. developing financial allocation criteria for ECE and establishing a subsidy system, and
4. contracting partial ECE service with non-governmental sectors (e.g. purchasing ECE service of private kindergartens for children from financially disadvantaged families) and encouraging enterprises, communities, and individual citizens to run kindergartens and thus guarantee affordable ECE for more young children.

Accountability of ECE in China

Accountability refers to whether the policy was accountable for the fiscal resources provided by the government for improving educational quality (Li et al. 2014). Before addressing the matter of accountability of ECE in China, we examine the governing bodies of ECE policies. In China, provincial governments are the main entities responsible for implementing their individual institutional mechanism reform of ECE. To facilitate provincial governments' work as much as possible, the MoE issued 学前教育督导评估暂行办法 (Interim Measures of the Early Childhood Education Monitoring and Evaluation) in 2012, supporting the establishment of corresponding monitoring, assessment, and annual inspection systems in various provinces based on the principles of development, inspiration, objectivity, and timeliness. In particular, six areas were emphasised:

1. Governmental duties (management and leadership structures, planning, and planning preparation, as well as monitoring, assessment, reward, and punishment mechanisms)
2. Investment of funds (financial budget and safeguard mechanism, investment mechanism, appropriation standards, and preferential policies and subvention system)
3. Kindergarten construction (expansion of qualified-and-affordable resources, construction of urban and rural kindergartens, as well as improvement of facility and equipment standards)
4. Teacher development and education (teacher supply and credentialing, teacher education, and training system, as well as teacher benefits and compensation)
5. Standardised ECE management system (kindergarten licencing and monitoring system, pricing management, safety and healthcare, and quality evaluation and intervention)
6. Guarantee of development (gross enrolment rate, proportion of public kindergartens, proportion of fiscal funding, proportion of teachers with certificates, child-care quality, and social satisfaction)

In addition, the national educational supervision team conducted dynamic monitoring and sampling inspection, as well as established corresponding reward/punishment and disclosure systems to provide transparency (MoE 2012a). These assurance mechanisms have gradually been implemented to monitor and evaluate the provincial governments' work performance in ECE, a basis on which the central government will determine its fiscal support. However, since the supervisory authority itself is part of the educational administrative department, there is a lack of objective third-party independent monitoring (Office of National Education Inspectorate 2012). In addition, the absence of a unified and comprehensive quality system has been shown to weaken the linkage between governmental accountability and ECE quality standards.

Sustainability in ECE Policies

Sustainability refers to whether the policy itself could be sustainable and whether it could sustain the development of ECE (Li et al. 2014). To address this issue, we examine the increased efforts put forth by the central government. Prior to 2010, the central government paid little attention to ECE. Since 2010, however, it has played a more active role in promoting ECE policies. Particularly, the National Education Reform and the Opinions on the Current Development of ECE have made clear the central government's responsibilities for and interest in achieving universality of ECE. Subsequently, efforts have been made to establish the operational system for both public and private kindergartens, with each county being required to develop and carry out its own action plans. Thus far, the government has implemented several key programmes to ensure the continuous advancement of current ECE policies.

Particularly in 2010, the General Office of the State Council issued the 关于开展国家教育体制改革试点的通知 ('Announcement on Carrying out the Pilot Reform of National Education System'), which included having the special pilot units nationwide to actively explore the development of the ECE system and related mechanisms (especially the management system), resource expansion, as well as ECE development in rural areas and teacher training. In the same year, the State Development and Reform Commission and Ministry of Education also commenced pilot projects to improve programme quality for rural ECE. In 2011, the Ministry of Finance and the MoE jointly issued the 关于加大财政投入支持学前教育发展的通知 ('Announcement on Increasing Fiscal Investment to Support Early Childhood Educational Development') and seven-project implementation programmes (MoE 2012b), focusing particularly on the following areas:

1. Alteration work (e.g. renovating unused rural buildings into kindergartens, increasing kindergartens affiliated with rural primary schools, promoting itinerant teaching in rural areas)
2. Reward and subsidy (developing qualified-and-affordable private kindergartens, maintaining kindergartens run by urban collectives, enterprises and public institutions and departments, and arranging places of kindergarten for migrant labourers' children)
3. Teacher training (providing rural kindergarten directors and master teachers with professional development activities)
4. Child assistance programme (offering financial aid to children from impoverished backgrounds as well as orphans and those who are disabled)

Furthermore, Phase I of the Three-Year Action Plan for ECE had already been implemented in various regions throughout China as an effort to address the issue of accessibility to kindergarten for young children by providing qualified-and-affordable ECE resources and financial investment, developing qualifications in teaching and administrative staff, and promoting childcare quality. The MoE, the State Development and Reform Commission, and Ministry of Finance have been

jointly promoting the implementation of Phase II of the Three-Year Action Plan for ECE during the years 2014–2016 as an enhancement of Phase I of the plan to further expand ECE resources and solve the accessibility problem for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Consequently, the government's responsibilities for ECE development have been expanded, including ensuring the sustainability of ECE policies through various means, such as providing resources, increasing fiscal investment, and monitoring the quality of teaching and administrative staff.

Social Justice in ECE Policies

Social justice refers to whether there was equality in the distribution of educational resources and quality across groups of children from different socio-economic backgrounds (Li et al. 2014). To ensure educational equality, the central government started to increase its fiscal investment in ECE. Yet, the total fund for ECE was ranked only fourth among all public fiscal funds devoted to the education system in the year 2000–2011, accounting for less than 2 % of the total educational fiscal budget (Educational Statistical Yearbook of China [ESYOC], 2000–2011). In comparison, the public fiscal investments for secondary education, elementary education, and higher education were ranked the top 3, respectively. However, the growth rates of ECE funds between 2008 and 2011 were noticeably the highest in the public fiscal budget (see Table 2.4).

The preceding analysis has provided a vertical comparison in financial investment between ECE and higher levels of education. The following analysis presents a horizontal examination of financial investment in ECE to promote educational quality in rural areas and for young children from disadvantaged backgrounds. To promote equality in ECE across regions, the central government offered an earmarking fund of 500 million Chinese yuan to build, renovate, and expand 416 rural kindergartens in 10 provinces and 61 pilot counties (MoE 2012b; Liu and Li 2012). By 2012, the pilot projects were already completed in 25 provinces with a special investment of 5.6 billion Chinese yuan, resulting in 3163 kindergartens being added (MoE 2012b). In 2011, the central government invested 38.2 billion Chinese yuan to build 4500 kindergartens and renovate more than 80,000 kindergartens by making use of unused buildings in rural areas and adding them to primary schools. In addition, it invested 1.1 billion Chinese yuan to train 296,000 teachers in rural kindergartens and implement urban reward and subsidy programmes to support qualified-and-affordable kindergartens run by local governments, urban enterprises, public institutions, and communities to meet the enrolment need of more than 10 million children (especially those of migrant labourers), accounting for more than three million children in 69,000 kindergartens (MoE 2014b). The central government's various efforts to finance ECE have demonstrated its commitment and dedication to solving the problem of social justice with respect to educational equality for young children, especially those in rural areas and those from disadvantaged circumstances.

Table 2.4 Fund input from public financial budget (in US dollars) for all levels of education from 2000 to 2011

Year	Higher education ^a	Growth rate (%)	Secondary education ^b	Growth rate (%)	Elementary education ^c	Growth rate (%)	Early childhood education	Growth rate (%)
2000	639,900	19.18	916,000	12.92	8,11,800	14.38	34,900	14.47
2001	763,900	19.38	1,120,600	22.33	1,034,300	27.40	41,900	20.18
2002	912,000	19.39	1,351,700	20.62	1,265,300	22.34	48,000	14.55
2003	1,013,500	11.13	1,515,400	12.11	1,397,500	10.44	53,300	11.06
2004	1,166,900	15.13	1,763,900	16.40	1,634,200	16.94	62,800	17.79
2005	1,318,600	13.00	2,080,600	17.96	1,885,400	15.37	75,800	20.70
2006	1,564,100	18.61	2,576,000	23.81	2,326,300	23.38	91,800	21.16
2007	2,104,000	34.52	3,595,900	39.59	3,311,300	42.34	125,600	36.77
2008	2,877,800	36.77	5,059,900	40.71	4,482,200	35.36	176,800	40.78
2009	3,292,900	14.42	6,212,300	22.78	5,519,100	23.14	223,200	26.24
2010	4,103,400	24.62	7,310,000	17.67	6,484,400	17.49	323,100	44.78
2011	5,930,400	44.52	9,469,500	29.54	8,228,800	26.90	544,400	68.49

The data as well as further calculations were drawn from China Education Statistical Yearbook (Han 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010; Ji 2000; Mu 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004; Xie 2011, 2013a, b), China Population and Employment Statistical Yearbook (formerly known as China Population Statistical Year book), (National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Employment Statistics 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012a, b, 2014), and China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook (Chen 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012; Wu 2013; Yang 2001a, b, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007) which were published by Chinese official agencies (Chinese official websites of Ministry of Education and National Bureau of Statistics). Except where noted, all tables consist of showing annual statistics and corresponding ratio calculations were based on information from these official statistical reports

^aHigher education includes regular and adult higher education

^bSecondary education includes secondary general and vocational education

^cElementary education includes general and adult elementary education

Conclusion

China has witnessed nearly four decades of momentous development of its ECE policies, leading to drastic changes in the ECE landscape. The question is *how did these ECE policies perform when judged by the 3A2S framework?* This chapter tackled this question by evaluating China's ECE policies using this specific framework. Our analysis revealed some key results indicating that (1) the supply of kindergartens is soaring, but the accessibility problem still persists, especially in destitute areas and for those from disadvantaged backgrounds; (2) funding support for ECE is increasing, but is still not sufficient enough; (3) the government has intensified its involvement in ECE, but objective monitoring and assessment mechanisms have yet to be established; (4) the Three-Year Action Plan has been implemented to enhance sustainability of ECE; and (5) efforts have been made to address educational equality for young children in rural areas and those from vulnerable circumstances. These findings collectively suggest that the government is improving accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice of ECE, but more work is needed to achieve a better and stronger ECE system in China.

Accessibility: Increasing Supply of Kindergartens but Still Not Adequate Enough

With the implementation of the Three-Year Action Plan for ECE, various kinds of kindergartens have been built and supported, leading to the growth of qualified-and-affordable ECE resources. This policy has, thus, benefited young children by providing them with more opportunities to enrol in kindergarten. There still exists, however, the problem of accessibility to kindergartens for young children in destitute areas (located particularly in central and western rural China) and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Given this persistent problem, it seems that China still has a long way to go before achieving universal, quality ECE for young children.

Affordability: Increasing Financial Support but Still Not Sufficient Enough

Both the central and local governments have been increasing their fiscal investment in ECE. However, the funds allotted to ECE are still relatively lower than those to higher levels of education. Moreover, the provision of federal funding and local funding is still scarce and thus insufficient to support high-quality ECE programmes. Furthermore, while the cost-sharing system of ECE among various stakeholders is in place, the specific co-payment plan has not yet been clearly delineated.

Accountability: Increasing Governmental Involvement but Lacking in Objective Assurance Mechanisms

The central government has issued a series of policies aimed at strengthening the ECE system, including monitoring local governments and providers of ECE, promoting quality ECE, investing financial resources, and facilitating the normal operation of kindergartens. Although the government has made some positive headway in its involvement, there still lacks a more objective, assessment system to ensure accountability at all levels.

Sustainability: Policies in Action

In 2010, the National Education Reform promulgated that by 2020, the country will have achieved the goal of universal ECE. Furthermore, the Opinions on the Current Development of ECE urged all local governments to implement the Three-Year Action Plan for ECE in every county. Phase I of the Three-Year Action Plan already garnered some remarkable achievements, especially in alleviating the problem of accessibility to kindergartens for some young children and increasing the amount of ECE resources. Building on these achievements, Phase II of the Three-Year Action Plan has been implemented to further address the institutional requirements of resources, investment, and staff management to sustain ECE development (MoE, 2014c).

Social Justice: Supporting Young Children from Disadvantaged Backgrounds

To empower every young child with an equitable access to ECE, the central government has already adopted a series of national pilot projects to support the establishment of ECE in underdeveloped rural areas, encourage the development of private kindergartens to supplement public ones, and provide financial support for kindergarten education to children from disadvantaged backgrounds (i.e. those from socio-economically impoverished families, orphans, and those with special needs). Although disparities still exist, ECE policies in China have devoted more attention to educational equality, an indication that the country is striving for social justice for the education of all young children.

Implications for Future ECE Development

Considering the aforementioned issues in the areas of accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice, we believe that China's ECE policies should be further perfected to realise the goal of making ECE fundamentally universal by 2020. Currently, there still remains a gap evidently between supply and demand for affordable, quality kindergartens in China. It is imperative that the Chinese government continues to provide quality education to all children in the early years, especially those from disadvantaged regions and backgrounds. Furthermore, the social sectors or individuals should be guided by policy that focuses on providing public-oriented, high-quality, and affordable ECE to all young children. Meanwhile, the market mechanism should be well regulated in order to adequately meet the parents' need to enrol their young children in kindergarten (Pang and Feng 2014).

Currently, the educational authorities of China are striving to improve ECE policies. For instance, the Chinese government is actively consolidating the executive results of Phase I of the Three-Year Action Plan (2011–2013) and is currently implementing Phase II of the Three-Year Action Plan (2014–2016), aimed at establishing a public service system as the principal component that promotes both the urban and rural development of qualified-and-affordable kindergartens. In the meantime, according to MoE's website (2014d), Phase II of the Three-Year Action Plan for ECE emphasises that 'the input mechanism of government, social runner, and rational household sharing should be perfected', and 'the rural ECE cost-sharing mechanism should be set up step by step, which is funded mainly by public fiscal investment'. To guarantee that both the ECE service system and the appropriate sharing mechanism are properly formed, Phase II of the Three-Year Action Plan shall further facilitate the workable annual monitoring system and the outreach system of ECE services used for making information public and transparent.

Finally, it is worth noting that as it was not intended to be an exhaustive examination of all variations in the implementation of ECE policies across all regions of China, this policy analysis focused mainly on the national trend of ECE policies in China, relying on national statistics. Overall, it contributes to the policy literature important insights concerning some critical, national ECE policies implemented in China, emphasising particularly on how they were conceived, how they have been delivered, as well as by whom and what mechanisms. What can be affirmed now is that ECE policies in China with their unique Chinese characteristics and circumstances will continue advancing steadily to address issues relevant to achieving 3A2S by (1) making kindergartens accessible, (2) offering affordable ECE, (3) providing quality assurance mechanisms accountable by the educational authorities, (4) promoting the sustainable implementation of these policies, and (5) meeting the needs of young children from all backgrounds to attain social justice in educational equality.

Appendix: Full Names of Terms and Their Acronyms

Full names	Acronyms
Early childhood education	ECE
Educational Statistical Yearbook of China	ESYOC
General Office of the State Council	GOSC
Ministry of Education	MoE
National Medium- and Long-term Outline for Education Reform and Development	National Education Reform
The State Council's Several Opinions on the Current Development of ECE	Opinions on the Current Development of ECE

References

- Chen, W. G. (Ed.). (2008). 中国教育经费统计年鉴 2007 [China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook 2007]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Chen, W. G. (Ed.). (2009). 中国教育经费统计年鉴 2008 [China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook 2008]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Chen, W. G. (Ed.). (2010). 中国教育经费统计年鉴 2009 [China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook 2009]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Chen, W. G. (Ed.). (2011). 中国教育经费统计年鉴 2010 [China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook 2010]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Chen, W. G. (Ed.). (2012). 中国教育经费统计年鉴 2011 [China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook 2011]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- China Statistical Yearbook. (2015). *Age composition and dependency ratio of population*. Retrieved from <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2015/indexeh.htm>
- Chinese Radio Network. (2010a, August 13). 公办园靠面子私立园靠票子 孩子入园难倒 家长 [Entrance to public kindergartens needs power and entrance to private Kindergartens needs money]. Retrieved from http://baby.ifeng.com/yuer/zaojiao/youjiao/content-1/detail_2010_08/13/1946951_0.shtml
- Chinese Radio Network. (2010b, August 17). 幼儿园入园难将至少持续五年 入托难于上大学 [The problem of accessibility in kindergartens will last at least 5 years: More difficult than college admission]. Retrieved from http://baby.ifeng.com/yuer/zaojiao/youjiao/content-1/detail_2010_08/16/1962022_0.shtml
- General Office of the State Council. (2010a, May 6). 国务院常务会议通过中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要 [State Council executive meeting voted for the National Medium- and Long-Term Plan for Education Reform and Development]. Retrieved from http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2010-05/06/content_1600544.htm
- General Office of the State Council. (2010b, November 24). 国务院关于当前发展学前教育的若干意见 [The several opinions on the current development of early childhood education of State Council]. Retrieved from http://www.gov.cn/zw/gk/2010-11/24/content_1752377.htm
- Han, J. (Ed.). (2005). 中国教育统计年鉴 2004 [Educational Statistical Yearbook of China 2004]. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- Han, J. (Ed.). (2006). 中国教育统计年鉴 2005 [Educational Statistical Yearbook of China 2005]. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- Han, J. (Ed.). (2007). 中国教育统计年鉴 2006 [Educational Statistical Yearbook of China 2006]. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- Han, J. (Ed.). (2008). 中国教育统计年鉴 2007 [Educational Statistical Yearbook of China 2007]. Beijing: People's Education Press.

- Han, J. (Ed.). (2009). 中国教育统计年鉴 2008 [Educational Statistical Yearbook of China 2008]. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- Han, J. (Ed.). (2010). 中国教育统计年鉴 2009 [Educational Statistical Yearbook of China 2009]. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- He, D. C. (Ed.). (1998). 中华人民共和国重要教育文献 1949~1997 [The Important educational literature of the People's Republic of China, 1949–1997]. Haikou: Hainan Press.
- Hu, B. Y., & Li, K. (2012). The quality rating system of Chinese preschool education: Prospects and challenges. *Childhood Education*, 88(1), 14–22.
- Ji, C. B. (Ed.). (2000). 中国教育统计年鉴 1999 [Educational Statistical Yearbook of China 1999]. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- Li, H., & Li, P. (2003). Lessons from implanting Reggio Emilia and Montessori curriculum in China (in Chinese). *Preschool Education*, 9, 4–5.
- Li, H., & Wang, D. (2014). Understanding the 15-year free education policies in China: An online study of four cases. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 3(2), 250–267.
- Li, H., Wang, D., & Fong, R. W. (2014). Editor's note – Sound bites won't work: Case studies of 15-year free education in Greater China. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 3(2), 161–170.
- Liu, D. W., & Li, Y. S. (2012). 中国教育年鉴 2012 [China education yearbook 2012]. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- Ministry of Education. (2012a, February 12). 教育部关于印发《学前教育督导评估暂行办法》的通知 [The announcement issued by the Ministry of Education about the interim measures for early childhood education supervision and evaluation]. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s6500/201205/xxgk_136728.html
- Ministry of Education. (2012b, September 3). ‘十二五’重大教育政策及名词解释: 中央财政支持学前教育发展重大项目 [‘Twelfth five-year’ major education policy and noun explanation: The central government supporting the development of early childhood education major projects]. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s6811/201209/141496.html>
- Ministry of Education. (2014a, February 26). 新春新闻发布会散发材料一: 学前教育三年行动计划新闻发布会介绍材料 [The first leaflet distributed at the New Year press conference: The leaflet about the Three-Year Action Plan for early childhood education press conference]. Retrieved from: <http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s7881/201402/164609.html>
- Ministry of Education. (2014b, June 4). 学前教育财政投入五年间增 5 倍—教育部有关负责人就学前教育财政投入答记者问 [Financial investment in early childhood education has increased by five times in five years— Ministry of Education spokesperson's responses to questions asked by reporters concerning financial investment in early childhood education]. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s271/201406/169763.html>
- Ministry of Education. (2014c). 2013 年教育统计数据 [Educational Statistics in 2013]. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s8492/index.html>
- Ministry of Education. (2014d, November 15). *Joint Statement of the Ministry of Education, National Development and Reform Commission, and the Ministry of Finance*. 教育部 国家发展改革委 财政部关于实施第二期学前教育三年行动计划的意见 [The opinions about the implementation of the second phase of the Three-Year Action Plan for early childhood education by the Ministry of Education, National, Development, and Reform Commission and Ministry of Finance]. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s3327/201411/178318.html>
- Ministry of Education. (2014e, November 15). 教育部基础教育二司负责人就《关于实施第二期学前教育三年行动计划》答记者问 [The responses from the Head of the Department of Basic Education of the Ministry of Education to questions asked by reporters concerning the implementation of the second phase of the Three-Year Action Plan for early childhood educa-

- tion]. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s271/201411/178314.html>
- Mu, Y. C. (Ed.). (2001). 中国教育统计年鉴 2000 [Educational Statistical Yearbook of China 2000]. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- Mu, Y. C. (Ed.). (2002). 中国教育统计年鉴 2001 [Educational Statistical Yearbook of China 2001]. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- Mu, Y. C. (Ed.). (2003). 中国教育统计年鉴 2002 [Educational Statistical Yearbook of China 2002]. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- Mu, Y. C. (Ed.). (2004). 中国教育统计年鉴 2003 [Educational Statistical Yearbook of China 2003]. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Employment Statistics. (2005). 中国人口统计年鉴 2005 [China Population Statistics Yearbook 2005]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Employment Statistics. (2006). 中国人口统计年鉴 2006 [China Population Statistics Yearbook 2006]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Employment Statistics. (2007). 中国人口和就业统计年鉴 2007 [China Population and Employment Statistics Yearbook 2007]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Employment Statistics. (2008). 中国人口和就业统计年鉴 2008 [China Population and Employment Statistics Yearbook 2008]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Employment Statistics. (2009). 中国人口和就业统计年鉴 2009 [China Population and Employment Statistics Yearbook 2009]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Employment Statistics. (2010). 中国人口和就业统计年鉴 2010 [China Population and Employment Statistics Yearbook 2010]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Employment Statistics. (2012a). 中国人口和就业统计年鉴 2011 [China Population and Employment Statistics Yearbook 2011]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Employment Statistics. (2012b). 中国人口和就业统计年鉴 2012 [China Population and Employment Statistics Yearbook 2012]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Employment Statistics. (2013). 中国人口和就业统计年鉴 2013 [China Population and Employment Statistics Yearbook 2013]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Social, Science and Technology Statistics. (2001). 中国人口统计年鉴 2001 [China Population Statistics Yearbook 2001]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Social, Science and Technology Statistics. (2002). 中国人口统计年鉴 2002 [China Population Statistics Yearbook 2002]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Social, Science and Technology Statistics. (2003). 中国人口统计年鉴 2003 [China Population Statistics Yearbook 2003]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics, Department of Population and Social, Science and Technology Statistics. (2004). 中国人口统计年鉴 2004 [China Population Statistics Yearbook 2004]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Office of National Education Inspectorate. (2012, May 10). 教育部督导办负责人就《强化督导问责制度办好人民满意教育》答记者问 [Office of Ministry of Education spokesperson's responses to questions asked by reporters concerning strengthening the supervision system of

- accountability so that citizens would be satisfied with education]. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s271/201407/171720.html>
- Pang, L. J. & Feng, J. Y. (2014). 学前教育公共服务分类与‘一主多元’供给机制设计 [Early childhood education public service classification and ‘one main pluralistic’ supply mechanism design]. *中国教育学报* [Journal of the Chinese Society of Education], 7, 1–6.
- Pang, L. J., & Hong, X. M. (Eds.). (2012). *2011 中国学前教育发展报告* [Report about China’s development of early childhood education in 2011]. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Publishing Group.
- Sheng, L. Y. (Ed.). (2014). *中国统计年鉴 2007* [China Statistical Yearbook 2014]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Wen, J. B. (2011, March 15). 温家宝在十一届人大四次会议上所作政府工作报告 (The government’s work report made by Premier Wen Jiabao at the fourth session of the Eleventh National People’s Congress Conference). Retrieved from http://www.gov.cn/2011lh/content_1825233.htm
- Wu, G. S. (Ed.). (2013). *中国教育经费统计年鉴 2012* [China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook 2012]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Xie, H. Z. (Ed.). (2011). *中国教育统计年鉴 2010* [Educational Statistical Yearbook of China 2010]. Beijing: People’s Education Press.
- Xie, H. Z. (Ed.). (2013a). *中国教育统计年鉴 2011* [Educational Statistical Yearbook of China 2011]. Beijing: People’s Education Press.
- Xie, H. Z. (Ed.). (2013b). *中国教育统计年鉴 2012* [Educational Statistical Yearbook of China 2012]. Beijing: People’s Education Press.
- Yang, Z. F. (Ed.). (2001a). *中国教育经费统计年鉴 2000* [China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook 2000]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Yang, Z. F. (Ed.). (2001b). *中国教育经费统计年鉴 2001* [China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook 2001]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Yang, Z. F. (Ed.). (2003). *中国教育经费统计年鉴 2002* [China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook 2002]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Yang, Z. F. (Ed.). (2004). *中国教育经费统计年鉴 2003* [China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook 2003]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Yang, Z. F. (Ed.). (2005). *中国教育经费统计年鉴 2004* [China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook 2004]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Yang, Z. F. (Ed.). (2006). *中国教育经费统计年鉴 2005* [China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook 2005]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Yang, Z. F. (Ed.). (2007). *中国教育经费统计年鉴 2006* [China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook 2006]. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Zeng, X. D. (2006). 我国幼儿教育由单位福利到多元化供给的变迁 (Changes concerning our country’s early childhood education from organization-run welfare to diversified funding sources). *北京师范大学学报* [社会科学版] [Journal of Beijing Normal University [Social Sciences]], 2, 11–16.
- Zeng, X. D., & Fan, X. (2009). 如何看待城镇公办幼儿园 [How should we view urban public kindergartens]. *幼儿教育* [教育科学] [Early Childhood Education [Educational Sciences]], 15, 1–4.
- Zheng, S. S. (2004). *中国教育年鉴 2004* [China Education Yearbook 2004]. Beijing: People’s Education Press.
- Zhu, J. (2010, December). *Curriculum implementation challenges and strategies in China*. Presentation at the 8th meeting of the OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care. Paris.

Chapter 3

Achieving a Balance Between Affordability, Accessibility, Accountability, Sustainability and Social Justice: The Early Childhood Education Policies in Hong Kong

Weipeng Yang, Jingying Wang, and Hui Li

Abstract Since its return to China in 1997, Hong Kong has launched a series of large-scale reforms to establish a new post-colonial education system. Early childhood education (ECE), however, is totally privatised and independently regulated by the market mechanism. Reforming such a private market is thus a challenge to the educational authorities. In this chapter, we will examine the ECE policies that have been implemented (or proposed) from the year 1997 to 2015, through the ‘3A2S’ framework (Li, Wang, & Fong, *Int J Chin Educ* 3(2): 161–170, 2014). Analyses of the most recent data obtained from the governmental agencies indicate that:

- (1) The ECE market has been well regulated by the supply and demand mechanism.
- (2) All the subsidy measures share the aim of assuring children’s equal access to affordable ECE.
- (3) Self-evaluation and school improvement mechanism has been well established to promote the accountability of ECE.
- (4) Sustainability of ECE has been highlighted by the policymakers.
- (5) Social justice has been upheld in the policymaking process.

All these findings jointly imply that Hong Kong might be a good case of study for the policymakers in other countries, as it has really achieved a balance between the affordability, accessibility, accountability, sustainability and social justice of ECE.

W. Yang (✉) • J. Wang • H. Li
The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong
e-mail: wpyang@connect.hku.hk

Introduction

Hong Kong is an international megacity located on the southern coast of China and facing the South China Sea, world-renowned for its skyline and deep natural harbour. After being ruled by the British colonial government for more than 100 years, it rejoined China in 1997 as a new entity called the ‘Hong Kong Special Administrative Region’ (HKSAR). Under the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ political umbrella, HKSAR continues to possess its own government, economical, educational, legal, military, monetary and even postal systems. According to the Basic Law, the constitutional document of HKSAR, the local government is responsible for all affairs except those regarding diplomatic relations and national defence. This is well known as the ‘high degree of autonomy’ and ‘Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong’ principles (State Council of China 2014). Accordingly, Hong Kong can carry on the British colonial legacy to keep its historical, cultural, economic, educational, legal and lifestyle uniqueness.

About the Education System

As one of the world’s most densely populated regions, Hong Kong is home to seven million people with just an area of 1104 km². This geographical feature has inevitably influenced the developments of Hong Kong in all domains including education. A fusion of traditional Chinese culture and modernised British system, Hong Kong has a unique education system in the world. For a century-long time, most of the public spending on education has been devoted to primary and secondary education, leaving pre-primary education crying in the kitchen as the *Cinderella* (Rao and Li 2009). For instance, the former British colonial government began to offer 9-year free education in 1978, including 6-year primary plus 3-year junior secondary education. In 2008, it was extended to 12-year free education covering the 3 years of senior secondary education (Li et al. 2014; Fong 2014). The sector of pre-primary education, however, is still fighting for ‘free kindergarten education’. But the 12-year free education does not exactly apply to the whole sector of primary and secondary schools. To date, only 34 out of 476 public primary schools and 30 out of 389 public secondary schools are fully funded by the government, whereas the rest (and the majority) just receives partial subsidies from the government (Committee on Home-School Co-operation 2015a, b). In other words, the so-called 12-year free education does not mean ‘all schools free’ or ‘all kids free’.

About the Sector of Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education (ECE) is officially defined as ‘pre-primary education’ in Hong Kong, referring to the 3-year education provided by kindergartens. The two terms are interchangeable in this chapter, as both exclusively refer to the kindergarten programme. Although it is neither compulsory nor totally free, about 95 % of the 3-year-old children have attended pre-primary/ECE programmes (Audit Commission 2013; Ho 2008; Rao and Li 2009). In the 2014–2015 academic year, there were a total of 978 kindergartens in Hong Kong (Education Bureau 2015a). Some kindergartens originated from childcare centres, which were originally registered and managed by the Department of Social Welfare (SWD). They were ‘harmonised’ into a so-called kindergarten-cum-childcare centre (KG-cum-CCC), which must be registered and supervised by the Bureau of Education (EDB) to provide pre-primary education for the children of 3–6 years old in 2005 (Rao and Li 2009; Education Bureau 2012a). But its childcare centre part is still under SWD’s administration to serve the younger children under age 3 (Social Welfare Department 2015).

Hong Kong kindergarten normally provides half-day programme, which is about 3 h per day. Some KG-cum-CCCs run whole-day programme, and few of them provide long-day services. Young children are enrolled in three levels of class by age: nursery (K1, aged 3–4), lower kindergarten (K2, aged 4–5) and upper kindergarten (K3, aged 5–6) (Education Bureau 2015b). All these pre-primary institutions, however, are independent institutions owned and run by nongovernmental organisations, private enterprises or individuals (Li et al. 2008). There are neither public kindergarten nor any ones run by the government. Although all of them are private ones, Hong Kong kindergartens could be classified into non-profit-making kindergartens (NPMKs) and private independent kindergartens (PIKs), depending on whether they are charitable organisations or private enterprises (Education Bureau 2015b). NPMKs are subject to quality review from the Education Bureau, have their fees capped, are required to be non-profit making and have a host of other transparency requirements (Rao and Li 2009; Education Commission 2010). PIKs have more freedom to set their own fees and aren’t subject to the same quality review, thus having more freedom in school finance and curriculum development.

According to the School Education Statistics Section of the EDB (2015), there were 978 Kindergartens, 797 (81 %) NPMKs and 181 (19 %) PIKs.

Until the mid-1990s, public investment in pre-primary education was so minimal that the sector was once depicted as the *Cinderella* of the education system that was ill-treated and neglected by the government (Rao and Li 2009). Since the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997, the new government has initiated a series of reforms to establish a brand new education system for the new millennium. And pre-primary education is part of the packaged reform. In 2007, the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS) was launched to alleviate the burden of parents and to enhance the quality of pre-primary education. Accordingly, the eligible NPMKs can receive government subsidy but have to observe the following criteria:

- (i) The tuition fee per annum must not exceed HK\$24,000 (half-day) or HK\$48,000 (full day) per student.
- (ii) Kindergartens must undergo quality reviews, both self-evaluations and external review conducted by the EDB.
- (iii) Operational and financial transparency must be maintained.
- (iv) Teachers serving in the kindergartens must possess at least a Certificate in Early Childhood Education.
- (v) Kindergartens must offer local curriculum which is in line with the Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum (GPC) issued by the Curriculum Development Council (2006).

In 2007–2008 school year, for instance, the PEVS-eligible kindergartens could receive a voucher of HK\$16,800 per student per annum as a full or partial subsidy for the tuition fee. If needed, means-tested financial assistance could be provided to the young children from low-income families to cover the outstanding tuition fee and miscellaneous expenses incurred, upon their parents' application. Consequently, in 2011, about 80 % of the kindergartens in Hong Kong joined the PEVS, and about 85 % of kindergarten-aged children benefited from the scheme (Legislative Council 2013). It was expected that more and more NPMKs would join the PEVS and therefore more parents and teachers would benefit from this subsidy scheme. Li et al. (2010) found that the PEVS had promoted the accessibility, affordability and accountability of pre-primary education in Hong Kong.

This chapter will analyse the recent developments of ECE policy in Hong Kong based on the theoretical framework of 3A2S—affordability, accessibility, accountability, sustainability and social justice (Li et al. 2014). This framework could provide a multifaceted account of the merits and limitations of the ECE policies implemented in Hong Kong.

Accessibility to Quality Kindergarten Programmes

In the '3A2S' framework (Li et al. 2014), accessibility means that every young child can have unimpeded access to a kindergarten in the neighbourhood. This target has been achieved in Hong Kong where the gross enrolment rate for kindergarten education has been 100 % or above for a long time (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education 2015). This is because that some young children have even enrolled in two kindergartens: one in the morning (normally a PIK for academic training) and the other in the afternoon (usually a NPMK for voucher subsidy). It seems that accessibility is no longer a problem to the educational authorities. But, this is not true in Hong Kong.

Historically and understandably, ECE has all along been provided by the private sector and is regulated by the market mechanism. Accordingly, balancing the supply and demand of kindergarten places is critical for achieving the accessibility of early childhood education policies in Hong Kong.

The Balance Between Supply and Demand

To ascertain whether there is enough supply of kindergarten places for eligible children, we have obtained the data from the official website about the number of kindergarten (local and non-local schools, including kindergarten-cum-childcare centres), number of kindergarten places available and number of children enrolled (i.e. students) in all districts of Hong Kong presented in Table 3.1.

Analysis of the official data indicates that the number of available places has always exceeded the number of children enrolled during the past 10 years. The surplus of kindergarten places implies that the 100% private market regulated by the demand and supply mechanism can process great flexibility, diversity, adaptability, vibrancy and responsiveness to demands (Education Bureau 2013a). Although the number of kindergartens has no significant change year by year, kindergartens may optimise their campus capacities for providing more classrooms by making alternative use of their registered classrooms to meet the fluctuating demands for places (Education Bureau 2013a). Figure 3.1 below shows how the supply of kindergarten places is highly correlated with and effectively responsive to the demand in Hong Kong, proving a well-adjusted mechanism of demand and supply.

Every Eligible Child Has Access to Kindergarten

Pre-schoolers are vulnerable; thus long travel to schools would have negative impact on their learning and growth (Education Bureau 2013b). The EDB has upheld the principle of vicinity in admission and has been urging parents to choose a kindergarten in their respective neighbourhood for their children (Education Bureau 2013b). Is this goal achieved? We tried to examine the distribution of children enrolled and the kindergarten places by district to see whether every young child stands a chance of attending a neighbourhood kindergarten. Table 3.2 presents the data from the 2008/2009 to 2014/2015 school years.

Analysis of the data in Table 3.2 indicates that all 18 districts in Hong Kong had enough kindergarten places for young children from the 2008/2009 to 2014/2015 school years. The whole sector had a satisfying flexibility and intake capacity to ensure every eligible child a place in the neighbourhood. However, there was a sudden and dramatic increase in the number of cross-boundary children from Mainland China since 2013, and the supply of places temporarily became a problem in the north part of Hong Kong such as Tai Po, North, Yuen Long and Tuen Mun. The EDB thus initially collected data on cross-boundary students from annual school survey to better manage this kind of applicants (Education Bureau 2013b). The key to successfully addressing this temporary issue was to enhance the intake capacity in these districts. Accordingly, the educational authorities immediately launched a series of measures such as prohibiting one child from holding several places simultaneously and requesting kindergartens to optimise enrolment capacity for the

Table 3.1 Number of kindergartens, places and students from 2005/2006 to 2014/2015 school years

School year	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Kindergartens	1062	1015	986	964	950	951	946	957	969	978
Places	218,102	201,628	192,437	188,396	186,636	189,728	193,363	197,553	201,162	205,843
Students	149,141	140,783	138,393	137,630	140,502	148,940	157,433	164,764	169,843	176,397

Source: Education Bureau (www.edb.gov.hk)

Note: (1) Figures exclude special schools

(2) Figures for places exclude vacant classrooms and vacant parts of childcare centres

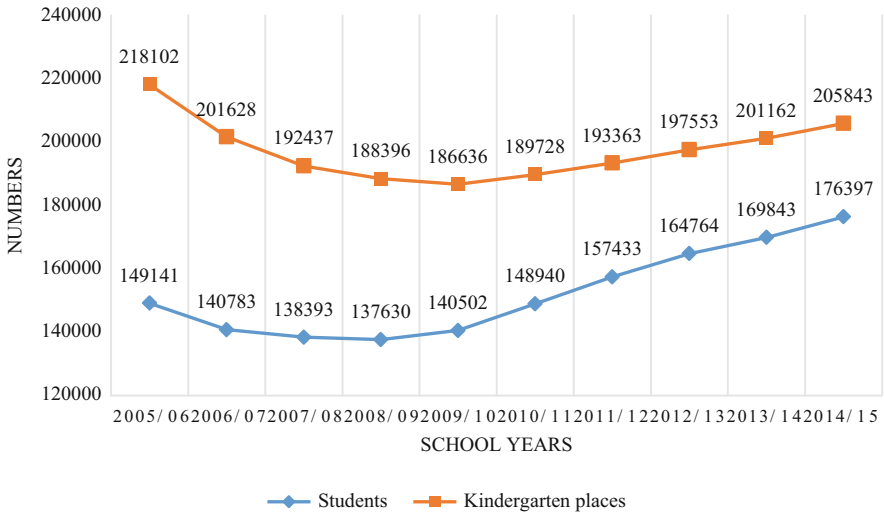


Fig. 3.1 Students and kindergarten places from the 2005/2006 to 2014/2015 school years. Note: (1) Figures exclude special schools. (2) Figures for places exclude vacant classrooms and vacant parts of childcare centres

following academic year (Education Bureau 2013b). Therefore, we evaluated the effectiveness of these initiatives by examining the occupancy rate that reflects the sufficiency of kindergarten places in these four districts (see Fig. 3.2).

Our analysis indicates that the kindergarten places in North and Yuen Long districts were nearly used up, and the occupancy rates in other districts have also risen up. As a response to the public concern about the supply of kindergarten places, the EDB announced that the projected supply of kindergarten places would be about 241,000 across the territory, which can fully satisfy the estimated demand of both local and cross-boundary applicants (Education Bureau 2013b). In addition, the demand of kindergarten places from the children born in Hong Kong with mainland parents (who are not Hong Kong permanent residents) was expected to drop with the implementation of the ‘zero delivery quota’ from 2013 (Education Bureau 2013b).

The ‘zero delivery quota’ policy regulates that all hospitals will not accept any bookings by non-local pregnant women for delivery in Hong Kong from January 1, 2013, onwards (Hong Kong’s Information Services Department 2012). As a consequence, naturally and theoretically, there will be zero applicants for kindergarten place coming from Mainland China since 2016–2017 school year. Accessibility to kindergarten place will no longer to be a problem in Hong Kong.

Table 3.2 Distribution of students and places by district from the 2008/2009 to 2014/2015 school years

School year	2008/2009		2009/2010		2010/2011		2011/2012		2012/2013		2013/2014		2014/2015	
	Places	Students	Places	Students	Places	Students	Places	Students	Places	Students	Places	Students	Places	Students
Central and Western	7257	5279	6981	5364	6889	5561	7063	5880	6726	5545	6599	5512	6742	5514
Wan Chai	7204	5155	7238	5251	7384	5769	7618	6387	7365	6435	7426	6425	7646	6552
Eastern	14,056	9680	13,855	9787	14,186	10,461	13,776	10,515	14,937	11,641	14,933	11,793	14,917	11,998
Southern	6457	4256	6230	4261	6515	4517	6473	4688	6804	4912	6703	4773	6704	4788
Yau Tsim Mong	6559	4460	6309	4722	6450	5104	6688	5414	6779	5607	6914	5881	7216	6199
Sham Shui Po	9922	7001	9945	7129	9611	7184	9995	7609	10,311	7998	10,455	8330	10,881	8935
Kowloon City	22,722	18,059	23,129	18,789	24,401	20,169	25,523	21,473	26,172	22,433	26,242	22,638	26,353	22,873
Wong Tai Sin	8690	6069	8364	6106	8491	6588	8476	6756	8355	6836	8438	7082	8596	7325
Kwun Tong	14,054	10,178	14,075	10,328	14,381	10,968	14,435	11,309	14,426	11,603	14,255	11,505	14,451	11,901

Sai Kung	8954	6689	8969	6633	9118	6875	9372	7442	9651	7870	10,003	8184	10,135	8497
Sha Tin	13,281	9502	13,348	9922	13,731	10,608	13,809	11,259	14,340	11,838	15,104	12,483	15,565	13,189
Tai Po	6245	4537	6082	4650	6253	4930	6354	5347	6496	5675	7016	6130	7187	6406
North	9328	7619	9710	8286	10,001	9102	10,865	10,220	11,549	10,873	12,228	11,653	13,114	12,563
Yuen Long	16,266	11,782	15,775	11,922	15,713	12,890	16,414	14,065	17,045	15,164	17,739	16,212	18,216	16,827
Tuen Mun	12,345	8640	12,260	8874	12,165	9470	12,361	10,222	12,637	11,127	13,070	11,738	13,862	12,730
Tsuen Wan	6495	5237	6505	5297	6685	5544	6834	5858	7152	6077	7233	6233	7497	6386
Kwai Tsing	13,238	9904	12,872	9803	12,730	9758	12,374	9579	12,047	9654	12,085	9726	12,178	10,146
Islands	5323	3583	4989	3378	5024	3442	4933	3410	4761	3476	4719	3545	4583	3568

Source: Education Bureau (www.edb.gov.hk)

Note: (1) Figures exclude special schools

(2) Figures for places exclude vacant classrooms and vacant parts of childcare centres

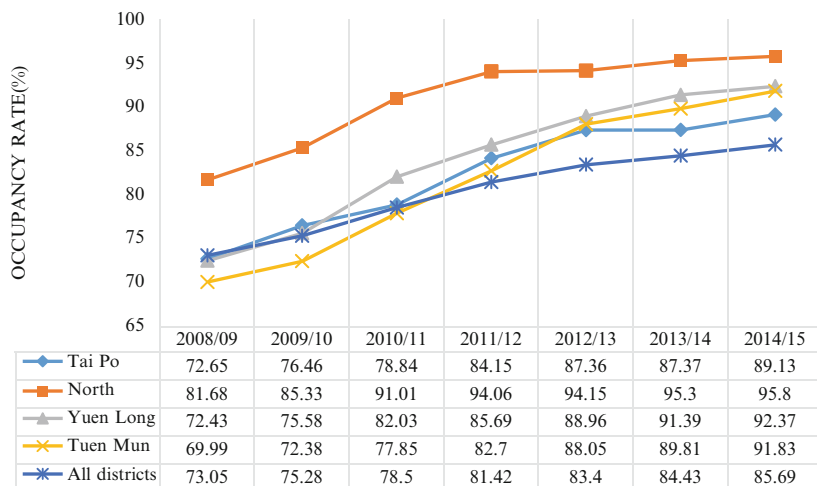


Fig. 3.2 Occupancy rates of kindergarten places from the 2008/2009 to 2014/2015 school years. Note: (1) Figures exclude special schools. (2) Figures for places exclude vacant classrooms and vacant parts of childcare centres

Increasing the Quantity of Teachers

In addition to adequate supply of kindergarten places, the quantity of teachers is also critical to the successful addressing of the accessibility problem. Therefore, we further analyse the changing number of kindergarten teachers to discover whether the increasing supply of places is accompanied with the growth of in-service teachers.

Table 3.3 shows that more teachers were employed to join the profession as the enrolment is increasing. The total number of in-service kindergarten teachers increased from 8298 in the 2004/2005 school year to 12,893 in the 2014/2015 school year. There was a noticeable increase of teachers in 2005 due to some related early childhood education policies in regulating teacher-child ratio and teacher qualification (Rao and Li 2009). All of these measures have jointly ensured each child's accessibility to ECE in Hong Kong as far as possible.

Affordability: No Child Deprived of ECE Due to Poverty

'Affordability' means that every family can easily afford the fees of the chosen kindergarten, and some exemptions could be offered to the needy families (Li et al. 2014). Hong Kong government has also achieved this target. Basically, Hong Kong kindergartens are categorised into NPMKs (about 80%) and PIKs (about 20%).

NPMKs could only budget for 5% profit margin that should all be reinvested in school development. PIKs, however, can earn 10% net profit and their school

Table 3.3 Number of kindergarten teachers from 2004/2005 to 2014/2015 school years

School year	Number of kindergarten teachers
2004/2005	8298
2005/2006	11,361
2006/2007	10,384
2007/2008	10,355
2008/2009	9866
2009/2010	10,063
2010/2011	10,454
2011/2012	11,059
2012/2013	11,817
2013/2014	12,384
2014/2015	12,893

Source: Education Bureau (www.edb.gov.hk); Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics (2006, 2012, 2013, 2014 Edition)
Note: Figures include local and non-local kindergartens

owners can pocket the money (Li et al. 2010). Therefore, the government can only subsidise those NPMKs as it does not want the public money to be pocketed as net profit by the private school owners.

NPMKs are registered as charity organisation thus granted with tax exemption under the Inland Revenue Ordinance. In addition, they are eligible to apply for government subsidies including reimbursement of rent, rates and government rent (Census and Statistics Department 2003). PIKs, however, are making profit and thus are not financially supported by the government (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education 2015; Li et al. 2010). Therefore, we mainly evaluated the affordability of ECE in Hong Kong by reviewing the following aspects: (i) the funding policy and the quantity of financial support by the government for supporting eligible individuals, (ii) annual financial investment into the sector and (iii) tuition fees (plus miscellaneous fees if applicable) charged by kindergartens.

Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme

In 2005, the funding support for ECE was limited: only 2.7% of the education budget was distributed to ECE, whereas 52% went to compulsory education (namely, primary and secondary sections) (Li et al. 2010). This laid burdens on parents, especially those from disadvantaged families, who had to pay kindergarten tuition for their own children. But even so, enrolment rate of children for pre-primary education was rather high, and competition among kindergartens for children was intense (Education Commission 2010). Before the harmonisation of kindergartens and

childcare centres in 2005, needy families could apply for the Child Care Centre Fee Assistance Scheme (CCCFAS) or the Kindergarten Fee Remission Scheme (KGFRS) depending on the serving institutes they enrolled. After the harmonisation, the KGFRS was renamed as Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme (KCFRS) from 2005/2006 school year to subsidise all eligible children for pre-primary services (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education 2015).

Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme

In 2007, the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme was launched to subsidise all the young children enrolled in eligible kindergartens. This is a universal voucher that is valued on the half-day kindergarten session, aiming at improving the accessibility and affordability of ECE in Hong Kong. PEVS has successfully attracted many local NPMKs, and the educational authorities also provided a one-off facilitation grant for PIKs to transform into NPMKs in order to receive the voucher (Education Bureau 2007; Student Finance Office of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency 2015a). With the voucher, parents have more choices and better opportunities to send kids to their favourite NPMKs. In the 2014/2015 school year, the voucher is valued as US\$2582 (= HK\$20,010¹) per child per year, while the annual school fee for the eligible kindergartens ranged from US\$1523 (= HK\$11,800) to US\$3874 (= HK\$30,020) for half-day session (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education 2015). Obviously, the voucher could not cover all the tuition fees for many kindergarteners, and their parents had to pay the outstanding fees.

To assure that no child is deprived of ECE because of poverty, the government has implemented the KCFRS to provide further financial support to those needy families (Education Bureau 2015c). Therefore, the needy children can get fee remission under the KCFRS, in addition to the fee subsidy provided by the PEVS.

The application for the KCFRS should take a common means test, and then the eligible applicants could receive three levels of financial assistance, namely, 100%, 75% or 50% fee remission (Student Finance Office of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency 2015b). The level of assistance is totally depending on the result of means test, which mainly considers the applicants' gross annual household income and the number of family members (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education 2015). With this fee remission scheme, many needy children can really get free kindergarten education. Basically, the affordability of ECE seems to be satisfactory in Hong Kong or not a problem.

¹USD 1 = HKD 7.75

Accountability: Promoting Self-Evaluation and School Improvement

Accountability means that the extra fiscal input provided by the policy should be accountable to the government for improving education quality (Li et al. 2014). All the kindergartens in Hong Kong are private ones; thus the educational authorities have no rights to manage them. To monitor their programme quality and school improvement, the government launched the new Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) in 2007, which is closely linked with the PEVS. This means that all the NPMKs have to follow the QAF to be eligible to receive the PEVS subsidy. To do so, they have to conduct continuous school self-evaluation (SSE) and undergo the quality review (QR) conducted by the EDB under the QAF. During 2007–2013, all the eligible kindergartens have completed the first round QR, and the second round has just started with a modified agenda and higher level of target in 2014.

Establishing Self-Evaluation and School Improvement Mechanism

Motivated by the PEVS and associated QR, most Hong Kong kindergartens have established the self-evaluation mechanism. They conduct SSE every year with the whole-school approach and with reference to the *Performance Indicators (Primary Institutions)* (2002) (Education Bureau 2012b). They submit the annual school report to the EDB to provide a comprehensive and systematic review of school performance and to plan for further improvement (Education Bureau 2012b). After receiving the annual school report, the inspection team of the EDB will come to conduct the external school review, i.e. QR, to thoroughly evaluate kindergartens' performance and professionally judge whether it has met the prescribed standards comprehensively (Education Bureau 2012c). Revised *School Self-Evaluation Manual* (2012), *Handbook on Quality Review for Pre-primary Institutions* (2012) and the *Performance Indicators (Primary Institutions)* (Education Bureau 2002) are all released to kindergartens and have become the important reference for their self-evaluation and school improvement. Recently, the government is encouraging those non-eligible NPMKs and PIKs to establish the School Development and Accountability Framework for continuous improvement (Education Bureau 2012c). Gradually and eventually, the government will conduct more kinds of inspection to monitor the programme quality of all kindergartens (Education Bureau 2012c).

Promoting Both Quality and Quantity of Teachers

Other measures of quality improvement have also been employed in Hong Kong such as increasing the teacher-child ratio and teacher qualifications. In 1986, the maximum of 30 children to one teacher was enforced, and in 1994 the ratio was revised to 1:20 for whole-day kindergarten classes and 3-year-old classes (Rao and Li 2009). In 2003, the government set the teacher-to-child ratio at 1:15 or lower; and from the 2004/2005 school year, all kindergartens should employ 100% qualified teachers basing on the above teacher-child ratio (Education Bureau 2015d). Normally, Hong Kong kindergartens deliver various learning activities in groups. For instance, in the 2014/2015 school year, the average teacher-child ratio of morning session is about 1:10, while that of afternoon session is 1:8.4 (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education 2015).

Meanwhile, the educational authorities have done a lot to promote the professional development of kindergarten teachers. Hundreds of additional training places were provided for kindergarten teachers between 1998 and 2002 in order to progressively increase the proportion of qualified ones (Rao and Li 2009; Wong and Rao 2015). In 2003, all new kindergarten teachers were required to have achieved five passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) with a Qualified Kindergarten Teacher (QKT) qualification, and all serving kindergarten principals were required to possess a Certificate in Early Childhood Education (C(ECE)) qualification before the end of the 2005/2006 school year (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education 2015). Hence, the percentage of QKT teachers was increased to 100% in the 2004/2005 school year, and in the 2014/2015 school year, 90.4% teachers in local kindergartens have at least the C(ECE) or equivalent training (Education Bureau 2015a).

In 2007, when the PEVS was launched, the entrance level of teachers was also upraised, and new mandatory requirements were made: (i) all teachers should possess a C(ECE) before the end of the 2011/2012 school year, and (ii) all new principals should possess a Bachelor's degree in Education in Early Childhood Education (BEd(ECE)) and have met other prescribed standards of post-qualification experience and completed the Certification Course for KG Principals (CKGP) (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education 2015). In the 2014/2015 school year, about 98.5% of teachers and principals are either holding or pursuing a C(ECE), and around 82% of the principals are either holding or pursuing a BEd(ECE) (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education 2015).

In addition, 464 principals had completed CKGP between 2007/2008 and 2013/2014 (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education 2015). There is a great improvement in the professional qualifications of the kindergarten education in Hong Kong. More data about the changes of teacher-child ratio and percentage of trained teachers in local kindergartens are presented in Table 3.4. It indicates that the quantity and quality of kindergarten teachers have been gradually promoted in the past decade, and accordingly, the accountability of ECE has been enhanced.

Table 3.4 Teacher-child ratio and percentage of teachers with qualified training in local kindergartens between 2004/2005 and 2014/2015 school years

School years	2004/2005	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Teacher-child ratio ^a	1:10.2	1:9.7	1:9.6	1:9.8	1:9.7	1:9.3	1:9.3	1:9.1
% of teachers with qualified training	93.0	96.3	95.7	N.A.	N.A.	95.7	95.3	96.1

Source: Education Bureau (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/about-edb/publications-stat/figures/kg.html>); Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (http://www.cmab.gov.hk/en/issues/child_statistics6.htm)

Note: (1) Figures exclude special schools

(2) ^aFigures are calculated in half-day equivalent unit

Sustainability: Towards Free/Quality Kindergarten Education

In the '3A2S' framework (Li et al. 2014), sustainability is interpreted as 'the strong financial support to free education should be affordable to the government and accordingly the policy could be sustainable' (p. 164). The Hong Kong government has been struggling to establish a sustainable system for free kindergarten education since 2012. In April 2013, the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education was set up to make proposals on how to implement free and quality kindergarten education in a practicable and sustainable approach (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education 2015). It is much more complicated in addressing actual issues existing in the early childhood education of Hong Kong than the proposal or set of any simple aims.

Therefore, five subcommittees were meanwhile formed under the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education to examine various relevant issues: (i) objectives, teacher professionalism and research; (ii) operation and governance; (iii) funding modes; (iv) catering for student diversity; and (v) communication strategy (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education 2015).

When considering the future of early childhood education in Hong Kong, the key point should be the sustainability of related policy. The Committee on Free Kindergarten Education has also presented their concern about it in the final proposal:

3.1.9.5 Sustainability – A coherent infrastructure to achieve the objectives of KG education has to be sustainable in the long run to maximise the benefits of KG education.

- *To achieve the objectives of KG education, the provision of full and consistent support and strategic planning of resource allocation is essential. The committee is of the view that stable and well-established groundwork can ensure the sustainable development of the KG sector, which in turn facilitates the all-round development of children.* (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education 2015, p. 26)

This is the explicit direction of early childhood education policy in Hong Kong. Even so, we still have to go further to review the sustainability of ECE policies. The advancement in accessibility, affordability and accountability would be meaningless if these outcomes are not sustainable over time (Leung 2014). In the final report, the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education (2015) proposes that the sustainable target is about 60% kindergarten children who enjoy 'free kindergarten education' (half-day session). On average, whole-day sessions cost 1.5–1.6 times of half-day session. The parents of whole-day kindergarteners will have to share the outstanding fees (0.5–0.6 times) with the government. And the recommended rental subsidy will be based on the average level of public estates and thus cannot fully cover the rents of nongovernmental properties. Those NPMKs leasing private venues will have to take the high rent cost on their own and thus will be negatively affected. In addition, kindergarten teachers can expect a salary range of HK\$18,000–38,000 a month, but the government would subsidise only the median amount, of about HK\$25,000 per teacher. Although a fairly frugality plan, this proposal will cause an additional HK\$3 billion cost on kindergarten education, which will almost double the current ECE budget in Hong Kong (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education

2015). Even though, some parents, educators and politicians criticised the proposal as offering ‘fake free kindergarten education’, as for it is neither ‘free to all’ nor ‘all fees free’. But the committee insisted that the proposal was ‘practical and practicable’, and we tend to believe that this proposal has achieved a balance between affordability and sustainability.

Social Justice: Caring All Kids Without Any Discrimination

Social justice means that ‘all young children should have equal access to and fair treatment of ECE, without any discrimination against their gender, race, religion, age, belief, disability, geographical location, social class, and socioeconomic circumstances’ (Li et al. 2014). And the Chinese great philosopher Confucius has also suggested that education should include all the people without any discrimination, which is literally in Chinese ‘有教無類’. OECD has also found that the ‘equity measure’ is the most commonly cited policy goal of developing early child education and care (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2012). All these have jointly indicated that governments should establish an early childhood education system being fair, inclusive and accessible for all children to act against child poverty and educational disadvantage.

Likewise, the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education in Hong Kong has also formulated the fundamental principles of developing policy and implementing measures to achieve quality kindergarten education sustainably, among which are two on ‘equity’ and ‘diversity’. And all the experts consulted by the committee highlighted the two principles in developing free kindergarten education (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education 2015). We believe that both equity and diversity are actually consistent with the particular indicator of social justice defined by the ‘3A2S’ framework. In its final report, the committee claims that the free ECE policy should fully support that (i) all 3–6-year-old children have equitable access to quality kindergarten education, and (ii) diversity in children’s abilities and backgrounds is respected and catered for through different modes of operation, forms of support, curriculum design and learning environment (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education 2015).

On the one hand, the Hong Kong government has adopted effective policies and measures, e.g. the PEVS and the KCFRS as reviewed before, to ensure that school places, fee subsidies and quality education are all available to every kindergarten-aged child as far as possible. Because the PEVS provides non-means-tested subsidy to all eligible children, the access to qualified NMPKs is equal for children, which can release some economic burden and increase choices for all children’s parents who join the PEVS. Additionally, the KCFRS provides means-tested subsidy to needy families for covering the part of the tuition fees that exceeds the voucher value. This makes the fee subsidies more equitable for the Hong Kong residents but not merely equal. Instead, these measures could cater for the diversity in children’s backgrounds through different forms of support.

On the other hand, the Hong Kong government has also paid attention to different needs of children. For example, there is an Integrated Programme for Mildly Disabled Children supported by the government. Some KG-cum-CCCs have joined this programme to provide intensive training and care to mildly disabled children aged 3–6 (Education Bureau 2015b). With the assistance of this programme, kindergarten education can better cater for diverse needs of children and parents and prepare disabled children for the mainstream education in the future. Furthermore, as an international megacity, Hong Kong is home to many nationalities and has to educate young children of different ethnicities. To make them adapt to the local community and master the Chinese language as early as possible, the educational authorities have provided many programmes and activities for non-Chinese-speaking children (Education Bureau 2015d). And more initiatives and programmes are forthcoming in the city. In this connection, we tend to believe that the Hong Kong government is upholding the principle of social justice in the development of ECE policies.

Conclusion

In summary, we can conclude that the HKSAR government has developed relevant policies and promoted kindergarten education in the private sector by:

- (i) Providing financial assistance to children and kindergartens
- (ii) Upgrading the training and qualifications of kindergarten teachers and principals
- (iii) Establishing quality assurance mechanisms of kindergarten self-evaluation and external quality review
- (iv) Guiding pre-primary curriculum for kindergartens
- (v) Promoting harmonisation of pre-primary services

With the help of the ‘3A2S’ framework, we could further our analysis on these policies in Hong Kong and their impacts on the development of ECE. First, the privatised and marketed kindergarten education has achieved the balance between demand and supply, ensuring all the children accessible to affordable kindergarten education. The flexibility and diversity, meanwhile, have not been compromised; instead, parents have more choices for their children.

Second, the government has even established a unique voucher system to finance and subsidise kindergarten education. Almost all children can receive affordable or partially free kindergarten education on the implementation of effective subsidising policies. If fee subsidy from the PEVS is inadequate to cover entirely the actual tuition fees charged by the kindergarten, parents may apply for additional assistance from the KCFRS (Student Finance Office of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency 2015b). So does the new proposal on free kindergarten education.

Third, the government has promoted accountability of the kindergarten education sector by establishing quality assurance mechanisms and measures. Upon the implementation of the QAF, all PEVS kindergartens are required to conduct

continuous SSE and to undergo QR by the EDB annually. Both school reports and quality review reports will be released on the EDB websites to the public. The quality of teachers, curricula and programmes has been promoted, gradually and noticeably.

Fourth, the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education has proposed a thorough solution for free kindergarten education, which has achieved a balance between affordability and sustainability.

Last but not the least, the government has launched many measures to cater for children's diverse needs without discrimination, and social justice has been upheld in all the ECE policy developments.

In particular, we are very satisfied to notice that the committee has taken some of the principles of '3A2S' framework as the foundation of policy development and presented as follows in their proposal: 'To provide for a sustainable policy that respects the uniqueness of KG education in Hong Kong as well as the diverse needs of children, and to provide for equitable access to quality holistic KG education that promotes lifelong development of a person' (Committee on Free Kindergarten Education 2015, p. 23). It seems that the educational authorities have accepted that accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability and social justice should be the criteria of policy development and evaluation. Currently, this final proposal is under public consultation and the hot debates are still going on. When this book comes out as scheduled, the new free kindergarten education policy will be launched in Hong Kong. At this moment, 'the Cinderella' is at the ball and about to meet the prince (Wong and Rao 2015). And their happy time (and the historical moment for Hong Kong ECE) is about to come, eventually and unavoidably.

References

- Audit Commission. (2013). *Pre-primary education voucher scheme (director of audit report No. 60)*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Audit Commission.
- Census and Statistics Department. (2003). *Statistics on school fees of kindergartens, 1998/1999–2002/2003*. Retrieved on 15 Aug 2015, from <http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp370.jsp?productCode=FA100083>
- Committee on Free Kindergarten Education (2015). *Children first, right start for all: Report of the committee on free kindergarten education*. Retrieved on 24 July 2015, from <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/kg-report/index.html>
- Committee on Home-School Co-operation. (2015a). *Primary school profiles 2014*. Retrieved on 15 July 2015, from <http://www.chsc.hk/psp2014/eng/index.php>
- Committee on Home-School Co-operation. (2015b). *Secondary school profiles 2014/2015*. Retrieved on 15 July 2015, from <http://www.chsc.hk/ssp2014/eng/index.php>
- Curriculum Development Council of Hong Kong. (2006). *Guide to the pre-primary curriculum*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.
- Education Bureau. (2002). *Performance indicators (pre-primary institutions)*. 2nd edition. Retrieved on 27 July 2015, from <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/sch-quality-assurance/performance-indicators/performance-indicators-pre-primary-institutions/index.html>
- Education Bureau. (2007). *New initiatives in pre-primary education (Education Bureau Circular No. 1/2007)*. Retrieved on 30 July 2015, from <http://applications.edb.gov.hk/circular/upload/EMBC/EMBC07001E.pdf>

- Education Bureau. (2012a). *Harmonisation of pre-primary services*. Retrieved on 24 July 2015, from <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/harmonisation-of-preprimary-services/index.html>
- Education Bureau. (2012b). *Enhanced quality assurance framework under the pre-primary education voucher scheme (Education Bureau Circular No. 15/2012)*. Retrieved on 27 July 2015, from <http://applications.edb.gov.hk/circular/upload/EDBC/EDBC12015E.pdf>
- Education Bureau. (2012c). *Handbook on quality review for pre-primary institutions*. Retrieved on 27 July 2015, from http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/quality-assurance-framework/qr/handbook_on_qr_eng.pdf
- Education Bureau. (2013a). *Response to issues relate to the supply and demand of kindergarten places*. Retrieved on 25 July 2015, from <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/panels/ed/papers/ed1028cb4-210-1-e.pdf>
- Education Bureau. (2013b). *Issues related to the supply and demand of kindergarten places (LC Paper No. CB(4)80/13-14(01))*. Retrieved on 25 July 2015, from <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/panels/ed/papers/ed1028cb4-80-1-e.pdf>
- Education Bureau. (2015a). *Figures and statistics of kindergarten education*. Retrieved on 27 July 2015, from <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/about-edb/publications-stat/figures/kg.html>
- Education Bureau. (2015b). *Overview of kindergarten education in Hong Kong*. Retrieved on 21 July 2015, from <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/overview/index.html>
- Education Bureau. (2015c). *Scope of free kindergarten education (LC Paper No. CB(4)473/14-15(01))*. Retrieved on 23 July 2015, from http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr14-15/english/panels/ed/ed_fke/papers/ed_fke20150210cb4-473-1-e.pdf
- Education Bureau. (2015d). *Profile of kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centres (general information)*. Retrieved on 24 July 2015, from <http://kgp.highlight.hk/website/generalinfo.php?lang=en>
- Education Commission. (2010). *Report on review of the pre-primary education voucher scheme*. Retrieved on 26 July 2015, from <http://www.e-c.edu.hk/eng/online/annex/WGPEV%20Report%20Eng.pdf>
- Fong, R. W. (2014). 15-year free education in Hong Kong: Perspectives from the online communities. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 3(2), 171–190.
- Ho, C. W. D. (2008). Exploring the definitions of quality early childhood programmes in a market-driven context: Case studies of two Hong Kong preschools. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 16, 223–236.
- Hong Kong's Information Services Department. (2012). *Government reaffirms its strict enforcement of the "zero quota" policy*. Retrieved on 25 July 2015, from <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201212/28/P201212280415.htm>
- Legislative Council. (2013). *Background brief on issues related to the provision of 15-year free education (LC Paper No. CB(4)486/12-13(02))*. Retrieved on 15 July 2015, from <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/ed/papers/ed0319cb4-486-2-e.pdf>
- Leung, S. K. Y. (2014). Evaluating the free early childhood education policies in Taiwan with the 3A2S framework. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 3(2), 268–289.
- Li, H., Wong, J. M. S., & Wang, X. C. (2008). Early childhood education voucher in Hong Kong: An Internet study of the public views. In N. Rao & E. Pearson (Eds.), *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 40(2), 49–63.
- Li, H., Wong, J. M. S., & Wang, X. C. (2010). Affordability, accessibility, and accountability: Perceived impacts of the pre-primary education vouchers in Hong Kong. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 25(1), 125–138.
- Li, H., Wang, D., & Fong, R. W. (2014). Sound bites won't work: Case studies of 15-year free education in greater China. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 3(2), 161–170.
- Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development. (2012). *Starting strong III: A quality toolbox for early childhood education and care*. Paris: OECD.

- Rao, N., & Li, H. (2009). Quality matters: Early childhood education policy in Hong Kong. *Early Child Development and Care*, 179(3), 233–245.
- School Education Statistics Section of Education Bureau. (2011–2015). *Report on enrolment statistics*. Retrieved on July 26, 2015, from http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/about-edb/publications-stat/figures/index_1.html
- Social Welfare Department. (2015). *Child care service*. Retrieved on 23 July 2015, from http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_family/sub_listofserv/id_c_hildcares/
- State Council of China. (2014). *The practice of the “One Country, Two Systems” policy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region*. Beijing: State Council of China.
- Student Finance Office of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency. (2015a). *Pre-primary education voucher scheme*. Retrieved on 21 July 2015, from <http://www.wfsfaa.gov.hk/sfo/eng/schemes/pevs.htm#top>
- Student Finance Office of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency. (2015b). *Kindergarten and child care centre fee remission scheme*. Retrieved on 21 July 2015, from <http://www.wfsfaa.gov.hk/sfo/eng/schemes/kinder.htm#6>
- Wong, J. M. S., & Rao, N. (2015). The evolution of early childhood education policy in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 9(3), 1–16.

Chapter 4

Japanese ECE: Four Abilities (Accessibility, Affordability, Accountability, and Sustainability) that Result in Social Justice

Satomi Izumi-Taylor and Yoko Ito

Abstract Japan's aging population and low birthrate have been two main concerns of the government. In order to deal with such concerns, the government has been making efforts to maintain accessibility, affordability, and accountability of early childhood education and elderly care. Such efforts are in a constant state of flux to balance and meet societal demands and the needs of the elderly generation as well as young children and their families. To maintain 3As, the government is also addressing the importance of sustainability and social justice for all its citizens. The current Abe administration has been attempting to improve childcare by working with everyone involved in children's lives. In this chapter, we will review the governmental reports, data, policies, and websites, dealing with how such efforts are achieved. Among all the changes in the field of ECE and care, specifically, we will focus on the creation and promotion of certified child gardens that have integrated kindergarten and nursery school education since 2006. We will describe how local and central governments and their agencies work together to better serve young children and their families.

Introduction

The history of Japanese ECE can be understood by reviewing two major governmental agencies: *hoikusyo* (nursery school) and *yochien* (preschool/kindergarten). Nursery school is governed by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, and

S. Izumi-Taylor (✉)
University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, USA
e-mail: sitaylor@memphis.edu

Y. Ito
Chiba University, Chiba, Japan
e-mail: itoh.yoko@faculty.chiba-u.jp

preschool/kindergarten is regulated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Children from a few months old to 5 years are eligible for nursery school, which targets at serving those working parents, working single parents, and sick mothers (generally government subsidized). Children between the ages of 3 and 5 years are accepted for preschool (Chesky 2011), which are called kindergartens and are mainly privately owned (62.6 % in 2015). “The first 2 years of kindergarten are the equivalent of preschools in the United States, and the third year is comparable to that of the American kindergarten” (Ogawa and Izumi-Taylor 2010, p. 50). Kindergarten education is not compulsory in Japan. In addition to the two agencies mentioned above, to meet needs for childcare for parents of young children, *nintei kodomoen* (certified child gardens) were established to care for and educate children from birth to age five in 2006. These *certified child gardens* provide the same care and education offered by kindergarten and nursery school (Abumiya 2011; Hosokawa and Inakuma 2015; Nozomi Yochien n.d.).

In 1876, the first kindergarten was established in Japan, followed by nursery schools in 1890 (Chesky 2011; Lascarides and Hinitz 2011). In the following decades, nursery schools cared for children whose fathers were at war and whose mothers worked. Historically, nursery schools cared for children from economically challenged families, while kindergartens were established to serve upper-middle-class families (Lascarides and Hinitz 2011). However, societal and cultural changes and demands, including the increasing numbers of women entering the workforce, required these facilities to meet family needs and improve childcare and education. For these reasons, certified child gardens were created to care for and educate children from birth to age five and have been regulated by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (Naikakufu 2015). As of April of 2015, there are 2836 certified child gardens in Japan.

Our chapter is based on Japanese governmental documents because ECE and care are regulated by the government. We will discuss each agency in relation to accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice. We define accessibility as each child having access to ECE and care. Affordability refers to each child’s access to such education and care that are affordable to his/her family. Accountability is defined as each agency being regulated by the government and being responsible for high-quality education for young children. Sustainability indicates that with governmental support and supervision, each agency maintains and offers quality care and education. Social justice refers to each child and his/her family having access to resources and equal opportunities to ECE.

The provision of affordable, accessible, and quality childcare is important in many different countries, including Japan (Izumi-Taylor et al. 2011). The increasing numbers of employed mothers with young children, as well as the low birth rate in Japan, have been serious concerns for the government. Because more young children have been cared for by caregivers in non-parental settings, the government has been building many nursery schools for working parents since World War II. Also, the government has been regulating these early childhood institutions since the late 1950s. However, in spite of such governmental efforts, many working parents of young children still have difficulties in finding adequate childcare (Izumi-Taylor et al. 2011). Reviewing and examining Japanese early childhood education (ECE)

in terms of accessibility, affordability, and accountability (3As) and sustainability, and social justice (2Ss) will broaden our perspectives of the importance of ECE and will influence the kinds of edu-care children receive in the classroom. Because desired childcare systems differ across cultures, we need to review how 3As and 2Ss are implemented in Japan. We will explain the following three early childhood facilities accordingly: kindergarten, nursery school, and certified child garden.

Kindergarten

Based on Japanese School Education Law, Act 22 (Naikakufu 1947a, b), the main goal of kindergarten is to nurture children's healthy bodies and minds by providing appropriate environments in order to prepare for them for compulsory education (The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 2006). In this Act, Article 11 states that in consideration of the importance of ECE as a basis for the lifelong formation of one's character, the national and local governments shall endeavor to promote such education, by providing an environment that is favorable to the healthy growth of young children and by other appropriate measures (MEXT 2006).

Nursery School

Nursery school is based on the Japanese Child Welfare Act 39, Article 39, stating that a nursery center shall be a facility intended to provide daycare to infants or toddlers lacking daycare based on entrustment from their guardians on a daily basis (Child Welfare Act 2009; Naikakufu 1947a, b). The main goal of nursery school is to care for and educate children as well as to maintain their healthy development through everyday activities (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2008). According to Muto (2009), "both yochien and hoikujo aim to care for and educate children through play, and early childhood professionals need to offer activities that children can initiate" (pp. 153–155).

Certified Child Gardens

Certified child gardens offer both education and care and are similar to what kindergarten and nursery school provide in terms of meeting the needs of families and communities. Certified child gardens care for and educate children of both working and non-working families 5 days a week and provide longer hours. There are several kinds of certified child gardens including those that are associated with both kindergarten and nursery school (unified), those that are related to nursery schools (nursery school), those that are similar to kindergarten (kindergarten), and those that

cater to community needs (locally discretionary) (Naikakufu 2015). It is noteworthy that certified child gardens care for and educate children of both working and non-working parents and offer services of child-rearing sessions and community resources also to parents whose children are not enrolled.

Accessibility: Comparing Both Public and Private Early Childhood Settings and How They Are Accessible to Children and Families

Accessibility can be understood by reviewing the numbers of early childhood settings, including kindergarten, nursery school, and certified child garden facilities that are available. Table 4.1 shows the number of kindergartens between 2010 and 2015. Currently, 1,401,966 children are enrolled in kindergartens, which are basically privately owned (82.6% in 2015). Table 4.2 indicates the number of nursery schools. As shown in Table 4.2, 2,304,401 children were enrolled in nursery schools in April 2014. Table 4.3 shows numbers of certified child gardens accessible to families of young children. Less than 30% of pupils are in public institutions (the OECD average is 68.4%), while 71.3% of pupils attend independent private institutions (OECD 2014).

In order to improve accessibility of ECE, the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare started the “Comprehensive Support System for Children and Child-Rearing” in 2012. Its aims are as follows:

1. Make “Centers for Early Childhood Education and Care” that combine the advantages of both kindergartens and nursery centers more widely available.
2. Realize a society where people find it easy to raise children and to work at the same time by establishing more childcare facilities and reducing the number of wait-listed children.

Table 4.1 Numbers of public and private kindergartens and of children enrolled

Year	Number of kindergartens	Public		Private		
		Number of kindergartens	Number of children enrolled	Number of kindergartens	Number of children enrolled	Total number of children enrolled
2010	13,392	5156	300,946	8236	1,304,966	1,605,912
2011	13,299	5073	292,367	8226	1,303,803	1,596,170
2012	13,170	4973	289,257	8197	1,314,968	1,604,225
2013	13,043	4866	279,949	8177	1,303,661	1,583,610
2014	12,905	4763	270,177	8142	1,287,284	1,557,461
2015	11,676	4370	243,546	7306	1,158,902	1,402,448

Source: 文部科学省[Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, (MEXT)]. 学校基本調査報告書[School Basic Survey] http://www.mext.go.jp/component/b_menu/other/icsFiles/afiedfile/2015/12/25/1365622_1_1_1.pdf

Table 4.2 Numbers of public and private nursery schools and of children enrolled

Year	Total of number of nurseries	Public	Private	Total number of children enrolled
		Number of nurseries	Number of nurseries	
2010	21,681	9887	11,794	2,033,292
2011	21,751	9487	12,264	2,084,136
2012	22,720	9578	13,142	2,187,568
2013	22,594	9123	13,471	2,185,166
2014	22,922	8973	14,019	2,304,401
2015	–	–	–	–

Source: 厚生労働省大臣官房統計情報部[Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. 社会福祉施設等調査報告[Survey of Social Welfare Institutions]. <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/23-22c.html>

Table 4.3 Numbers of public and private certified child gardens

Year	Number of nintei kodomoen	Public	Private	Kinds			
				Unified	Kindergarten	Childcare	Locally discretionary
2011	762	149	613	406	225	100	31
2012	909	181	728	486	272	121	30
2013	1099	220	879	595	316	155	33
2014	1360	252	1108	702	411	189	40
2015	2836	554	2282	1931	524	328	53

Source: 内閣府[Nakikakufu]. 認定子ども園[Certified child gardens]. <http://www.youho.go.jp/press150508.html>

3. *Promote the quantitative expansion and the qualitative improvement of early childhood school education, childcare, and various child-rearing support services in local communities.*
4. *Support childcare not only in urban areas, but also in the areas where the numbers of children are declining.* (Cabinet Office 2012, p. 2)

In addition, this comprehensive support system for children and child-rearing (Cabinet Office 2012) has its five-page-long Q and A section that is helpful and supportive of parents of young children. It has many realistic questions such as, “I am living in an urban area where many children are on the waiting list for childcare. Under the new system, am I more likely to be able to use a childcare service for my child?” (p.18). Its answer is comprehensive and detailed. In conclusion, we tend to believe that accessibility to ECE is not a problem in Japan.

Affordability

To explain how the government ensures affordability of ECE to its people, we will review the following issues: average Japanese incomes and governmental financial support:

Average Japanese Incomes

According to the reports published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2015), the Gini coefficient indicates the income distribution of a country's population. When a Gini coefficient is 0, it shows that there is equal distribution of income. Japan's Gini coefficient (per capita) was 0.336 in 2012 (OECD 2015). It appears that Japanese families have similar incomes. However, the birthrate in Japan dropped to 1.41 in 2014 (The Japan Times 2015) because many couples cannot live on husbands' incomes alone and hesitate to have their second child in view of financial difficulties. Other reports by the OECD in 2014 reveal that Japanese educational expenditure per student is relatively high compared to other OECD countries. Some 55% of total expenditure on early childhood institutions comes from private sources, largely households.

Governmental Financial Support

The government financially supports parents of young children by reducing childcare fees (Naikakufu 2014). When parents enroll their children in any childcare settings, they need to pay for their first child's childcare. However, when a couple has three children who are enrolled in a kindergarten, nursery school, or certified child garden, they pay for the first child, the second child's fees are cut in half, and there are no fees for the third child. In 2013, a child-rearing allowance was allocated to 1,073,790 families because they were divorced or had become single parents. The amount of child-rearing allowance differs depending on each family's structure, including two-parent families, single-mother families, and single-father families (for more information, see <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/bunya/kodomo/osirase/dl/141030-1a.pdf>). This website describes how much each family will receive for its childcare allowance and how to apply for it. Not only the central government but also local governments financially support needed families (for more information, see <https://www.city.meguro.tokyo.jp/kurashi/kosodate/josei/shoteate/teate.html>). This website is about how the Tokyo government takes care of and supports families successfully in terms of their financial and childcare needs.

Child Allowance

Upper limits of the childcare fees are set at similar levels to the actual user fees currently charged at private kindergartens and nursery centers (Cabinet Office 2012). Table 4.4 shows each family's income bracket and child allowance by the Cabinet Office (2012). It indicates the allowance depends on both working parents' incomes and the number of their children. When working parents have either one child or

Table 4.4 Allowance for children

Children age			
Income (year)	Birth~3	3~12	12~15
~9,600,000	15,000	10,000	one child or two children
			10,000
			three children~15,000
960,000~			5000

Source: 厚生労働省 [Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare]. 児童手当 [Allowance for children] http://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/seisakunitsuite/bunya/kodomo/kodomo_kosodate/jidouteate/index.html

two children, they will receive 10,000 yen. When they have three children, they will receive 15,000 yen for financial support.

Accountability

Teacher Qualifications

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) (2015), the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2008), and the Society for the Study of Childcare (2003) emphasize the importance of teacher qualifications. Kindergarten teachers' qualifications are based on the Educational Personnel Certification Law, and nursery school teacher qualifications are on the basis of the Child Welfare Law and Regulations for its Enforcement (Abumiya 2011). In order to teach in a certified child garden that is associated with both kindergarten and nursery school, teachers must have certifications for both kindergarten and nursery school. Teachers without license must obtain it within the first 5 years of teaching.

In certified child gardens, it is preferable for teachers who care for children aged three and older to have certifications for both kindergarten and nursery school.

Teachers of children under the age of three (birth to two) must have nursery teacher qualifications. Table 4.5 shows teacher qualifications regarding kindergarten, nursery school, and certified child garden and indicates the results conducted by the Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute (2012). This survey was sent to 29,110 ECE institutions, and 5221 returned their responses. Permission to use this table was granted by the Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute.

Table 4.5 also shows approximately 70–80 % of educators who work in kindergartens possess both childcare and kindergarten licenses. More than 80 % of kindergarten/certified child garden teachers have both childcare and kindergarten licenses. There are less than 10 % of teachers with no license. However, it is not clear when we will know these teachers will obtain license. Because finding high quality of

Table 4.5 Teachers' qualification

	Yochien		Hoikusyo		Nintei kodomoen
	Public	Private	Public	Private	
Childcare workers' qualifications	70.8	75.4	83.5	85.4	82.1
Teachers with first-class kindergarten licensure	36.1	23	14.4	14.1	13.4
Teachers with second-class kindergarten licensure	63	74.7	83.1	75.3	76.8
Teachers with both childcare and kindergarten licensures	71.3	77.6	80.9	82.1	83.7
Teachers without licensure	4.8	4.4	8.2	5.6	4.6

Source: Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute 第2回幼児教育 保育についての基本調査報告書 [Basic survey report of childhood education and care, vol. 2]. http://berd.benesse.jp/up_images/textarea/06_2.pdf

childcare is one of the main concerns of parents, the governmental officials must maintain qualified teachers (Maruko 2013).

Sustainability: How to Sustain Accessibility, Affordability, and Accountability of ECE

In order to sustain the 3As of ECE and care, the government is struggling to balance and meet societal demands and needs of young children and their families. The Abe administration created an advisory panel in order to improve child birthrates and to address childcare issues (Yoshida 2015). Japan's aging and shrinking population has been one of the most serious problems that he has been confronting.

Additionally, the current government is taking steps to offer easier access to childcare and tax incentives (White 2015). The Abe administration is easing childcare regulations and is making it easier for women to go back to work after their children are born. The goal is to increase the population by the year 2060 (Cabinet Office 2012), and in order to achieve such a goal, the government and policy makers are working together to boost employment stability for young people and to support working mothers and child-rearing. It is equally important for the government to obtain sustained efforts and cooperation from private-sector employers to improve working environments for both women and men.

Some local governments are dealing with Japan's childcare issues successfully. One example of a successful role model of reducing the number of children on waiting lists is Yokohama City that once had the largest waiting lists in the nation (Maruko 2013). The city of Yokohama officials took many different measures to rectify the situation, including opening smaller private nursery schools run by individuals or nonprofit organizations. These facilities extended kindergarten hours in order to accommodate the working hours of parents.

As part of sustainability, Japanese early childhood educators emphasize the importance of education for sustainable development (ESD) (Maruyama 2011). Japan has set to work promoting ESD with the cooperation of ESD-related international organizations, government agencies, NGOs, and grassroots organizations. Japan has accumulated a wide range of know-how and experience regarding the implementation of ESD as well as insights into tasks that still need to be tackled (Maruyama 2011). Japanese educators joined in the OMEP (L'Organisation Mondiale pour L' Education Prescolaire (see this website for more information: <http://www.worldomep.org/en/education-for-sustainable-development/>)), and Hagiwara and others (2015) reported their efforts regarding equality for sustainability in Japanese kindergartens and nursery schools in the 67th OMEP world conference at Washington, DC, in 2015.

Among private nursery schools, educators have been studying ESD, and a book regarding ESD entitled, “Chikyu ni yasashii hoiku no susume: ESDteki hasso ga hoiku o kaeru” [Earth friendly childcare: ESD can change childcare] was published (Zenkoku shiritsu hoiken renmei 2014). In this book, theories of ESD as well as practical teaching methods are described. For more information see <http://www.zenshihoren.or.jp/about>. Also, another book regarding ESD in English was published in Japan with more examples of how Japanese teachers promote ESD in classrooms (International Committee of JFPNS 2015). Japanese early childhood educators' main goal is to improve quality of ECE, and one way of doing this is to support ESD in classrooms.

Social Justice

Here we examine the government's efforts regarding social justice in providing quality ECE to all children and their families. One of its efforts is related to eliminating the “wait-listed children” for childcare (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2013). The government has been actively building and securing personnel as well as promoting the involvement of private sectors in childcare. To eliminate children on the waiting list between the years of 2013 and 2014, the numbers of childcare facilities increased to serve more than 191 thousand additional children (The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2014a, b).

Another governmental effort is to promote women's active roles in the workforce (The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2013). The government prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, pregnancy, etc. To enable both females and males to balance their family lives, the government is creating a framework that can be implemented to create appropriate environments where everyone can work with a sense of security.

Additionally, the General After-School Child Plan was announced on July 31, 2014 to support two-income families and others in developing next-generation human resources, including children's clubs and classrooms for after-school activities (The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2014a, b). According to the Plan,

by the end of 2019, children's clubs will be opened within 80% of elementary schools.

To implement social justice, the government also supports single-parent households by providing them with comprehensive self-sufficiency support that consists of childcare/living support, employment support, securing childcare expenses, and financial support. Additionally, the government has been promoting registration for paternity leave since 2005 (Cabinet Office of Japan 2009), and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan (2011) has launched a new program to support fathers, enabling them to balance work and childcare. "Japanese gender and parental roles are in a stage of flux" (Morrone and Matsuyama 2010, p. 375), and current younger fathers are more interested in their family lives than in the previous generation (Central Research Service of Japan 2011).

Recently, the government has announced that single-parent households with more than two children will receive more financial support in 2016 (Cabinet Office 2012). At this point, a single parent with one child receives the maximum of 42,000 yen, but the support will change depending on the cost of living according to the announcement. Such support can be allocated to single-parent families until their children reach the age of 18. During the year 2015, approximately 160,000 single-parent families received this support.

The government also plans to expand its support for low-income families with three children by providing free early childhood care and education in 2016 (Cabinet Office 2012). A family with three children will pay for childcare for the first child, only half of the cost of childcare for the second child, and will receive free childcare for the third child. These governmental efforts are aimed to support single-parent families and low-income families with many children. Additional governmental efforts can be seen on the websites which focus on supporting families with young children, fathers, and working mothers (see websites for more information in the reference section).

In spite of such governmental efforts to support childcare in Japan, some concerns exist. There are some public childcare facilities that use a point system to determine whose children should be enrolled (Inakuma 2015). In this system, the more points families receive, the more opportunities they will be given to enroll their children in public nursery schools. When both parents work, they will be eligible for more points, but when they do not, they receive less points. When the grandparents of the children live nearby, points will be subtracted, while working parents with night jobs will receive more points. Also single parents and parents with many children will receive more points. Because of this point system, some parents are concerned about access to public childcare and are enrolling their children in uncertified nursery schools.

This may have some influences on the social justice of ECE in Japan. Further studies, however, are needed to explore these influences.

Conclusion

In summary, the field of ECE in Japan has been constantly changing in order to meet and balance the demands and needs of young children and families since the first kindergarten was established in 1876. Because of an aging population and low birthrate, the governmental efforts have been modified in order to improve childcare, although its efforts are not without criticism. By reviewing the governmental efforts and policies, we are hopeful for continuous improvement at local and federal governmental levels for young children and families.

In order to improve accessibility and affordability of ECE to all children and families, the government has been building and subsidizing more childcare facilities as well as providing free childcare for families with many children. Additionally, the government has created certified child gardens to meet high demands of childcare. In its efforts to maintain accountability, the government has issued laws demanding high qualifications for teacher certification. However, constantly establishing more public childcare centers cannot meet parents' expectations for accessibility to ECE. The government should understand the needs of the community and where are the best areas to build such centers (Maruko 2013). The government's recent financial support for parents with young children is one way to address its accountability.

To sustain the 3As of ECE, the central and local governments work together with private sectors to eliminate the waiting lists for childcare. Japanese early childhood educators consider education for sustainable development (ESD) to be important, and they have been working on implementing ESD in ECE classrooms. In dealing with social justice, the government has been taking an active role to support working parents and to create appropriate environments where they can work and balance their family lives. The General After-School Child Plan is helping two-income families with children by providing more children's clubs and classrooms for after-school activities. The government strongly endorses both paternity and maternity leave for working parents and provides single-parent households with more financial support.

The current governmental efforts regarding childcare are not without some criticism (Mie 2013). Yoshida (2015) reports that as long as Japan has the problem of low birthrate and a lack of financial resources to fund expensive welfare facilities such as elderly care, the government needs to come up with specific plans and programs to deal with 3As and 2Ss. Although the Abe administration is trying to support and capitalize on female power, many are skeptical (Mie 2013). His critics argue that Abe's crusade and efforts are not feasible when a corporate culture values long work hours for mothers and fathers. Childcare issues need to be discussed and solved by all the parties involved, and the government should promote dynamic social engagement among everyone.

Nevertheless, the situation is changing better. The Abe administration plans to increase and to subsidize more childcare centers (unauthorized centers) with the understanding that they also increase the numbers of qualified teachers and provide

pay raises. Since the administration is working with private sectors to improve childcare numbers, we need to review and examine how the government and private facilities work together for the betterment of young children's care and education in the future.

Appendix: List of Acronyms

Full names	Acronyms
Early childhood education	ECE
Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology	MEXT
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	OECD
Education for sustainable development	ESD
Non-government organization	NGO
L'Organisation Mondiale pour L' Education Prescolaire	OMEP
Japanese Federation of Private Nursery Schools	JFPNS

References

- Abumiya, M. (2011). *Preschool education and care in Japan*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nier.go.jp/English/educationjapan/pdf/201109ECED.pdf>
- Besse Educational Research and Development Institute. (2012). *Yojikyoiku hoiku nitsuiteno kihonchosa hokokusyo*, Vol. 2 [*Basic survey report of childhood education and care*, Vol. 2]. Retrieved from: http://berd.benesse.jp/up_images/textarea/06_2.pdf
- Cabinet Office. (2012). *Information booklet*. Retrieved from: http://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/sei-sakunitsuite/bunya/kodomo/kodomo_kosodate/jidouteate/index.html
- Cabinet Office of Japan. (2009). A 2009 declining birthrate white paper, Chapter 2 Countermeasures against a declining birthrate. Retrieved from <http://www8.cao.go.jp/shoushi/whitepaper/english/w-2009>
- Central Research Service of Japan. (2011). *Chichioya no ikujisanka ni kansuru seronchosa* [*Research on fathers' participation in childrearing*]. Retrieved from <http://www.crs.or.jp/backno/No646/6462.htm>
- Chesky, A. (2011). Hoikuen or yochien: Past, present, and future of Japanese early childhood education. *Childhood Education*, 87(4), 239–243.
- Child Welfare Act. (2009). Retrieved from: <http://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/law/detail/?id=11&vm=04&re=01&new=1>
- Hagiwara, M., Kaneda, T., Kawakita, M., Hiura, N., Hotta, M., Okamoto, H., Ishizuka, Y., Sakai, N., & Syuzui, K. (2015). Equality for sustainability in Japanese kindergarten and nursery schools. *News of OMEP Japan*, 48(2), 8–9.
- Hosokawa, A., & Inakuma, M. (2015, June). *Kodomoen zenkokubaizochu* [Increasing numbers of children's gardens]. *Tokyo Shinbone*, p. 11.
- Inakuma, M. (2015). *Jichitai no nyuenji no pointosei* [Childcare facilities' childcare point systems]. *Tokyo Shinbon*, p. 23.

- International Committee of JFPNS. (2015). *Education for sustainable development : 12 examples from nursery schools in Japan*. Tokyo: Japanese Federation of Private Nursery Schools.
- Izumi-Taylor, S., Lee, Y., & Franceschini, L. (2011). How are notions of childcare similar or different among American, Chinese, Japanese, and Swedish teachers? *Research in Comparative International Education*, 6(2), 183–200.
- Lascarides, V., & Hinitz, B. (2011). *History of ECE*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Maruko, M. (2013, June). Yokohama day care centers scramble to keep kids off waiting lists. *The Japan Times*. Retrieved from: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/06/18/national/social-issues/day-care-centers-scramble-to-keep-yokohama-kids-off-lists/#vp5yj7yrlx>
- Maruyama, H. (2011). *Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Japan*. Retrieved from: http://www.nier.go.jp/English/EducationInJapan/Education_in_Japan/Education_in_Japan_files/201103ESD.pdf
- Mie, A. (2013, June). *Maternity leave, day care still elude many working mothers*. Retrieved from: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/18/national/social-issues/maternity-leave-day-care-still-elude/#VqEzEJorLIU>
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). (2006). *Basic act on education*. Retrieved from: <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/lawandplan/1303462.htm>
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). (2015). *School basic survey*. Retrieved from: http://www.mext.go.jp/component/b_menu/other/icsFiles/afield-file/2015/12/25/1365622_1_1_1.pdf
- Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. (2008). Hoikusho hoikushishin [*Childcare guidelines*]. Retrieved from <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/bunya/kodomo/hoiku04/pdf/hoiku04a.pdf>
- Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. (2011). *Press release*. Retrieved from <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/houdou/2r9852000001ihm5-att/2r9852000001ihnm.pdf>
- Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. (2013). *Equal employment and children family bureau*. Retrieved from: [equal_employment_children_and_families_bureau.pdf](http://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/seisakunitsuite/bunya/kodomo/kodomo_kosodate/jidouteate/index.html)
- Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. (2014a). *Allowance for children*. Retrieved from: http://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/seisakunitsuite/bunya/kodomo/kodomo_kosodate/jidouteate/index.html
- Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. (2014b). *Survey of social welfare institutions*. Retrieved from: <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/23-22c>
- Morrone, M., & Matsuyama, U. (2010). Japan's parental leave policy. *Childhood Education*, 86(6), 371–375.
- Muto, T. (2009). Yogi kyoiku no genri [*Principles of ECE*]. Tokyo: Minerubashobo.
- Naikakufu. (1947a). *Child welfare act*. Retrieved from: <http://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/law/detail/?id=11&vm=04&re=01&new=1>
- Naikakufu. (1947b). *School education law*. Retrieved from: <http://law.e-gov.go.jp/htmldata/S22/S22HO026.html>
- Naikakufu. (2014). Kodomo kosodateshien shinseisaku [*New laws about children and childrearing support*]. Retrieved from: http://www.8.cao.go.jp/shoushi/shinseido/event/publicity/pdf/naruhodo_book2609/print4.pdf
- Naikakufu. (2015). *Press release*. Retrieved from: <http://www.youho.go.jp/press150508.html>
- Nozomi Yochien. (n.d.). *Kindergarten, nursery schools, and certified children garden*. Retrieved from: <http://nozomi.ac.jp/hoikuen/tigai.html>
- OECD. (2014). *Education at a glance 2014*. Retrieved from: www.oecd.org/edu/japan-EAG2014-country-note.pdf
- OECD. (2015). *OCED income distribution database: Gini, poverty, income, methods and concepts*. Retrieved from: <http://www.oecd.org/social/omcome-distribution-database.htm>
- Ogawa, T., & Izumi-Taylor, S. (2010). Tech-knowledge in Japanese early childhood education. In S. Blake & S. Izumi-Taylor (Eds.), *Technology for early childhood education and socialization: Developmental applications and methodologies* (pp. 49–69). Hershey: IGI Global.
- Society for the Study of Childcare. (2003). *Hoikusho hoikushishin [Childcare centers' childcare guidelines]*. Tokyo: Society for the Study of Childcare.

This website is about the panel discussion on how the ministry of low childbirth is working with others to deal with Japan's low birthrate. <http://www8.cao.go.jp/shoushi/index.html>

This website is created by the Cabinet Office and deals with the issues regarding childrearing, taxes, childcare issues, and other items related to children and families. http://www8.cao.go.jp/shoushi/shinseido/event/publicity/naruhodo_book_2710.html

This website offers everything people need to know about childcare and childrearing. The Cabinet Office updates this website continuously.

Websites for working parents, fathers, and all families: http://www8.cao.go.jp/shoushi/shoushika/etc/project/pdf/kick_off-1.pdf

White, S. (2015). *Japan targets boosting birth rate to increase growth*. Retrieved from: <http://reuters.com/article/us-japan-economy-population-idUSKCN0T113A2015112>

Yoshida, R. (2015, October). Abe convenes panel to tackle low birthrate, aging population. *The Japan Times*. Retrieved from: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/29/national/politics-diplomacy/abe-convenes-panel-tackle-low-birthrate-aging-population/#Vp5TRbYrLIX>

Zenkoku shiritsu hoikuen renmei [Japanese Federation of Private Nursery Schools]. (2014). *Chikyu ni Yasashii Hoiku no Susume: ESDteki hasso ga hoiku o kaeru [Earth friendly childcare: EDS can change childcare]*. Tokyo: Japanese Federation of Private Nursery Schools.

Chapter 5

Early Childhood Education Policies in Korea: Advances in Theory and Practice

Eunhye Park, Minyoung Jang, and Seenyoung Park

Abstract Since the first kindergarten and childcare center were introduced with different purposes in the early twentieth century, early childhood education and care (ECEC) has developed in two different systems. Recently, Korea has moved to integrate these two ECEC systems. In this chapter, we will present brief histories and contexts of ECEC in Korea and analyze trends, policies, and issues of accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice, using the most recent 10-year data published by the governmental agencies. Results indicate that (1) the accessibility to both of kindergartens and childcare centers has increased; (2) the affordability of ECEC has increased as the public spending on ECEC has increased almost ten times over the past decade; (3) Korean government has implemented three systems for ensuring the accountability; (4) Korean government has developed long-term plans for building sustainable ECEC; and (5) under two split systems, the government has not been able to ensure the same quality of ECEC to all children. However, Korean government began to address social justice issues in 2012 by starting to integrate ECEC sectors. Thus, finally, we will show the integrating steps done so far and discuss the next steps for the development of ECEC in Korea.

Introduction

South Korea, the Republic of Korea, lies in the middle of Northeast Asia. It is flanked by China on its west and Japan on its east; it also has a total area of approximately 100,284 km². Approximately 51 million people live in Korea, and nearly 50 % of the population is concentrated in Seoul, the capital city (Official website of the Republic of Korea 2015). “Korean (Hangeul)” is the official language in Korea,

E. Park (✉) • M. Jang
Early Childhood Education Department, Ewha Womans University,
Room 531, Ewhayeodae-gil 52, Seodaemun-gu, Seoul, Republic of Korea
e-mail: ehparkh@ewha.ac.kr

S. Park
Early Childhood Education Department, Bucheon University, Bucheon, South Korea

and it features a unique language system (Official website of the Republic of Korea 2015). Korean politics take place under the framework of a presidential representative democratic republic where the president is the head of state.

Additionally, a multiparty system comprised of conservative, liberal, and progressive parties is employed. The current early childhood education in Korea has been largely shaped by government policies which have been largely influenced by political parties and by the effort of nongovernmental stakeholders.

History of Early Childhood Education Policies in Korea

Since the first kindergarten called “Busan kindergarten” was introduced in 1987 in Korea, early childhood education and care (ECEC) has developed in two different directions. Busan kindergartens were established for Japanese children’s education, whereas other kindergartens in the beginning of the twentieth century (e.g., Ewha kindergarten, established in 1914; Junmyung kindergarten, established in 1911; Naman kindergarten, established in 1909) were influenced by the spirit of Froebel in order to propagate Christianity (Yoon et al. 2013). During the 1930s and 1940s, the number of kindergartens increased to preserve the Korean language during the period of Japanese occupation. At the time, kindergartens were the only schools permitted to use the Korean language. Following Korea’s emancipation from Japan, the number of kindergartens decreased.

In 1949, the first ever Education Act was established to provide a common educational goal and curriculum for Korean schools. No additional laws existed concerning early childhood education in that period. Instead, there were only three articles in the Education Act regarding early childhood education. After the Education Act was established in 1969, the first national curriculum for kindergartens was developed through an Education Ministry Ordinance by the Ministry of Education (Kim et al. 1995).

In 1976, the first public kindergarten was established. The enactment of the Early Childhood Education Promotion Act in 1982 provided a comprehensive legal basis for early childhood education in Korea, which led to quantitative growth. In 2004, the Early Childhood Education Act was enacted and concerned early childhood education.

The first childcare center was founded in 1921 and two more nurseries were introduced in 1923. There were only 11 childcare centers in 1939, and they served 435 children. Childcare centers at this time had philanthropic purposes. By 1961, childcare centers were being regulated by the government to support the government’s economic plan. As a result, a growing number of mothers with young children entered the workforce. The Child Welfare Act was enacted in 1968, and private childcare centers started to significantly expand (Cho et al. 2013).

The government prepared a comprehensive plan to promote early childhood education. It enacted the Early Childhood Education Promotion Act in 1982, which was extremely powerful. This law led to improvements in various types of childcare centers and integrated the centers into one system called Saemaul nurseries. Due to

the Early Childhood Education Promotion Act, education and care for young children were divided into two separate systems (Park et al. 2013).

In 1988, the number of Saemaul nurseries increased to 2394 and served 301,192 children. Even with the increasing number of Saemaul nurseries, accessibility was limited and most only provided half-day care (Park et al. 2013).

In 1991, the government enacted the Infant Care Act. This law was regulated by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. It unified various types of childcare centers and began providing public funding for children in low-income families. With the introduction of this law, the name “Saemaul nurseries” was changed to “Eorinijip,” which means young children’s house in Korean (Cho et al. 2013). This law was so significant because it meant that the government recognized its responsibility for providing quality care to young children.

Free education for 5-year-olds was implemented in 2012, and free education for 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds was implemented in 2013 (Suh and Lee 2014). The government provided equal public funding to all children aged 3–5 in Korea for their “free” education, which actually only covered a portion of children’s tuition fees for kindergarten and childcare centers. In 2013, the government began to discuss the integration of ECEC. Since then, ECEC integration has been in progress.

Overall Context: The ECEC System in Korea

Kindergarten and childcare systems in Korea have different historical backgrounds. As in most countries, kindergartens fell under the Ministry of Education’s jurisdiction; they were responsible for ensuring that young children aged 3–5 were educated. Conversely, childcare was under the Ministry of Health and Welfare’s jurisdiction; they were responsible for ensuring that children up to age 6 whose mothers were at work were being cared for. Table 5.1 compares the main features of kindergartens and childcare centers.

Table 5.1 Comparison of kindergartens and childcare centers

	Kindergarten	Childcare center
Jurisdiction	Ministry of Education	Ministry of Health and Welfare
Law	Early Childhood Education Act	Infant Care Act
Target age	3–5-year-olds	0–6-year-olds (up to 12-year-olds)
Teacher certificate	Kindergarten teacher certificate	Childcare worker certificate
Running hour	Morning care (starting at 6:30)	Morning care (starting at 7:00)
	Nuri (3–5 h)	All day care (12 h)
	After school	(Nuri for 3, 4, 5-year-olds)
	Afternoon care (finishing at 22:00)	Night care (finishing at 24:00)
Curriculum	3–5-year-olds: Nuri curriculum	3–5-year-olds: Nuri curriculum 0–2-year-olds: standard childcare curriculum

Source: Park and Park (2015) (p. 27)

Yuchiwons (kindergarten) are schools for children aged 3–5. Yuchiwons have a national curriculum called “Nuri” that is taught to students between 3 and 5 h a day. To work at a Yuchiwon as a full-time teacher, an individual must hold a kindergarten teaching certificate. The Yuchiwons are controlled by the Early Childhood Education Act and are supervised by the Ministry of Education. Children up to age 6 can also attend childcare centers called Eorinjips. Eorinjips operate for 12 h per day and are also expected to implement the curriculum, Nuri, for children aged 3–5. Eorinjips are controlled by the Infant Care Act and are overseen by the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Teachers who work at Eorinjips are expected to have childcare worker certifications.

Accessibility of ECEC in Korea

Accessibility of Kindergartens

Number of Kindergartens

There are public and private service providers in kindergartens. As shown in Table 5.2, as of 2014, there were 8826 kindergartens in total. Out of those 8826 kindergartens, 4619 (52.3%) were public kindergartens and 4207 (47.7%) were private kindergartens. Over the last decade, the number of kindergartens has been steadily increasing with public kindergartens outnumbering private kindergartens.

According to Table 5.3, the number of classroom per kindergarten has been increasing over the last decade. In 2005, there were 6451 public kindergarten classrooms, and this number increased to 8693 classrooms in 2014. In 2005, there were 15,958 private kindergarten classrooms, and this number increased to 24,348 classrooms in 2014.

Although the number of public kindergartens outnumbered the number of private kindergartens, the number of private kindergartens classrooms was greater. This is because most public kindergartens have smaller school sizes than private kindergartens. In 2014, there was an average of 1.88 classrooms in public kindergartens and an average of 5.79 classrooms in private kindergartens. In 2005, there was an average of 1.46 public kindergarten classrooms and an average of 4.13 private kindergarten classrooms. This indicates a high dependency on private kindergartens rather than public kindergartens.

Table 5.2 Number of kindergartens from 2005 to 2014

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total	8275	8290	8294	8344	8373	8388	8424	8538	8678	8826
Public	4412	4.460	4448	4483	4493	4501	4502	4525	4577	4619
Private	3863	3830	3846	3861	3880	3887	3922	4013	4101	4207

Source: Korean Educational Development Institute (2005–2014). Educational Statistics

Table 5.3 Number of classrooms in kindergarten from 2005 to 2014

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total	22,409	23,010	23,860	24,567	24,908	25,670	26,988	28,386	30,597	33,041
Public	6451	6588	6646	6789	6887	7129	7279	7535	8220	8693
Private	15,958	16,422	17,214	17,778	18,021	18,541	19,709	20,851	22,377	24,348

Source: Korean Educational Development Institute (2005–2014). Educational Statistics

Number of Kindergarten Teachers

Table 5.4 presents the number of teachers in kindergartens in last 10 years. The number of teachers in kindergarten has increased. In particular, the number of teachers in public kindergartens has almost doubled.

Class Size of Kindergartens

According to Table 5.5, class sizes in public and private kindergartens have been decreasing over the past decade. In 2005, an average of 19.3 children enrolled per class in public kindergartens, and by 2014, that number dropped to an average of 17.1 children per class. In 2005, an average of 26.2 children enrolled per class in private kindergartens, and by 2014, that number dropped to an average of 20.7 children per class.

Enrolment Rates of Kindergartens

Kindergarten enrolment rates have been increasing over the past decade as Table 5.6 shows. In 2014, the enrolment rate for 3-year-olds was 33.1%; this represents an almost double increase from 2005 when the enrolment rate was 15.2%. In 2014, the enrolment rate for 4-year-olds was 51.0%; this figure increased from 31.7% in 2005. In 2014, the enrolment rate for 5-year-olds was 57.3%; this figure increased from 44.9% in 2005. Compared to other age groups, enrolment rates for 3-year-olds have increased the most over the past decade.

Accessibility of Childcare

Number of Childcare Centers

According to Table 5.7, in 2014, there were a total of 43,742 childcare centers. Of these, 23,318 (53.3%) were home-based private childcare centers that primarily cared for children up to age 2, and 14,822 (33.9%) were private childcare centers that primarily cared for children aged 3–5.

Together, home-based childcare centers and private childcare centers accounted for 87.2% of all childcare centers. Public childcare centers consisted of only 5.7% of the total number of childcare centers. Clearly, the childcare system relies heavily on the private sector. Since 2005, the number of childcare centers has rapidly increased. The number of home-based private childcare centers has almost doubled, while the public sector only added 1000 new childcare centers.

Table 5.4 Number of teachers

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total	31,033	32,096	33,504	34,601	35,415	36,461	38,629	42,235	46,126	48,530
Public	6946	7737	8163	8482	8628	8827	9187	9969	10,997	11,931
Private	24,087	24,359	25,341	26,119	26,787	27,634	29,442	32,266	35,129	36,599

Source: Korean Educational Development Institute (2005–2014). Educational Statistics

Table 5.5 Number of children in class

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total	24.2	23.7	22.7	21.9	21.6	21.0	20.9	21.6	21.5	19.7
Public	19.3	18.4	17.8	17.5	18.2	17.8	17.3	17.2	17.3	17.1
Private	26.2	25.8	24.6	23.6	22.9	22.2	22.3	23.3	23.1	20.7

Source: Korean Educational Development Institute (2005–2014). Educational Statistics

Table 5.6 Kindergarten enrolment rate (%) by age

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
3	15.2	15.8	19.7	22.9	22.4	22.6	28.7	29.4	30.3	33.1
4	31.7	34.5	34.6	38.9	42.6	40.5	39.8	49.2	52.3	51.0
5	44.9	52.4	54.9	50.1	53.1	56.2	52.1	50.9	59.4	57.3
Total	31.8	35.0	36.6	37.9	39.6	39.0	40.0	43.5	47.2	47.2

Source: Korean Educational Development Institute (2005–2014). Educational Statistics

Number of Childcare Center Teachers

According to Table 5.8, the number of teachers in childcare centers has been increasing over the past decade. There were a total of 136,916 teachers in childcare centers in 2005, and that number increased to 311,817 teachers in 2014.

In childcare centers, the number of teachers in employer-supported centers has increased the most: in 2005, there were 1975 teachers, and by 2014, that number almost quadrupled to 9266 teachers. Additionally, the number of teachers in childcare homes and corporate-parent centers almost tripled from 2005 to 2014.

Enrolment Rates of Childcare Centers

As Table 5.9 shows, the enrolment rates in childcare centers for children up to age 2 have significantly grown. In 2004, 18.3% of children fell into this age range compared to 63.3% of children in 2013. This sharp increase can be attributed to extended childcare support policies which is that the government gives parents who send their children to childcare centers a full payment for fixed government assistance costs regardless of mothers' working condition since 2012 (Yun et al. 2014). Those costs are ranging from 750 USD per month for under 1-year-olds to 400 USD per month for 2-year-olds, while those who raise their children at home receive home-care allowances which are ranging from 200 USD for under 1-year-olds to 100 USD for 2–5-year-olds (Yun et al. 2014).

The overall enrolment rates for children aged 3–5 are similar in both kindergartens (47.2%) and childcare centers (43.4%). Analyzing the data by age, 3-year-olds show higher enrolment rates in childcare centers (54.2%) than in kindergartens (30.3%). According to enrolment rates, children aged 4–5 tend to be enrolled in kindergartens (59.4%) rather than childcare centers (34.6%). This trend can be

Table 5.7 Number of childcare centers

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total	28,367	29,233	30,856	33,499	35,550	38,021	39,842	42,527	43,770	43,742
A	1473	1643	1748	1826	1917	2034	2116	2203	2332	2489
B	1495	1475	1460	1458	1470	1468	1462	1444	1439	1420
C	979	1066	1002	969	935	888	870	869	868	852
D	12,769	12,864	13,081	13,306	13,433	13,789	14,134	14,440	14,751	14,822
E	11,346	11,828	13,184	15,525	17,359	19,367	20,722	22,935	26,632	23,318
F	42	59	61	65	66	74	89	113	129	149
G	263	298	320	350	370	401	449	523	619	692

A- National/Public Center; B-Social Welfare Corporation Center; C- Corporate-Body Center; D- Private Childcare Center; E- Child Care Homes; F- Corporate-Parents Center; G- Employer Supported Center

Source: Ministry of Gender Equality & Family (2005–2007). Childcare statistics
Ministry of Health and Welfare (2008–2014). Childcare Statistics

Table 5.8 Number of teachers in childcare center

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total	136,916	156,306	169,585	175,729	206,912	229,084	248,635	284,237	301,719	311,817
A	13,656	14,910	15,628	17,132	19,397	20,980	22,229	23,725	26,750	28,977
B	15,922	16,226	16,020	16,145	17,042	17,368	17,491	18,011	18,765	19,045
C	7,220	8,206	7,687	7,653	7,988	7,708	7,724	8,094	8,703	8,749
D	70,384	78,960	83,088	84,140	95,668	104,531	112,779	126,239	136,180	141,977
E	27,492	35,425	44,167	47,348	62,863	73,895	82,911	101,273	102,731	102,947
F	267	252	345	298	348	398	485	614	730	856
G	1,975	2,327	2,650	3,013	3,606	4,204	5,016	6,281	7,860	9,266

Source: Ministry of Gender Equality & Family (2005–2007), Childcare Statistics; Ministry of Health and Welfare (2008–2014), Childcare Statistics
A – National/Public Center, B – Social Welfare Corporation Center, C – Corporate-Body Center, D – Private Child Care Center, E – Child Care Homes, F – Corporate-Parents Center, G – Employer Supported Center

Table 5.9 Childcare center enrolment rate (%) by age

Age	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
0	8.1	10.9	14.7	22.3	25.3	27.9	32.5	38.3	35.2	33.0
1	19.0	23.7	27.5	42.8	42.8	51.7	53.1	68.1	67.0	78.0
2	36.5	51.2	51.2	54.4	54.4	71.2	77.0	79.2	84.5	84.0
<i>Subtotal</i>	22.0	30.6	30.6	41.6	41.6	50.5	54.1	62.0	63.3	66.2
3	45.3	50.3	50.3	50.9	50.9	49.3	58.3	58.1	54.2	55.9
4	39.3	42.1	42.1	44.6	44.6	40.3	37.0	41.6	41.3	37.4
5	30.6	36.3	36.3	32.2	32.2	34.3	30.6	30.2	34.6	34.7
<i>Subtotal</i>	30.7	42.8	42.8	42.4	42.4	41.6	42.0	42.8	43.4	42.9
Total	37.8	37.0	37.0	42.0	42.0	42.0	48.0	52.4	53.3	54.3

Source: Ministry of Gender Equality & Family (2005–2007). Childcare Statistics; Ministry of Health and Welfare (2008–2014). Childcare Statistics

explained by Korean parents' perceptions of early childhood education and care (ECEC). Parents in Korea tend to think that kindergartens focus primarily on education, while childcare centers focus primarily on care (Yoon et al. 2013). Thus, as children get older and are closer to entering elementary schools, parents want their children to be enrolled in kindergartens rather than childcare centers. They believe that this will prepare their children to smoothly transition into elementary schools.

Affordability of ECEC in Korea

The public spending on ECEC has increased almost ten times over the past decade from 1273.53 USD in 2004 to 12,470.22 USD in 2014 (Suh and Lee 2014).

In most countries, childcare is supported by various means including providing child-rearing time for working parents, providing childcare services, and supporting childcare by financial funding (Suh and Lee 2014). Although countries vary in this regard, most countries spend a higher proportion of their funding on ECEC by cash benefits than on providing childcare services or tax benefits such as reduction on taxes (OECD 2012). In contrast, childcare policies in Korea heavily focus on services rather than benefits. Table 5.11 presents the subject and range of public spending on early childhood education in Korea from 2003.

As Table 5.10 presents, selective support for low-income families was radically expanded; the targeting procedures and scale of the operation significantly increased from 2003 onward (Seo et al. 2013). It expanded to include “free” education and care for all children aged 3–5 in 2013 (Seo et al. 2013).

Since the free education and care policy was extended without clearly establishing the content and range of services, parents expected 12-h childcare to be guaranteed for all children (Suh and Lee 2014). Korea is the only country in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) where the utility rate of childcare facilities is higher than the employment rate of women (OECD 2012). The meaning of the term “free” needs to be reconsidered in this context.

Table 5.10 The subject and range of public spending on early childhood education and care

	2003–2011					2012					2013					2014					2015			
	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	
Kindergarten	Top 30% of income level	Top 30% of income level	Top 30% of income level	All income level	Top 30% of income level	Top 30% of income level	Top 30% of income level	All income level	All income level	Top 30% of income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level
	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level
Child care center	Top 30% of income level	Top 30% of income level	Top 30% of income level	All income level	Top 30% of income level	Top 30% of income level	All income level	All income level	Top 30% of income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level	All income level
	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level	Below 70% of income level

Source: Park and Shin (2013, pp. 40–84)

Table 5.11 Government support for early childhood education and care

(Unit: US dollar) (%)

Year	Childcare	Early childhood education	Total	Ratio of GDP
2004	890.04	382.89	1273.53	0.17
2005	1338.49	535.01	1875.50	0.24
2006	1709.67	691.40	2402.08	0.30
2007	2248.15	795.02	3043.18	0.35
2008	2275.64	849.00	3624.64	0.39
2009	3423.45	1036.70	4460.15	0.46
2010	4147.14	1238.30	5405.44	0.51
2011	4977.30	1613.88	6591.17	0.59
2012	6116.53	2534.37	8650.90	0.75
2013	7768.64	3472.61	11,241.26	0.94
2014	8020.71	4449.52	12,470.22	1.01

Source: Suh and Lee (2014) (p. 101)

As shown in Table 5.11, government expenditure on ECEC has increased dramatically since 2005. In particular, as shown in Table 5.12, the childcare budget steeply increases over time as compared to the early education budget. In 2004, the total budget for all early childcare and education provided by central and local governments was 1273.53 USD. By 2006, this figure increased to 2402.08 USD, and by 2014, it stood at 12,470.22 USD. Measuring it against GDP, the ratio increased from 0.17% in 2004 to more than 1% in 2014 (Suh and Lee 2014).

Most of this expenditure has been directed at childcare support to alleviate the financial burden on parents (Suh and Lee 2014); however, the budget for infrastructure development remains limited.

Although the free education and care policy is subsidized for parents who send their children to either kindergartens or childcare centers, parents are still responsible for paying for after-school programs. Since both kindergartens and childcare centers are highly dependent on the private sector, the expense gap that parents must pay may be quite large depending on the center. For children attending kindergarten, the expense may range from 0 to 1500 USD, and for children attending childcare centers, the expense may range from 0 to 470 USD. There is a wide gap in kindergarten tuitions because there is no price cap for kindergartens, whereas childcare centers have price caps and financial regulations (Yun et al. 2014). The tuition differences between kindergartens and childcare centers affect the quality of teachers, facilities, and programs, which lead to enrolment preferences in parents (Yoon et al. 2013). Since the overall quality is higher in kindergartens than in childcare centers, parents with older children prefer to place their children in kindergartens so that they receive a better education.

There are two dilemmas in this situation. First, parents want to provide high-quality education to their children; however, this goal may come with the financial burden of paying expensive tuition costs. Second, there are educational disparities in what is being taught and how to Korean children. Although each child aged 3–5

receives an equal amount of government subsidy for ECEC, there are inequalities in their education depending on their parents' financial state.

Accountability of ECEC in Korea

Two systems ensure the quality of kindergartens and childcare centers in Korea. The first system is an evaluation system for kindergarten and childcare center. It was introduced to both early childhood education and childcare sectors in recent years to ensure that quality services are being provided to children and families. The second system, the information disclosure system, was introduced to guarantee accountability within kindergartens and childcare center.

The Kindergarten Evaluation System (KES)

The KES was introduced in 2007, and tests are conducted every 3 years. The evaluation areas include the curricula, health and safety features, operational management, and the educational environment. The KES is now in its third phase and being implemented in all public and private kindergartens from 2014 to 2016 (Yoon et al. 2013). Each kindergarten must submit an internal evaluation report to be verified by a site inspection. A written evaluation is then provided by the evaluation team, which consists of a college professor as well as directors and deputy directors of both public and private kindergartens. The results of these evaluations are released to the public. Through the KES results, successful kindergartens are identified and publicized (Ministry of Education and Gwangju Metropolitan Early Childhood Education and Development Institute 2014).

Childcare Center Accreditation System (CCAS)

In 2006, a Childcare Facility Accreditation Office and a CCAS were developed for childcare centers. To be authorized and accredited, all childcare centers must undergo an evaluation process and obtain accreditation. The evaluation consists of a self-report, checklist, inspection report, and committee opinion institute (The official website of Korea Childcare Promotion Institute 2015).

The inspection reviews a center's accounting, facility status, business registration, curricula implementation, childcare staff qualifications, and standards for providing educational materials and facilities. Self-evaluation reports must be sent annually to the evaluation office at the Korean Childcare Promotion Institute (The official website of Korea Childcare Promotion Institute 2015).

Evaluation results are released to the public, and accredited statuses are made visible to the accreditation board. Using these results, centers can gain parents' trust, and parents will want to send their children to these centers.

Information Disclosure System

In November 2014, the integrated information disclosure system was introduced in kindergartens and childcare centers as part of the ECEC integration policy. This system provides essential information about ECEC to parents—thereby protecting their right to access this information and allowing them to make informed choices about ECEC (Office for Government Policy Coordination, Prime Minister's Secretariat 2014, November 17). The integrated information system includes general information (e.g., the name of the institute, establishment category, and the address of the institute), the number of classrooms in each age range, the number of teachers, the hours of operation, number of hours of teaching, government subsidies received, financial cost for parents, etc. Table 5.12 shows detailed information on information disclosure items.

Table 5.12 The integrated information disclosure system: information disclosure item

	Range	Detailed contents
Basis present condition	Institution name	Yuchiwon (kindergarten), Eorinjip (Child Care Center)
	Types of establishment	Each types of establishment (national/public, private etc)
	Address and contact information	Address, phone number, fax number, homepage
	Location information	Location-based information service (e.g., distance from our house)
Infants and children	Infants and children status	Number of classrooms
Faculty	Teacher status	Number of teachers
Curriculum	Running hour	Basic running hour (begin-end time)
	Nuri curriculum running	The daily teaching hours for the Nuri curriculum
	Offering service	Additional operating (e.g., afternoon Care)
Kindergarten and childcare center fees	Kindergarten and childcare center fees	Government grants by age and parent's financial burden of tuition and childcare costs
Etc.	For unified vehicle operation	Vehicle operation and insurance

Source: *Child care center-kindergarten the integration of information disclosure*. Retrieved from <http://www.childinfo.go.kr/info/info.isp/> (September 2, 2015)

Sustainability of ECEC in Korea

Childcare has emerged as a key policy issue and has expanded rapidly over the last 10 years. Underlying the emergence of childcare as a major policy issue is a shared sense of crisis over rapidly decreasing fertility rates. In Korea, the overall fertility rate has decreased from 6.0 in 1960 to 1.08 in 2005, with a slight increase to 1.3 in 2012 (Statistics Korea 2013).

The government's interest in ECEC became apparent with the implementation of the first Childcare Support Policy in 2004. Aiming to increase public support for early education and childcare, the policy focuses on reducing the financial burden of childcare on parents by up to 50 %, depending on parents' income levels. The policy includes 1 year of parental leave and a new accreditation system for childcare facilities (Suh and Lee 2014).

In 2005, the second Childcare Support Policy announced a standard childcare fee for childcare facilities and introduced a basic subsidy system for infant childcare. The Saessak Plan, implemented in 2006, is a long-term strategy (2006–2010). It aims to ensure increases in basic subsidies for infant childcare facilities. It also aims to increase the number of public childcare options (up to 30 % by 2010). In addition, the Saessak Plan subsidizes childcare fees for low-income families. The Aisarang Plan (2009–2012) is a revised version of the Saessak Plan (Seo et al. 2013). It strengthens the government's role in childcare by increasing support for users of childcare facilities and by introducing a child allowance for families who do not use these facilities. The Aisarang Plan also aims to improve childcare service quality. Since 2012, free childcare for children under the age of 5 has been strongly promoted to fulfill the Korean president's election pledge (Y. Kim et al. 2013).

The development of a long-term plan for the Ministry of Education started in 2009 and was legislated in 2012. The Ministry of Education should ideally develop an early childhood strategic plan every 5 years. The first 5-year strategic plan was released in 2013 (Prime Minister's Secretariat 2013).

According to the policy research on establishing 5-year plan (Y. Kim et al. 2013), the first area, expanding early childhood education opportunities, is to ensure accessibility to ECEC for children. The second area, efficiency in kindergarten management, ensures accountability during the implementation of financial support and laws which will be established within 5 years. The third area, reinforcing the curriculum, provides quality assurance for the curricula. The fourth area, strengthening professionalism and self-esteem in teachers, serves to enhance teachers' competency. Finally, the fifth area, strengthening support systems in early childhood education, intends to sustain the whole ECEC system in Korea.

Social Justice in ECEC in Korea

Lack of Integrated Infrastructure

The lack of integrated infrastructure has been responsible for the decreased quality of ECEC services in Korea. The separation of the ECEC system meant that two different regulations and also two different financial and administrative supports were developed for each sector. These differences in regulations have led some private childcare providers to enter childcare sectors where restrictions are rather weak, which caused that, during the last 10 years, about half of private kindergartens closed and reopened as private childcare centers (Yoon et al. 2013).

In terms of research, evaluations, information, and professional groups, the separation of ECEC deepened structural problems, worsened the gap between the two sectors, and hindered competitiveness. According to the research team on developing the integration model for ECEC in Korea (Yoon et al. 2013), separating the infrastructure for information in kindergarten and childcare centers made it more difficult for parents to find appropriate services for their children. The separation of the ECEC system worsened existing structural problems, and policymakers were ineffective in addressing market problems. As a result, service quality, which is the most important factor for children's well-being, failed to improve (Yoon et al. 2013).

Quality Gaps Within the ECEC Sector

Because of different regulations caused by the split systems of ECEC in Korea, overall qualities of kindergartens are higher than those of childcare centers in terms of quality of education programs, educational environment, teachers' quality, and their working conditions (Park and Park 2015; Yoon et al. 2013). While such quality gaps exist between kindergarten and childcare, gaps within each sector have led to differences in service quality. This has therefore become a social justice issue.

Meanwhile, political leaders have been rapidly increasing financial aid for childcare. They keep supporting low-quality facilities because they must meet the demand for childcare services. In 2005, there were 28,367 childcare centers, and by 2014, there were 43,742 childcare centers. The number of home-based childcare centers in particular more than doubled (Ministry of Health and Welfare 2005, 2014). This massive influx of providers reflects what they expect in return from growing government financial support. A large number of providers entered into the market and expected significant profit. With this increased financial support, these providers have become a powerful group of stakeholders who resist the reinforcement of quality management. The profit-driven nature of private childcare centers is reflected in the premium or key money that is paid at the time of the real estate transaction for selling, which in turn reflects their expectations for financial returns. According to a 2012 survey of the childcare industry in Korea (Yoon et al. 2013),

only 48.9% of respondents reported that they paid no premium for occupancy. The sum of the collected fees ranged from 1.5 million USD in Seoul to as much as 3 million USD in other cities. For childcare providers to be profitable, they need to keep management costs—such as teachers' salaries or the quality of meals—lower than the amount provided through government support. As a result, many childcare centers hire teachers at a low cost or provide poor meals to the children, which negatively impacts the children.

Gaps in Teacher Quality

Teachers' education levels and working conditions are both factors that determine the quality of service provided to children. As Table 5.13 shows, a large differential appears in teacher education depending on the type of facility. Only 6% of national/public childcare center teachers have high school degrees, while 20.1% of private childcare center teachers and 29.8% of home-based childcare teachers have high school degrees. Additionally, 35.5% of national/public childcare center teachers hold bachelor degrees or higher, whereas less than 19% of teachers in private childcare centers and home-based childcare centers hold bachelor degrees. Regarding the gap between kindergarten teachers' education levels, 85.3% of national/public kindergarten teachers have completed 4 or more years of university, whereas 39.4% of private kindergarten teachers have done so.

The average wage per month for childcare is approximately 1550 USD for center teachers and 2540 USD for kindergarten teachers (Yoon et al. 2013). The basic salary for public kindergarten teachers is 120 USD higher than public childcare center teachers' salaries and 230 USD higher than private kindergarten teachers' salaries. Gaps in the average wage of childcare center teachers may be even wider, depending on the type of facility (Park and Park 2015). The average wage for teachers is about 1890 USD at employer-supported centers, 1880 USD at public childcare centers, and 1380 USD at home-based childcare centers. The average wage for kindergarten teachers is approximately 3850 USD for public kindergarten teachers and

Table 5.13 Education level of childcare center teacher and kindergarten teacher by type of facility

	Type of facility	High school graduate (%)	Less than university graduate level (%)	University graduate level or more (%)
Child care center teacher	National/public	6.0	58.7	35.3
	Private	20.1	61.0	18.9
	Child care home	29.8	51.4	18.7
Kindergarten teacher	National/public	0.07	14.6	85.3
	Private	0.03	60.5	39.4

Resource: Ministry of Health and Welfare and Korea Institute of Child Care and Education. (2012). Investigate on childcare in Korea

2140 USD for private kindergarten teachers (Yoon et al. 2013). That amounts to a 1610 USD difference between the two salaries, which seems extreme.

However, these salaries reflect the education levels and teaching experience of these teachers as well. The average number of years of teaching experience for national/public kindergarten teachers is 18 years, whereas private kindergarten teachers only have an average of 8 years of experience, and childcare workers only have an average of 4 years of experience (Kim, Chang, Cho 2013; Park and Park 2015).

Discussion: What Is Next?

As presented earlier, ECEC has two separate histories and systems for kindergartens and childcare centers in Korea. After 2000, the Korean government's financial support increased, parents' childcare needs for children of all ages increased, and the accessibility of ECEC also increased. The government guaranteed 12 h of free childcare per day in childcare centers, regardless of the employment status of mothers. The government also provides parents with vouchers for childcare for under 2-year-olds as well, leading Korea to have the highest educational enrolment rates for 2-year-olds in the world. In 2012, after the Nuri system was implemented, the Korean government adopted a free education system. They provided the same amount of financial support for all children aged 3–5 who were enrolled in kindergartens or childcare centers. However, parents with children in private kindergartens are still burdened by high tuition fees because the government fund does not cover all tuition fees and no fee regulations exist for private kindergartens. Moreover, it is difficult to control the quality of kindergartens and childcare centers.

There are gaps in teacher quality and education quality between education sector and childcare sector and within each sector as well. Furthermore, kindergartens and childcare centers receive the same amount of financial assistance regardless of the quality level, as assessed through the KES or the CCAS.

The Korean government has identified these issues and has started to discuss integrating ECEC in Korea. Since the OECD (2006) highly recommended integrating the early childhood education and care and have ECEC under the Ministry of Education's jurisdiction, most OECD countries have done so for children aged 3–5, with the exception of Korea and Japan in the Asia-Pacific region. After Park Geun-hye replaced Lee Myung-bak as president of Korea in 2012, the government began to develop policies to integrate these two systems. In 2013, a committee was organized to prepare the integration of ECEC and to create a plan for integration (Yoon et al. 2013). Based on that plan, the Korean government has worked on integrating ECEC and expects to be done in 2016 (Office for Government Policy Coordination, Prime Minister's Secretariat 2013, 05, 21). As of 2015, integration in curricula for children aged 3–5, information disclosure system, and the card vouchers for kindergartens and childcare centers were completed (Park 2015). A pilot project is currently running to integrate monitoring systems for kindergarten and childcare centers. Policy studies were completed for integration of age range for enrolment

and the operating hours of kindergartens and childcare centers, and also integration in teacher education system was also completed. Finally, policy studies for integrating related laws are yet to be completed. For example, the institute type will be modified to integrate the different forms of preschool available for children aged 3–5. These institutes will share a common curriculum and have equal educational financing to ensure that they provide high-quality education to all children. Also, the jurisdiction for both kindergartens and childcare centers will be integrated as well. Teachers' qualifications will also be made standard so that all kindergarten teachers will hold bachelor degrees, equal as elementary school teachers in Korea. By 2017, law that covers all aspects of integrating ECEC will be passed and then implemented. When this happens, a new era of ECEC will begin in Korea.

Appendix

List of Acronyms

CCAS	Childcare Center Accreditation System
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
GDP	Gross domestic product
KES	Kindergarten evaluation system
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOI	Ministry of the Interior
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
USD	United States dollar

References

- Child care center-kindergarten the integration of information disclosure. Retrieved from <http://www.childinfo.go.kr/info/info.jsp/>. 2 Sept, 2015.
- Cho, B., Kang, H., Kim, Y., & Han, Y. (2013). History and law of child-care in Korea. *Korean Journal of Childcare and Education*, 9(5), 381–405.
- Kim, Y., Park, H., Yang, O., Lee, K., Lee, Y., Lee, W., Lee, Y., Jang, Y., Jung, M., & Joo, Y. (1995). *Modern history of Korea early childhood education*. Seoul: YangSeowon.
- Kim, E., Chang, H., & Cho, H. (2013). *An analysis on welfare of teachers for early childhood education and care and subsequent suggestions*. Seoul: Korea Institute of Child Care and Education.
- Kim, Y., Lee, K., Shin, E., Moon, M., Park, E., Chang, M., Lee, H., Cho, B., Woo, M., Moon, M., Cho, H., Choi, Y., Kim, J., Kim, E., & Seo, H. (2013). *Policy research on establishing five-year plan for development of early childhood education*. Seoul: Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, Gwangju, Korea: Gwanju Metropolitan Office of Education.
- Korean Educational Development Institute. (2005–2014). *Educational statistics*. Seoul: Korean Educational Development Institute.

- Ministry of Education & Gwang-ju Metropolitan Early Childhood Education and Development Institute. (2014). *A manual of kindergarten evaluation system: The 3rd period*. Seoul: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Gender Equality & Family. (2005–2007). *Childcare statistics*. Seoul: Ministry of Gender Equality & Family.
- Ministry of Health and Welfare. (2008–2014). *Childcare statistics*. Seoul: Ministry of Health and Welfare.
- Ministry of Health and Welfare, & Korea Institute of Child Care and Education. (2012). *Investigate on childcare in Korea*. Seoul: Ministry of Health and Welfare, Korea Institute of Child Care and Education.
- OECD. (2006). *Starting strong II: Early childhood education and care*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- OECD. (2012). *Starting strong III: A quality toolbox for early childhood education and care*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Office for Government Policy Coordination, & Prime Minister's Secretariat. (2013). *Promises to complete integration of early childhood education during the President's five-year term, actively accepting parents' opinions*. Sejong: Office for Government Policy Coordination, Prime Minister's Secretariat.
- Office for Government Policy Coordination, & Prime Minister's Secretariat. (2014). *Find information of kindergartens and child care centers nearby your home at one website: Integrated information disclosure system*. Sejong: Opening Office for Government Policy Coordination, Prime Minister's Secretariat.
- Official website of Korea Childcare Promotion Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.kcpi.or.kr/>. 14 Nov, 2015.
- Official website of the Republic of Korea. Retrieved from <http://www.korea.net/index.jsp>. 15 Aug, 2015.
- Park, S. (2015). *An analysis on policy networks of early childhood education from 1993 to 2013. Unpublished doctoral dissertation*. Seoul: Ewha Womans University.
- Park, E., & Park, S. (2015). Issues and tasks for early childhood education and care workforce in Korea. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education*, 9(2), 23–50.
- Park, E., & Shin, E. (2013). Significance and issues of NURI system. In J. Seo & I. Jung (Eds.), *Korea education policy issues and solutions* (pp. 40–84). Seoul: Educational Science.
- Park, K., Hwang, O., & Moon, H. (2013). Childcare policies in Korea. *Korean Journal of Childcare and Education*, 9(5), 513–548.
- Seo, J., Jeong, I., et al. (2013). *Korea education policy issues and solutions*. Seoul: Educational Science.
- Statistics Korea. (2013). *Statistics of fertility rate in Korea*. Retrieved from http://www.index.go.kr/potal/main/EachDtlPageDetail.do?idx_cd=1428
- Suh, M., & Lee, H. (2014). *The increase in the budget of and its effect to early childhood education and care: 2004–2014(research report 2014–2012)*. Seoul: Korea Institute of Child Care and Education.
- Yoon, H., Kim, I., Kwon, H., Lee, J., Suh, M., Park, E., & Woo, S. (2013). *A study on development of the integration model for early childhood education and care*. Sejong: Prime Minister's Secretariat, Korean Development Institute.
- Yun, H., Kim, I., & Kwon, H. (2014). *Nine observations on Korean child care support and their policy implications. KDI focus*. Sejong City: Korea Development Institute.

Chapter 6

A Postcolonial Analysis of the Free Kindergarten Education Policy in Macau

Michelle Marie Lau

Abstract The first region in China to offer complete free kindergarten, primary and secondary education to its residents, the evolution of policy deliberation of the Macau Special Administrative Region, serves as an unprecedented model for other cities in the Greater China region. Since the Portuguese colonial era, a laissez-faire fashion featuring limited state intervention has been dominating the education landscape of Macau. Realising education is the key to improve the quality of the people and ultimately the economic future of the territory, the Macau government finally instigated measures in 2007 to regain the control of schools and extended the free education policy to 15 years. Using the 3A2S theoretical framework, this chapter analyses Macau's free kindergarten education policy with reference to the dimensions of accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability and social justice. This chapter concludes that in light of the non-discriminatory treatment that Macau residents enjoyed, Macau's free education kindergarten policy fully achieved accessibility, affordability and social justice, but only average accountability was achieved given the absence of a quality review mechanism. Sustainability was somewhat doubtful taking into consideration Macau's strong reliance on its casino and gaming industries but, at the same time, the government's announcement of its commitment to develop the region's non-tertiary education with its 10-year plan. More efficacious, continuous and practical efforts would be needed to fortify the accountability and sustainability of Macau's 15-year free education policy in the long run.

List of Acronyms

3A2S	Accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability and social justice
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DSEC	Statistics and Census Service
DSEJ	Education and Youth Affairs Bureau

M.M. Lau (✉)

Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong
e-mail: michmarie@gmail.com

GCS	Government Information Bureau
GDP	Gross domestic product
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
MOI	Medium of instruction
MOP	Macau Pataca
MSAR	Macau Special Administrative Region
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SEN	Special educational needs
USD	US dollars

Introduction

Despite the 400 years of Portuguese sovereignty and the signing of the treaty on 1 December, 1887, acknowledging the dominance of Portuguese influence in the legislative system (Afonso and Pereira 1987), Macau has always held a political, administrative, economic and financial statute of its own with very little Portuguese domination, and it was essentially against this political backdrop that the local education system was born (Rosa 1989).

Education serves different functions in promoting both individual and societal development and understanding. Politically, education is seen as a public entity of which the government holds the primary responsibility for offering guidance and direction for its development. Morally, education is regarded as a way to allow citizens to appreciate the nation's ideals and to improve themselves as a person. And ultimately, on a societal level, a well-educated population serves to justify the government's long-time investment and support (Kraft and Furlong 2012). Reasons for the provision of public education decades ago are still applicable to the present world where policymakers address educational reforms (Kraft and Furlong 2012). Education, however, can essentially be argued as a *de facto* market commodity given the fact that it is costly and not universally inclusive in practice (Tooley 1996). In any case, when the market or the society fails to resolve publicly unacceptable conditions, government action, in the form of public policies and regulations, and sometimes administrative inaction, is necessary (Kraft and Furlong 2012). Consumerism disrupts the policy of "public monopoly education" (Ball 1994), and marketisation, in education, claims that operative and efficient "delivery" of education can in fact be ensured by market forces (Grace 1994). The case of the education landscape in Macau, in reality, as governed by the non-interventionist *laissez-faire* market attitude of the Macau government, has failed to produce high-quality local education since it regards education as neither a complete public good nor an absolute private service (Tang and Morrision 1998).

This chapter will briefly describe the circumstance surrounding the education system of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR), and then, by adopting a postcolonial analytical perspective, the various aspects of the free kindergarten

education policy in Macau will be closely examined with the adoption of Li and Fong's (2014) 3A2S theoretical framework: (i) accessibility, every child has unrestricted access to a kindergarten in their neighbourhood; (ii) affordability, families can easily afford the fees of the kindergarten of their choice where exemptions are offered to needy families; (iii) accountability, the extra fiscal input generated by the free kindergarten education policy from all public and private kindergartens should be accountable for the improvement of education quality; (iv) sustainability, the government is financially able to continually support and sustain the free kindergarten education policy; and social justice, all children have equal access to kindergarten education and are treated in a fair way irrespective of their age, race, gender, religion, socio-economic status, physiological characteristics, disability or whatsoever.

A Brief Account of the Local Education System

Macau is very small in terms of size and population. At a size of 30.3 km² with an estimated population of 640,700 (DSEC 2015), Macau is one of the world's smallest territories and among the most densely populated cities in the world (Morrison 2006). Macau is a growing city in terms of population size and financial status. The population has been increasing at a staggering speed from just 280,000 in 1980, although the census was believed to have omitted the illegal immigrant population, to 426,000 in 1987, to 640,700 in 2015 (DSEC 2015). The biggest ethnic group in Macau is Chinese which accounts for 92.3% of the total population, while Portuguese accounts for only 0.6%, and the remaining proportion, which includes people from places such as the Philippines, Indonesia and Americas, accounts for 6% (DSEC 2011). Macau's smallness contributed to the phenomenon which Colin Brock has coined – the “ceiling of educational provision” in small states, where features such as limited resources and manpower, curriculum models, textbooks, etc. dominate the education system (Bray 1992). This could be the reason why Macau never has a single universal education system and have to import educational models.

Similar to Hong Kong, Macau's neighbour which was once a British colony, Macau has a long tradition of church-provided schooling. Schooling in Macau is mostly provided for by the Catholic and Christian churches while the rest by non-religious organisations such as private or commercial enterprises, non-government organisations and entrepreneurs.

Kindergartens are often affiliated with primary and/or secondary schools. The Portuguese colonial government was prominent for its non-interventionist attitude towards the development of the colony's education sector which is characterised by its lack of any universal or uniform integrated system, even up till the present day (Bray 1992). Private schools in Macau received little or virtually no financial support from the government, were under very minimal laws or regulations and were accountable for their own expenses and operation, while the official state schools

are well taken care of by the government (Tang and Morrisson 1998). The Macau government's limited state intervention or interference to school administration and operation (Chou 2012) is believed to have led to the low standards and quality of education within the territory. The situation, however, has altered slightly when the government of the second special administrative region of China started to take more active initiatives in the education sector and decided to offer 15 years of free education to its residents in 2007.

Advantages of the Non-interventionist Approach

The Basic Law of Macau Chapter VI Article 121 reads, “the Government of the Macau Special Administrative Region shall, on its own, formulate policies on education, including policies regarding the educational system and its administration, the language of instruction, the allocation of funds, the examination system, the recognition of educational qualifications and the system of academic awards so as to promote educational development. The Government of the Macau Special Administrative Region shall, in accordance with law, gradually institute a compulsory education system. Community organizations and individuals may, in accordance with law, run educational undertakings of various kinds. (The Eighth National People's Congress 1993)

While this officially recognised and justified “hands-off” approach has contributed to the formation of an education system that is far from being unified, coordinated and sanctioned, its lack of control has nonetheless granted a lot of freedom to schools to adopt the type of curriculum and assessment standards that suit their needs and interests (Bray 1992).

Schools adopt educational models and examination systems imported from Portugal, Hong Kong, Taiwan and China, depending on their political stance, vision or mission, to cater for the local student population which could be from a Chinese, Portuguese, Macanese or any other ethnic background. Different schools use different curriculum materials to teach students different sets of knowledge and skills depending on their source of funding (Lau et al. 2014; Rosa 1989). Educational structure teaches a curriculum catered to their values and principles – some conform to a Portuguese-oriented curriculum, while others lean towards an international framework (Rosa, 1989). Subject to very few government regulations, schools choose their own medium of teaching, devise their own curricula and employ teaching staff based on their own conditions of service. While diversity in education could be preserved, the side effect causes a difference in learning opportunities (Bray 1992). The fact that Macau's education system is built on several overseas systems of education, rather than a single coherent one, has caused the education structure to be so thinly connected to Macau's cultural and social reality (Bray 1992; Rosa, 1989).

All in all, the poly-centredness of the education system is characterised by its (i) decentralised and unstandardised education system; (ii) minimal state intervention; (iii) external dependence on imported curriculum models from Hong Kong, Portugal, Taiwan, and China; (iv) inadequate evidence-based quality assurance sys-

tem; and (vi) lack of responsiveness to and information for parents (Bray and Hui 1989; Morrision and Tang 2002; Tang and Morrision 1998).

Schooling in Macau in the Postcolonial Era

The Macau government realised that education is the key to improving the quality of the population and enhancing the city's long-term regional and global competitiveness. The first official law on education, *Macau Education System Bill*, was issued by the Macau government in 1991 to outline long-term objectives of education which included catering for students' different educational needs and the extent of government involvement in education (Rosario 2012). Then in 1995, the former Portuguese government started the 10-year free education scheme. In recent years, the Macau government has continued to promote education in the territory by implementing administration directions of "Improving Macau through education" and "Strengthening Macau with talents". Following the declaration of the *Fundamental Law of Non-tertiary Education* in 2006 (GCS 2014), permanent Macau residents have been granted free universal education across all levels of education – kindergarten, primary, secondary, special, and vocational technical education. Free formal education is provided for Macau citizens at public schools and private schools which are part of the free education system (DSEJ 2014). Private schools in Macau are classified into two groups: those following the local curriculum and those which do not. Non-profit-making schools which adopt the local curriculum are eligible to apply to join the free education network (DSEJ 2013c). While history has documented Macau as a follower of other regions' footsteps in education and policy development, in the context of free mandatory education and provision of financial assistance to stakeholders of the education sector, Macau has taken the lead to be the first region in the Greater China region to implement a 15-year free education system – 3 years of kindergarten education, 6 years of primary education, 3 years of junior secondary education, 3 years of senior secondary education or vocational technical education or an altogether 15 years of special education.

Accessibility of Macau's Free Education Policy

Accessibility is defined as every child having unrestricted access to a kindergarten in their neighbourhood (Li and Fong 2014). Theoretically speaking, the more kindergartens there are, the more accessible children are to them. With a land area of 30.3 km² and a total number of 59 kindergartens, there is mathematically one kindergarten in every 2 km², and given the small area of Macau, this figure already implies a good sense of coverage.

In the 2014–2015 school year, 381 students (2.62%) were enrolled at public kindergartens while 14,171 students (97.38%) enrolled at private kindergartens, of which 80.82% were enrolled at private within-network kindergartens (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Number of kindergartens and students across the public and private kindergarten education sector

School year	Total KG population	Total KG number	Public		Private within-network		Private out-of-network	
			Students	KGs	Students	KGs	Students	KGs
2005–2006	10,041	55	461	6	7964	41	1616	8
2006–2007	9301	58	354	7	7439	43	1508	8
2007–2008	9065	52	316	6	6997	39	1752	7
2008–2009	9127	56	261	7	7046	41	1820	8
2009–2010	9776	56	262	7	7484	41	2030	8
2010–2011	10,804	54	282	7	8319	39	2203	8
2011–2012	11,787	57	317	7	9174	42	2296	8
2012–2013	12,669	56	340	7	9939	41	2395	8
2013–2014	13,395	56	339	6	10,553	42	2503	8
2014–2015	14,552	57	381	6	11,453	42	2718	8

In the same school year, there were 59 kindergartens in Macau, of which six were public kindergartens, 45 were private kindergartens within the free education system, and the remaining eight private kindergartens were not part of the free education system (DSEJ 2015a). In the following 2015–2016 school year, the total number of kindergartens rose to 61, of which seven were public, 46 were private within network, while the remaining eight were private out of network (DSEJ 2016).

Private kindergartens have always occupied the biggest share of the kindergarten population market, partly due to the non-interventionist *laissez-faire* approach of the colonial government and partly because of the limited number of public kindergartens which only account for 10% of the entire kindergarten education sector. However, the majority of the private kindergartens have joined the free education system where students are exempted from tuition fees and related school charges. Lau et al. (2014) interviewed stakeholders of Macau's private kindergartens and found out that although joining the system will infer losing certain degree of school autonomy and operational freedom, it helps sustain survival of kindergartens especially those which had difficulty with student enrolment.

Parents would also be more than happy to send their children to private within-network kindergartens to enjoy free education and quality early education and care service.

With the information obtained from the official website of the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ), Table 6.2 shows the number of school sections which use Chinese, Portuguese and English as their medium of instruction (MOI). Chinese is by far the most commonly used MOI, followed by English, while Portuguese is the least used. Chinese forms the biggest proportion (92.4%) in Macau's population, next is the Macanese ethnic group consisting of people of Portuguese ancestry (0.7%), and Portuguese has a proportion figure of 0.6%. Since the Chinese ethnic group forms the bulk of the city's population and English holds a global status as a world language, even though the Portuguese language has mostly remained influen-

Table 6.2 School statistical data in the 2014–2015 school year

Number of schools	Number of school sections	Formal education	Public schools	Within-network private schools	Out-of-network private schools	Chinese as the MOI	Portuguese as the MOI	English as the MOI
77	120	109	16	83	21	101	5	14

Note. MOI=medium of instruction

tial on the administrative and governmental levels and the Portuguese colonial government did attempt to enforce the learning of Portuguese in its sunset years, e.g. the attempt to make Portuguese a mandatory subject in 1994 (Bray and Koo 2004), the MSAR government sees very little need in maintaining a high proportion of schools which use the colonial language as the main MOI, and Portuguese may be better off serving as an extracurricular learning subject just like how it was in the 1980s (Rosa 1989).

Any responsible government should take the initiative to guard for children's accessibility to quality education. Accessibility to public schools in Macau is eligible as long as students are permanent residents of Macau. Non-Macau residents at private schools may be subject to different fees depending on the respective school, and only Macau residents are eligible to receive the annual educational subsidies offered by the government. Taking into account the number of schools and school places available for the local population, accessibility of Macau's free education system is said to be satisfactory.

Affordability of Macau's Free Education Policy

Affordability is defined as families being able to afford the fees of the kindergarten of their choice with ease and fee exemptions are offered to needy families wherever necessary (Li and Fong 2014). The government of Macau has been striving hard to provide free kindergarten education all the way to senior secondary education to as many of its residents as possible. In the 2014–2015 school year, there were a total of 77 schools in Macau – 10 public schools and 67 private schools. While all public schools provided formal education to the public, only 64 out of the 67 private schools did, accounting for 74 schools in total with formal education provision. Out of these 74 schools (10 public and 64 private), Macau students had the choice of receiving free education from 64 schools which were part of the free education system, while managing their educational expenses with the tuition subsidy and textbooks and stationery allowance from the government if enrolled at the remaining ten schools not part of the free education system (DSEJ 2015d).

Since the launch of the 15-year free education policy in the 2007–2008 school year, according to the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ), Macau residents who are enrolled in government-operated public schools and private schools which have joined the free education system can enjoy free education subsidy which

includes coverage of tuition fee and additional services related to students' enrolment, schooling and the issuing of certificates (DSEJ 2013b). Although kindergarteners enrolled in schools outside the free education system were required to pay for their tuition fee and other school-related expenses, in the 2015–2016 school year, they received an annual tuition subsidy of MOP 17,800 (around USD 2217.94) and a textbooks and stationery allowance worth MOP 2100 (around USD 261.67) from the government (DSEJ 2015e). Compared to the 2009–2010 school year, the rates of increase for tuition subsidy and textbooks and stationery allowance for kindergarten children attending out-of-network schools were 78% and 40%, respectively.

Parents, however, have the freedom to decide if they would opt for optional services provided by the school or other service providers (DSEJ 2014a). The rate of increase for per class free education subsidy from 2009 to 2015 was 72.57%. The amount of free education subsidy that kindergartens received for every class that they operated in the 2015–2016 school year was MOP 880,100 (around USD 109,663.63), which accounted for a 72.57% increase from MOP 510,000 (around USD 63,547.84) in 2009. Table 6.3 illustrates the amounts of tuition subsidy and textbooks and stationery allowance received by parents, as well as the free education subsidy which schools receive for every class that they operated, from the government from 2009 to 2015.

To find out the various tuition fees and service charges which schools imposed on parents, the author attempted to search through the official records published on the website of the DSEJ; however, only nine out of the 56 registered kindergartens had their data publicised for the 2014–2015 school year. It is evident that schools could enjoy a great deal of restriction-free flexibility and freedom with regard to the disclosure of school information that the Macau government still permits schools. Out of those nine kindergartens, only one was part of the free education system, while eight were out of the free education system, of which two were of an international educational nature. Table 6.4 illustrates the average annual tuition charges across K1 to K3 of the six out-of-system schools and those of the two international schools.

Table 6.3 Free education subsidies and textbook and stationery allowances for kindergartens and children (in MOP) from 2009 to 2015

Year	Tuition subsidy	Textbooks and stationery allowance	Subsidy for KGs (per class)
2009–2010	10,000	1,500	510,000
2010–2011	11,000	1,500	540,000
2011–2012	12,000	1,500	570,000
2012–2013	14,000	1,500	605,000
2013–2014	15,800	2,000	755,000
2014–2015	16,700	2,000	810,000
2015–2016	17,800	2,100	880,100

Table 6.4 School charges of tuition and miscellaneous services imposed by kindergartens (in MOP) in the 2014–2015 school year

School Name of school	Free education network	K1	K2	K3	M
1 Pui Ching Middle School	out	35,120	35,120	35,120	35,120
2 Colegio Perpetuo Socorro Chan Sui Ki – (Branch)	out	25,000	23,840	24,040	24,293
3 St. Anthony’s English Kindergarten	out	35,800	35,800	35,800	35,800
4 Colegio Diocesano de Sao Jose (1)	out	25,500	25,500	25,500	25,500
5 Colegio Diocesano de Sao Jose (5) (Chinese Division)	out	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
6 Jardim de Infancia “D. Jose da Costa Nunes”	out	25,900	25,900	25,900	25,900
7 The International School Macao	out	52,600	52,600	52,600	52,600
8 School of the Nation	out	60,050	60,050	60,050	60,050
Mean 1 (school 1–6)					28,602
Mean 2 (schools 7 and 8 only)					56,325
Difference between mean 1 and mean 2					27,723
After subsidy of mean 1 (school 1–6)					12,802
After subsidy of mean 2 (schools 7 and 8 only)					40,525

Regardless of the last two international schools, the average annual tuition fee of the six out-of-system schools across K1 to K3 ranged from MOP 24,293 (around USD 3,030.47) to MOP 35,800 (around USD 4,465.93), with a difference of MOP 11,507 (around USD 1,435.46) in the 2014–2015 school year. The mean annual tuition fee was MOP 28,602 (around USD 3,568), and after subsidy, parents would still have an outstanding balance of MOP 12,802 (around USD 1,597) a year, i.e. an approximate additional household expenditure of MOP 1066.85 (around USD 133.09) per month. According to the Household Budget Survey 2012/2013 conducted by the Documentation and Information Centre of the Statistics and Census Service (DESC), the average monthly employment earning of a Macau household was MOP 41,423 (around USD 5,167.8) (DSEC 2014). Since the most up-to-date average monthly household income was not available at the time of writing, using the 2012/2013 figure as a reference, families would still need an additional 3.27 % of their household income on childcare every month in 2014. However, taking into account how much parents in Macau’s neighbouring cities, such as Hong Kong and Shenzhen, would normally spend on childcare and education monthly, the average monthly education fee was still deemed acceptable.

The two international schools had annual charges higher than the other kindergartens, charging parents an average annual fee of MOP 56,325 (around USD 7,018.3) across the three kindergarten school grades, in other words, resulting in a

Table 6.5 Income of households and changes by income quintile

	2007–2008		2012–2013		Mean income change in real term
	Average income	Structure	Average income	Structure	
	(MOP)	(%)	(MOP)	(%)	
Lowest 20 %	8115	5.3	11,509	5.6	41.8
Second 20 %	17,321	11.2	24,436	11.8	41.1
Middle 20 %	25,845	16.7	36,742	17.7	42.2
Fourth 20 %	36,840	23.9	51,031	24.6	38.5
Highest 20 %	66,333	42.9	83,397	40.3	25.7

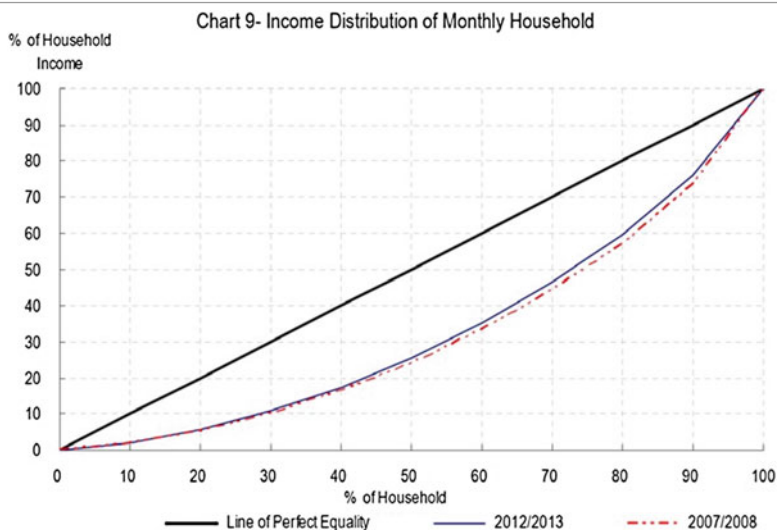
difference of MOP 27,723 (around USD 3,458.35) between the mean annual tuition fee of the other six kindergartens. The deduction of the tuition subsidy would result in a mean annual tuition fee of MOP 40,525 (around USD 5,055.36) across the three kindergarten school grades. Parents would need to settle MOP 3,377.08 (around USD 421.28) on average every month for their child's kindergarten tuition, across a calendar year and using the 2012/2013 average household income as a reference figure, that would account for an additional 8.15 % of monthly household expenditure.

With reference to the Household Budget Survey 2012/2013 (DSEC 2014) and as shown in Table 6.5, there was a 0.3 % increase in the monthly income of households in the lowest-income quintile (accounting for 5.6 % of the income of all households) over the previous 5 years with an average monthly income of MOP 11,509 (around USD 1,435.71). A 2.6 % decrease was recorded, however, in the monthly income of the highest 20 % income quintile (which accounts for 40.3 % of the income of all households) where the average monthly income was MOP 83,397 (around USD 10,403.5) (DSEC 2014).

The rise in the percentage income share contributed by the lowest to middle 20 % income households also implies a narrower disparity of household income over the 5-year period between the 2007–2008 financial year and the 2012–2013 financial year. This fact about a smaller income gap is further strengthened with the fact that a 41.8 % change in the mean income of the lowest-income households was recorded versus a mere 25.7 % for the highest-income households. The middle and fourth quintiles contributed the most of the share of income (42.3 %). Taking into account a narrower income gap between the high- and low-earning groups and a rising middle-class population, the tuition fees and school charges become more affordable to a wider population.

The Gini coefficient gives a general picture of the distribution of nation's citizens' income and is commonly used as a reference for inequality (Jasso 1979). After deduction of government subsidies and welfare, the Gini coefficient for 2012–2013 was 0.38, accounting for a decrease of 0.02 compared with that in the 2007–2008 financial year, indicating the success of such benefits in the reduction of income disparity of households. As seen in Table 6.6, the fact that the household income curve in 2012–2013 has moved towards the Lorenz's curve, also known as the line of perfect equality, over the past five financial years, demonstrates that an increase

Table 6.6 The Lorenz curve and the monthly household income curves of the 2007–2008 and the 2012–2013 financial years



Adapted from the *Household Budget Survey 2012/2013* (DSEC 2014)

of income share of the same proportion of households in relation to the income of all households suggests a more evenly distribution of income and that the subsidies and welfare from the government had been effective in the reduction of household income disparity (DSEC 2014).

Consumer Price Index (CPI) indicates the changes in the prices of consumer services and goods purchased by households in a region (Census and Statistics Department 2011).

While a drop in the Composite CPI of Macau was recorded in the subsequent 5 years after 1999, the CPI had been rising since 2004 at a rather steady pace, with a notable difference in 2009 following the financial tsunami in 2008. The Composite CPI for education was always higher than that of the other expense categories and was decreasing from 119.25 in 2007 to 98.51 in 2014 (see Table 6.7), indicating the effectiveness of the government's free education policy in controlling the rise of inflation in the privately enterprised education market. The Composite CPI for education in 2015, however, rose to 103.33 reflecting a 4.89% increase compared to the previous financial year.

Although parents could save more by sending their children to public kindergartens, Lau et al. (2014) found that parents, unless financially incapable, would avoid this option based on the belief that the student population at public kindergartens was dominated by ethnic minority children and those deemed as unsuitable to attend mainstream kindergartens due to such reasons as special educational needs and other forms of disabilities. Although additional service charges might be imposed, private

Table 6.7 Overall composite consumer price index of various major expenses and their same period variances

Composite consumer price index										
Year	Overall index		Education		Housing and fuels		Household goods and furnishings		Food and non-alcoholic beverages	
	Point	Same period variance	Point	Same period variance	Point	Same period variance	Point	Same period variance	Point	Same Period Variance
1998	68.06	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	54.96	/
1999	65.88	-3.2	/	/	/	/	/	/	52.55	-4.4
2000	64.82	-1.61	/	/	/	/	/	/	51.76	-1.49
2001	63.53	-1.99	100.36	/	55.28	/	77.16	/	51.01	-1.45
2002	61.86	-2.64	100.42	0.06	53.54	-3.14	74.31	-3.69	49.93	-2.12
2003	60.89	-1.56	100.96	0.54	52.89	-1.21	72.31	-2.69	49.3	-1.26
2004	61.49	0.98	102.98	2	52.72	-0.33	73.19	1.22	50.41	2.24
2005	64.19	4.4	108.17	5.03	57.15	8.4	73.92	1.01	52.41	3.99
2006	67.5	5.15	116.98	8.15	63.87	11.75	74.89	1.31	54.36	3.71
2007	71.26	5.57	119.25	1.94	69.96	9.55	76.29	1.87	58.81	8.19
2008	77.39	8.61	115.64	-3.03	75.66	8.15	78.55	2.96	68.94	17.22
2009	78.3	1.17	103.46	-10.53	74.71	-1.26	80.28	2.2	72.75	5.53
2010	80.5	2.81	95.94	-7.27	75.02	0.42	81.46	1.47	76.19	4.73
2011	85.17	5.81	97.4	1.52	77.6	3.43	85.16	4.53	82.39	8.14
2012	90.37	6.11	97.63	0.24	82.85	6.76	91	6.86	89.41	8.52
2013	95.35	5.51	96.26	-1.40	91.09	9.95	96	5.49	95.34	6.63
2014	101.11	6.04	98.51	2.34	101.95	11.92	100.53	4.72	101.16	6.10
2015	105.72	4.56	103.33	4.89	110.17	8.06	105.56	5.00	106.09	4.87

kindergartens remained parent's first choice (Lau et al. 2014). Word of mouth is another aspect commonly exists in small states where "common knowledge" of successful and less successful schools is extensive and dominates (Bray and Hui 1989). Given Macau's small scale and its closely networked circumstance, schools' reputation and quality are commonly believed to be dependent upon the oral communication of stereotypical beliefs rather than objective information sources.

Taking into account the government subsidies in lessening families' burden in their childcare expenses, the relatively little additional money parents need to settle, the drop in CPI, the narrower income gap between the high- and low-income groups and the rising proportion of the middle class within Macau's social economic structure, affordability of Macau's free education policy is considered satisfactory.

Accountability of Macau's Free Education Policy

Accountability is defined as the extra fiscal input of all public and private kindergartens provided by the free kindergarten education policy being accountable to the enhancement of the quality of education (Li and Fong 2014). Crucial factors which

determine the accountability of ECE include teacher qualification levels, teacher-child ratio, teacher-class ratios, continuous professional development for teaching staff and the existence of an evidence- or data-based quality assurance mechanism, which has never quite existed in the landscape of Macau's education sector.

According to the information provided by the DSEJ, all public schools with kindergarten sections offered teacher training to teachers, but not all private schools practised that, and this could be the reason why data are shown in two separate tables. Tables 6.8 and 6.9 illustrate the distribution of teachers with various qualifications in public and private schools where teacher training was or was not offered in the 2014–2015 school year (2014c). Nearly 70 % of teachers at public and private schools which offered teacher training had attained a tertiary level degree, such as a bachelor's or a master's degree; the remaining teachers were with either a secondary or a secondary technical qualification. A bachelor's degree is a level 5 according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) in developed countries developed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). An entry requirement of level 5 (normally a first university degree) of ISCED can normally be seen in many developed OECD countries, such as Australia, Japan and Sweden (OECD 2011). While Czech Republic only requires level 3 for ECEC staff and Austria and the Netherlands a level 4, practitioners in Italy are expected to have held a qualification as high as a level 6 (second stage tertiary education) (OECD 2011). For those who teach at private schools which offer no teacher training, nearly all of them have attained a master or a bachelor's degree.

While education helps improve the quality of people, the quality of the curriculum holds the essence of it. Teacher qualification and continuous professional development contribute to the quality of education as educational outcomes cannot be fully realised without the strong knowledge and expertise of well-educated and well-trained early childhood practitioners – the foremost implementer of a child's first ever “proper” education (OECD 2006). The DSEJ promulgated the by-law *Framework for Public School Teaching Staff* in 2010 by the DSEJ for the building of a robust professional teacher force. Procedures and projects for the bill on *the Framework for the Private School Teaching Staff System* have also commenced for the successful implementation of the by-law. It is obvious that the Macau government is determined to promote continuous professional development of teachers to improve the effectiveness of their teaching and the overall quality of its education (DSEJ 2014b).

Since the implementation of the 15-year free education policy, a great improvement was observed in the teacher-student ratio due to an expansion of the teacher force and the number of classes. Observing the principle of “letting Macau thrive through education”, the Macau government strives to create a favourable learning environment for students to grow and develop healthily (DSEJ 2013a). Since the school year of 2007–2008, class sizes had been vigorously reduced from 35–45 students per class to 25–35 students per class in order to foster small class teaching (DSEJ 2013b). As seen in Table 6.10, the average number of students per class drops from 38.3 in 1999 to 26.8 in 2013, while a slight increase (27.4 students per class) was recorded in the 2014–2015 school year. Meanwhile, the teacher-student ratio dropped drastically from 1:30.4 in the 1999–2000 school year to 1:15.9 in

Table 6.8 Distribution of the highest academic qualification of teachers at public and private schools with teacher training in the 2014–2015 school year

Total	Public						Private					
	Doctoral	Master	Bachelor	Higher diploma/ diploma	Secondary/technical	Doctoral	Master	Bachelor	Higher diploma/ diploma	Secondary/technical		
898	/	2	24	6	/	/	26	567	194	79		

Table 6.9 Distribution of the highest academic qualification of teachers at private schools without teacher training in the 2014–2015 school year

Total	Private				
	Doctoral	Master	Bachelor	Higher diploma/diploma	Secondary/technical
18	/	1	15	2	/

2014–2015 school year, accounting for nearly 50 % of decrease. Although the number of serving teachers dropped for 10 % from 1999 to 2006, the number started to rise again after kindergarten education was officially announced to be made free in 2006 and the figure gained a rise of 106.31 % from the 2005–2006 school year to the 2014–2015 school year. The teacher-class ratio, however, had increased slightly in the last decade from 1:1.4 to 1:1.7.

The Macau government was funding schools to upgrade their hardware equipment to improve the quality of education (Lau et al. 2014); the Financial Aid Scheme for School Computer Renewal, launched by the Education Development Fund, subsidised the upgrading of students' computers in schools in the 2010–2011 school year. In the same school year, another component of the Education Development Fund, the School Development Scheme, contributed MOP 450 million (around USD 50.5 million) to subsidise education-related projects which involved professional training of teaching staff, curriculum reform, expansion of school structures and improvement of facilities, student assessment, enhancement of parent-school cooperation, information technology education and inclusive education (DSEJ 2014b).

From the stakeholders survey and interviews conducted with kindergarten principals, serving teachers and parents, Lau et al. (2014) found that to be part of the free education system, schools must sacrifice their administrative autonomy and financial concealment, but not their curriculum autonomy, and would be made subject to quality review carried out by inspectors from the DSEJ. Teachers were also required to undergo 30 h of training every year but were compensated by an annual professional development subsidy based upon their academic qualification, years of teaching experience and participation in educational programmes (DSEJ 2011; Lau et al. 2014). Interview with parents and teachers, however, revealed that they had access to neither the performance review reports nor the school's management and financial information documents, e.g. salaries of staff and the school's expenses on rent and teaching equipment. By joining the free education system, schools which previously experienced insufficient head counts could survive as they would then have the power to attract students with exemption of tuition fees and additional service charges. The side effect, however, would be that the subsidy merely delays such schools' extinction unless long-term measures were taken to secure a reliably steady annual intake of students.

In terms of the operation of any potentially existing quality assurance mechanism, however, only a substantially little government documents can be found. To fortify the *Number 9/2006 System on Non-Higher Education Law* passed in 2006 through the continuous improvement of the curricula and education in Macau, the

Table 6.10 Figures of student number, class size and ratios of teacher-student and class-teacher from 1999 to 2015

	Students		Classes		Teachers		Students per class		Teacher:student ratio		Teacher:class ratio	
	Number	Growth rate (%)	Number	Growth rate (%)	Number	Growth rate (%)	Number	Growth rate (%)	Number	Growth rate (%)	Number	Growth rate (%)
1999-2000	16,162	/	422	/	531	/	38.3	/	30.4	/	1.3	/
2000-2001	14,847	-8.1%	398	-5.70%	494	-7%	37.3	-2.60%	30.1	-1%	1.2	-7.70%
2001-2002	13,620	-8.30%	387	-2.80%	472	-4.50%	35.2	-5.60%	28.9	-4%	1.2	0%
2002-2003	12,639	-7.20%	375	-3.10%	461	-2.30%	33.7	-4.30%	27.4	-5.20%	1.2	0%
2003-2004	11,874	-6.10%	363	-3.20%	459	-0.40%	32.7	-3%	25.9	-5.50%	1.3	8.30%
2004-2005	10,962	-7.70%	354	-2.50%	454	-1.10%	31	-5.20%	24.1	-6.90%	1.3	0%
2005-2006	10,041	-8.40%	336	-5.10%	444	-2.20%	29.9	-3.60%	22.6	-6.20%	1.3	0%
2006-2007	9301	-7.40%	342	-1.80%	477	-7.40%	27.2	-9%	19.2	-15.04%	1.4	7.69%
2007-2008	9065	-2.54%	350	2.34%	501	5.03%	25.9	-4.78%	18.1	-5.73%	1.4	0.00%
2008-2009	9127	0.68%	365	4.29%	519	3.59%	25	-3.47%	17.6	-2.76%	1.4	0.00%
2009-2010	9776	7.11%	392	7.40%	570	9.83%	24.9	-0.40%	17.2	-2.27%	1.5	7.14%
2010-2011	10,804	10.52%	420	7.14%	648	13.68%	25.7	3.21%	16.7	-2.91%	1.5	0.00%
2011-2012	11,787	9.10%	448	6.67%	706	8.95%	26.3	2.33%	16.7	0.00%	1.6	6.67%
2012-2013	12,669	7.48%	473	5.58%	765	8.36%	26.8	1.90%	16.6	-0.60%	1.6	0.00%
2013-2014	13,395	5.73%	501	5.92%	835	9.15%	26.8	0.00%	16	-3.61%	1.7	6.25%
2014-2015	14,552	8.64%	532	6.19%	916	9.70%	27.4	2.24%	15.9	-0.62%	1.7	0.00%

government further announced administrative statues (*Number 15/2014*) regarding the formal education curriculum framework and basic educational requirement of the local education system which would take effect in the 2015–2016 school year. These decrees were to specify the learning outcomes across the various education levels within the formal education system while guiding schools and teachers in curriculum design. The interplay of these two statues was meant to form the foundation of student development and quality assurance in education (DSEJ 2015f). While the DSEJ claimed that quality reviews were carried out at private within-system schools periodically, such performance reviews were never released to the public nor were they disclosed to parents or teachers in any official manner (Lau et al. 2014). The claimed existence of a quality assurance procedure seemed rather like a masquerade or a smokescreen.

All in all, taking into account the following factors of Macau, (1) a high percentage of teachers attaining a tertiary degree, (2) an continuously growing teacher force, (3) a reasonable mean class size of under 30 children in the past decade, (4) an absence of a good teacher-student ratio which is below the 1:15 level, (5) an existence of fiscal input in the advancement and maintenance of teaching equipment and hardware in schools, and (6) the seemingly existing and yet obscurely indefinite quality review mechanism, the accountability of the Macau's free education policy can only be deemed average.

Sustainability of Macau's Free Education Policy

Sustainability is defined as the government being financially able to continually to support and sustain the free kindergarten education policy (Li and Fong 2014). This aspect will be analysed with close reference to Macau's economic change, i.e. its gross domestic product (GDP) and budget surplus, and long-term national plan for educational advancement.

Legalised in the mid-nineteenth century, Macau's gaming industry has developed an inseparable relationship with its tourism industry and has remained the main source of income for its government contributing to 80% of the government's revenue, even till the present day (Riley 2015). Macau's economy has been exceptionally boosting ever since the liberalisation of the gaming industry to international casinos from its previous monopoly state. Macau has transformed to be known as "Las Vegas of the East" (Yu and Chan 2014). Taxes earned from gaming are the main source of direct taxes for the government and contributed to the region's total revenue ranging from 76.91% to 83.49% from 2010 to 2015 (see Table 6.11).

The increase in the budget surplus was fluctuating over the 6-year period, from 52% in 2011 to -6.22% in 2014 and ultimately, to -67.55% in 2015. The situation of the budget surplus of the government, however, revealed a rather financially unconvincing impression. Although, at an irregular year-by-year rate, the budget surplus was increasing from 2011 to 2013, negative figures dominated since 2014, and from the financial data collected from the Financial Services Bureau, the GDP of Macau in

Table 6.11 Central account of the Macau government from 2010 to 2015

Year	Revenue	Direct taxes	Direct taxes from gaming	Percentage of gaming taxes in revenue	Expenditure	Surplus	Increase in surplus	Per-capita GDP	Real GDP growth
2010	79,635.80	68,849.2	65,003.8	81.63%	37,758.1	41,877.8	/	398,071	/
2011	112,721.40	98,395.0	94,112.2	83.49%	48,976.6	63,744.8	52.22%	531,723	34.69%
2012	129,498.30	111,962.7	106,989.8	82.62%	56,737.5	72,760.8	14.14%	611,930	12.55%
2013	155,512.10	132,391.8	126,738.4	81.50%	59,227.3	96,284.7	32.33%	697,502	14.74%
2014	156,071.40	136,016.7	128,868.8	82.57%	65,775.0	90,296.4	-6.22%	713,514	2.99%
2015	109,778.20	93,417.9	84,430.9	76.91%	80,479.6	29,298.6	-67.6%	574,790	19.40%

*Provisional data
(Million of patacas)

2014 was recorded with a -0.4% . To financially sustain any long-term public policy, it is important that the government is capable of ensuring a stable flow of income and to have it based on sources or industries that are durable in the long run.

Perhaps having realised the rather “unhealthy” effect of having a large proportion based on the gaming and betting sectors, the Macau government has also been attempting to boost its emerging non-gaming industries to promote economic diversification and to promote employment competitiveness, such as traditional Chinese medicine, cultural and creative business, tourism and international exhibition and convention programs (Asia Pacific Daily 2015).

Education has the power to build up the manpower and train talents who form the foundation of the society. The enhancement of the quality of education and educators is not attainable without a sustainable and adequate supply of financial input. Statistical data gathered by the World Bank in 2010 shows that Asian countries or cities in general spend less of their GDP on education, e.g. Hong Kong and Japan spent 3.5% and 3.8% , respectively.

Western countries, on the other hand, spent a considerable larger proportion on education. Countries like Australia, Switzerland, Germany and Portugal spent roughly around 5% of their GDP on education, while countries like Belgium, Finland, the UK and Norway spent over 6% . New Zealand even spent more than 7% . The Macau government, however, was spending much lesser than the other developed countries and cities, ranging from 2.09 to 3.69, and a declining trend has been observed after the sovereignty was returned to China (Table 6.12).

A draught for the *Ten Year Plan for Non-tertiary Education (2011–2020)* guided by the Non-tertiary Education Council was put forwards by the government in 2010 (Non-tertiary Education Committee 2012), in preparation for the blueprint of the *Framework for Formal Education*, to formulate further and enhance the quality of non-tertiary education so as to make adjustments for the future needs and talents in society. Formulation of the plan was done through in-depth discussions by the Non-higher Education Commission, its task force and public consultations which involved different sectors and levels of society (DSEJ 2014b). Substantial analyses of the document by Yu and Chan (2014) arrived at a conclusion of the economic significance the government has laid upon education. In light of Macau’s limited natural resources, the government recognised education as an instrument crucial for economic development which would only be possible through the construction of high-quality human resources serving as the foundation for the long-term development of the territory. A high-quality education system, where educational reforms aim to safeguard its economic strength, helps upgrade the general quality and competitiveness of the residents. The term “teaching staff”, instead of “teachers”, was used to emphasise the equally importance of teaching and breeding of as well as the love for students. Professional development and on-the-job training of the teaching staff and their engagement in research were valued greatly in the upgrading of the quality of teaching and education (Yu and Chan 2014).

Table 6.12 Government expenditure on education as percentage of GDP (%)

Government expenditure on education as % of GDP (%) from the World Bank															
Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Education	3.68	3.69	3.68	2.86	2.99	2.89	2.32	2.35	2.24	2.09	2.23	2.57	2.61	2.69	3.34

While determination to sustain and improve the education quality of Macau could be seen in the government's strategies for the future, the development of the thriving casino capitalism, which encompassed the betting and entertainment industries and tourism where desirably high salaries and fringe benefits were more readily accessible by the residents, had been a particular threat to the brain drain of the education sector. Unless the conditions and welfare of the teaching profession could be enhanced, the profession would be placed at a disadvantaged position and inadequacy of intellectual capacity (Yu and Chan 2014).

In view of the fluctuating GDP of Macau, the low yearly government financial input in education, the sustainability of the free education policy can be said to be rather doubtful. The more promising fact was, however, the government's 10-year plan strengthening the non-tertiary education system in Macau.

Social Justice of Macau's Free Education Policy

Social justice is defined whether children have access to kindergarten education and how fair the treatment that they receive is which should be irrespective of their age, race, gender, religion, socio-economic status, physiological characteristics, disability, etc. (Li and Fong 2014). Apart from the exemption of tuition and school charges for students at public kindergartens and private kindergartens that are part of the free education system, the Macau government was also offering the Student Welfare Fund to support families with financial difficulties. The fund included various subsidies which covered tuition fee, meals, textbook and stationery, student insurance and the milk and soy milk programme (Government Printing Bureau 2015). According to the figures publicised by the Government Printing Bureau (2015), the subsidies for tuition, meal and learning materials in the 2015–2016 school year were MOP 4000, MOP 3200 and MOP 2100, which were approximately USD 499.03, USD 399.22 and USD 261.99, respectively. To be eligible for application, students must be residents of Macau enrolled at schools which were non-profit making or at recurrent education, and the monthly household income of their families must not exceed a certain limit. This is deemed acceptable as the additional public fiscal goes to the permanent residents whose financial inputs were indeed not sufficient enough to cover the childcare expenses and whose children were enrolled at schools which educated for the wellness and advancement of the residents in their community, rather than for their own interests. Table 6.13 shows the number of kindergarten students benefitted from Student Welfare Fund over the 10 years from 2002 to 2012 (DSEJ 2015b).

An evident decrease can be seen in the total numbers of students being supported, and this may not come as a surprise considering the affordable school charges of schools in Macau and the comprehensiveness of the free education policy. An approximate 96% decrease was recorded for the support on tuition fee between 2005 and 2006, just a couple of years prior to the realisation of free kindergarten education. The student number for textbook and stationery support increased

Table 6.13 Number of kindergarten students benefitted from Student Welfare Fund from 2002 to 2012

Types of financial support	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Tuition fee	947	899	530	413	17	11	5	3	1	/	1
Textbook and stationery	1643	1707	1539	1180	781	476	398	396	127	229	214
Meal allowance	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	301	229	218

by 80.3% in 2011 and only dropped by a slight 6.56% in 2012. The need for meal allowance was first recorded in 2010 after the introduction of the free education policy. The existence of additional student financial support and its decreasing trend in use indicate the government's readiness to assist its needy residents of which the proportion in need is improving.

With regard to how the supplementary support available to students with special educational needs (SEN), the DSEJ formulated the inclusive education subsidise scheme to encourage private institutions to include SEN students in their normal classes by providing them with financial assistance and technical support (DSEJ 2010). The Centre for Educational Psychological Support cum Special Education was responsible for the provision of screening assessment for students with physical disabilities, autism, hyperactivity disorder, emotional problems, etc. Apart from the basic free education subsidies, each inclusive student would receive an additional subsidy three times the normal amount. Staff from the DSEJ would also provide school-based support to inclusive schools to assist teachers to design pedagogies, assistance measures and learning environment to cater for individual differences. Parents were also invited to attend the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings to foster home-school collaboration through meaningful exchanges of opinions. To enhance teachers' professional knowledge and skills in educating SEN students, the DSEJ commissioned the Hong Kong Institute of Education in 2010 to host several professional development courses which included two 30-h "inclusive education teacher" and one 100-h "resource teacher" (DSEJ 2010).

In the 2013–2014 school year, there was a total of 1,317 students in Macau with special educational needs – 705 studied in inclusive classes while the remaining 612 students studied in classes specialised in catering for this type of students (DSEJ 2015c). In view of the rising number of SEN students, the DSEJ was currently in the process of modifying the "Inclusive Education System" regulation within the *Number 9/2006 System on Non-Higher Education Law*, by inviting the education and special education sectors, institutions and the public to submit their views and recommendations for improvement (DSEJ 2015f).

Considerable determination could be seen in the Macau government's commitment to establishing more applicable regulations and developing more appropriate learning conditions necessary for effective inclusive education to take place. Social

justice in the sense of the provision and advancement of education to cater for learning diversity could be said to have met.

Conclusion

From a laissez-faire decentralised style in the Portuguese colonial era to a more centralised administrative system in the postcolonial days, the landscape of the schooling system in Macau has indeed gone through some deliberately manipulated changes. With the application of the 3A2S theoretical framework, this chapter has examined how accessible, affordable, accountable, sustainable and socially justifiable the free education policy in Macau is with reference to the situation of the local kindergarten education (Li and Fong 2014). This chapter concludes that while kindergarten education was accessible, affordable and being socially justifiable to the Macau residents irrespective of their background and abilities, its accountability was merely average given a lack of a quality review mechanism. Sustainability was somewhat unclear or doubtful given the government's strong reliance on the casino and gaming industry, but yet the introduction of a 10-year plan for non-tertiary education somehow cast light to the prospects of the sector. To further fortify the 15-year free education policy and to make kindergarten education more accountable and sustainable, this chapter suggests continued effort and more practical measures from the government, such as increasing the annual financial input to support the continuous enhancement of the teaching quality via teacher training, upgrading of teaching and learning facilities and introducing a comprehensive evidence-based monitoring and review mechanism to safeguard the quality of education.

References

- Afonso, R., & Pereira, F. G. (1987). The constitution and legal system. In R. D. Cremer (Ed.), *Macau: City of commerce and culture* (pp. 185–198). Hong Kong: UEA Press.
- Asia Pacific Daily. (2015, March 24). *Macau to boost non-gaming industries to promote economic diversification: Chief Executive*. Retrieved from <http://en.apdnews.com/asia-pacific/macau-taiwan/289730.html>
- Ball, S. J. (1994). *Education reform*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Bray, M. (1992). Colonialism, scale, and politics: Divergence and convergence of educational development in Hong Kong and Macau. *Comparative Education Review*, 36(3), 322–342.
- Bray, M., & Hui, P. (1989). The implications of size for educational development in small states: The case of Macau. *International Review of Education*, 35(2), 129–143.
- Bray, M., & Koo, R. (2004). Postcolonial patterns and paradoxes: Language and education in Hong Kong and Macao. *Comparative Education*, 40(2), 215–239.
- Census and Statistics Department. (2011). *Introduction to the Consumer price index*. Retrieved from <http://www.statistics.gov.hk/pub/B8XX0021.pdf>
- Chou, B. (2012). The paradox of educational quality and education policy in Hong Kong and Macau: A postcolonial perspective. *Chinese Education and Society*, 45(2), 96–110.

- DSEC (Statistics and Census Service). (2011). *Results of 2011 population census*. Retrieved from <http://www.dsec.gov.mo/Statistic.aspx?NodeGuid=8d4d5779-c0d3-42f0-ae71-8b747bdc8d88>
- DSEC (Statistics and Census Service). (2014). *Household budget survey*. Macau: Macau Government. Retrieved from <http://www.dsec.gov.mo/Statistic.aspx?NodeGuid=259c38c9-2d82-495d-acd7-8df90028a26d>
- DSEC (Statistics and Census Service). (2015). *Population estimate, birth and mortality, marriage and divorce*. Macau: Macau Government.
- DSEJ (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau). (2010). 教Re育tr暨ie青ve年d局積極推展融合教 from http://portal.dsej.gov.mo/webdsejspace/internet/Inter_main_page.jsp?id=4618
- DSEJ (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau). (2011). *System framework for private school teaching staff of non-tertiary education*. Retrieved September 25, 2013.
- DSEJ (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau). (2013a). *DSEJ lays stress on the preparatory work of the academic year 2013/2014*. Retrieved from July 23 2015, from http://portal.dsej.gov.mo/webdsejspace/internet/Inter_main_page.jsp?id=41109
- DSEJ (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau). (2013b). *Free education*. Retrieved from http://portal.dsej.gov.mo/webdsejspace/internet/Inter_main_page.jsp?id=22753
- DSEJ (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau). (2013c). *Non-tertiary education*. Retrieved from http://portal.dsej.gov.mo/webdsejspace/internet/Inter_main_page.jsp?id=22748
- DSEJ (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau). (2014a). *A guide to school enrollment 2014/15 school year*. Macau: Macau Government
- DSEJ (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau). (2014b). *Review 2010*. Retrieved from http://portal.dsej.gov.mo/webdsejspace/internet/Inter_main_page.jsp?id=43780
- DSEJ (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau). (2014c). *Statistics of teaching staff (Scholastic year 2014/2015) – Distribution of teaching staff (By HEAD) by type of school, level of education and highest qualification*. Retrieved from http://portal.dsej.gov.mo/webdsejspace/internet/category/teach/Inter_main_page.jsp?id=8525
- DSEJ (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau). (2015a). *List of schools 2015*. Retrieved from http://appl.dsej.gov.mo/edu/enquiry/edu/eduweb/schinf/schlistmain.jsp?search=1&advance=0&lang=c&sh_a_code=&sh_year=2014&sh_info=schalvara&sh_name=&sh_s_code=&sh_area=&sh_level=kid&sh_special=&sh_system=P&sh_daynight=&sh_language=&sh_free=&sid=&b_submit=%E6%9F%A5%E8%A9%A2&report=schsub_lab el&sh_orderby=SS.s_code
- DSEJ (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau). (2015b). *Overview of educational figures*. Macau: Macau Government
- DSEJ (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau). (2015c). *Review 2013*. Retrieved from http://portal.dsej.gov.mo/webdsejspace/internet/Inter_main_page.jsp?id=43753
- DSEJ (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau). (2015d). *Review 2014*. Retrieved from http://portal.dsej.gov.mo/webdsejspace/internet/Inter_main_page.jsp?id=53878
- DSEJ (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau). (2015e). *The main work of non-tertiary education and youth affairs in the academic year 2015/2016*. Retrieved from http://portal.dsej.gov.mo/webdsejspace/internet/Inter_main_page.jsp?id=52714
- DSEJ (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau). (2015f). 修訂《特殊教育制度》. Retrieved from <http://www.dsej.gov.mo/~webdsej/www/edulaw/201503/index.html?timeis=Thu%20Aug%2006%2013:45:54%20GMT+08:00%202015&&>
- DSEJ (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau). (2016). 澳門學校資料查詢. Retrieved from http://portal.dsej.gov.mo/webdsejspace/addon/allmain/msgfunc/Msg_funclink_page.jsp?msg_id=8301&langsel=C&
- GCS (Government Information Bureau). (2014). *Macao factsheet – education*. Retrieved from http://www.gcs.gov.mo/files/factsheet/Education_EN.pdf
- Government Printing Bureau. (2015). *School benefits [Press release]*. Retrieved from <http://cn.io.gov.mo/Legis/record/141180.aspx>

- Grace, G. (1994). Education is a public good: On the need to resist the domination of economic science. In D. Bridges & T. H. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Education and the market place*. London: Falmer Press.
- Jasso, G. (1979). On Gini's mean difference and Gini's index of concentration. *American Sociological Review*, 44(5), 867–870.
- Kraft, M. E., & Furlong, S. R. (2012). *Public policy: Politics, analysis, and alternatives* (4th ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Lau, M. M. Y. L., Li, H., & Leung, S. O. (2014). A multiple case study on the perceived impacts of the 15-year free education policy in Macau. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 3, 223–249.
- Li, H., & Fong, R. (2014). Sound bites won't work: Case studies of 15-year free education in greater China. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 3, 161–170.
- Morrison, K., & Tang, F. H. J. (2002). Testing to destruction: A problem in a small state. *Assessment in Education*, 9(3), 289–317.
- Morrison, K. (2006). Sensitive educational research in small states and territories: The case of Macau. *Compare*, 36(2), 249–264.
- Non-tertiary Education Committee. (2012). *Ten year plan for non-tertiary education (2011–2020)*. 《-2非02高0等教育.年發M)展a》十ca年u規: M劃a(cau G2o0v1eIrnment. Retrieved from <http://www.dsej.gov.mo/ce/index.html?timeis=Fri%20Aug%2007%2015:20:00%20GMT+08:00%202015&&>
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2006). *Starting strong II: Early childhood education and care*. Paris: OECD.
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2011). *Survey for the quality toolbox and early childhood education and care portal*. 2014 (April 7). Retrieved from: www.oecd.org/edu/school/48623811.pdf
- Riley, C. (2015). Macau's economy slumps 17% after anti-corruption drive. *CNNMoney (Hong Kong)*. Retrieved from <http://money.cnn.com/2015/03/16/news/economy/Macau-gambling-gdp-revenue/>
- Rosa, A. (1989). *Macau: Education in the period of transition. An overview and prospects*. Paper presented at the meeting of UNESCO's international congress res on planning and management of educational development, Mexico City
- Rosario, L. D. (2012, April 11). Education reformer. *Macau Magazine*, 14–20
- Tang, F. H. J., & Morrison, K. (1998). When marketisation does not improve schooling: The case of Macau. *Compare*, 28(3), 245–262.
- The Eighth National People's Congress. (1993). *Basic law of the Macau special administrative region of the People's Republic of China*. Macau: Government Printing Bureau.
- Tooley, J. (1996). *Education without the state, studies in education no. 1*. London: The Education and Training Unit of the Institute of Economic Affairs.
- Yu, E. W. Y., & Chan, M. K. (2014). *China's Macau transformed: Challenge and development in the 21st century*. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press.

Chapter 7

Early Childhood Development Policies in Nepal: Achievements, Learning, and Implications

Sanjaya K. Khanal, Bimala Rai Paudyal, and Sabita Dangal

Abstract Since the 1990s, Nepal has witnessed a continuous increase in investment to improve accessibility of children to quality education. Early Childhood Development (ECD) policy has been introduced to promote academic success and holistic development in young children. Based on the analysis of data obtained from the governmental agencies, this chapter examines ECD policy in Nepal through the “3A2S” framework (Li, Wang, Fong, *Int J Chin Educ* 3(2):161–170, 2014). The analysis indicates mixed results. The ECD guidelines are clearly defined to apply throughout the country, and institutions are established at different levels. To date, more than 35,000 Early Childhood Development Centers (ECDCs) have been established to benefit more than one million young children annually. However, universal coverage has yet to be achieved. Accessibility and affordability of ECDCs vary across socioeconomic groups. Children living in remote locations and from poor economic conditions often lack accessibility to quality ECDCs, and thus the problem of social justice still needs to be addressed. Accountability measures are scattered and sustainability provisions are less elaborated and poorly enforced. This chapter identifies geographical and socioeconomic variables that shape the process and outcomes of the ECD policy implementation and highlights areas for improvement to achieve a balance among accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice of ECD in Nepal.

S.K. Khanal

Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, Government of Nepal, Kathmandu, Nepal

B.R. Paudyal (✉)

Former Member, National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal, Kathmandu, Nepal

e-mail: bimalarp@gmail.com

S. Dangal

Department of Education, Government of Nepal, Madhyapur Thimi, Nepal

Introduction

Investment in early childhood years can have significant and lasting returns in terms of human development as compared to later investments in the life cycle. For instance, it can yield intergenerational benefits by improving the prospects for future generations to break the vicious circle of poverty. Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) service is also a powerful equalizer. It lays a strong foundation for physical, mental, cognitive, and social-emotional competencies and skills on which children's survival and well-being depend. There is a compelling body of evidence suggesting that early deprivation in terms of nutrition, healthcare, parental care, early emotional attachments, positive stimulation, and learning environment can have irreversible and far-reaching consequences not only during childhood but throughout the adult life (Bagdi and Vacca 2005; Cunha et al. 2005; OECD 2006; Pollitt 1990; Young 1995). Evidence from neuroscience suggests that the human brain grows most rapidly during the prenatal period and postnatal period within 6 months (Shonkoff 2010). Accordingly, well-resourced ECEC can be a very significant “protective factor” in helping young children, parents, and other caregivers cope with adversities and provide children with a strong and healthy start (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child 2007; Shonkoff 2010).

Realizing the critical role of Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) in the process of human development, the Ministry of Education (MoE), Government of Nepal (GoN) in recent years have laid an emphasis on expansion of equitable and affordable early childhood development services. Early Childhood Development Centers (ECDCs) in Nepal are known by various names such as *day care centers*, *early childhood development centers*, *child care centers*, *nursery*, *kindergarten*, *preschool*, and *preprimary classes (PPCs)*. Conceptually and over time, there has been a shift in emphasis from Early Childhood Education (ECE) to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and from ECCE to ECDCs.¹ ECDC implies the centers for the overall development of children (UNESCO 2008). The GoN has emphasized universal coverage of ECDCs with an objective of helping achieve holistic development (i.e., physical, psychological, emotional, and cognitive) of a child.

In this chapter, we attempt to assess the implementation of the ECD policy through the “3A2S” framework (accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice) (Li et al. 2014). The chapter has divided the contents into two major parts. The first part sets the overall context within which ECD policy is operationalized in Nepal. This includes understanding the concept, history, policy and legislative framework, implementation arrangements, and financing. The next part provides assessments of ECD policy implementation in reality. This includes

¹ In this chapter, the term Early Childhood Development Centers (ECDCs) refers to centers established and run to achieve the objective of Early Childhood Development. We have used ECDCs, ECD, and Early Childhood Education Development (ECED) interchangeably.

examining the ECD process and outcomes in terms of the 3A2S framework and highlighting the lessons learned.

Understanding the Concept of ECD

Like many other fields of knowledge, the concept of ECD also has its Western origin. Friedrich Froebel established the first kindergarten classes grounded in traditional religious values in Germany in the 1800s. Rachel and Margaret MacMillan established the first nursery school in London in 1910. Italian physician Maria Montessori introduced the Montessori method with its focus on individualized self-teaching within a carefully prepared teaching environment in 1906 (Shonkoff and Meisels 2000). However, the most significant expansion of ECDCs took place after the 1960s with the end of colonialism, establishment of independent states, and dramatic increase in female labor force participation in the world. Yet, in practice, ECDCs could not make headway until the 1990s. Even within United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), preprimary education was included in its program budget since the year 1971–1972 to provide assistance to member states (Kamerman 2006). The problems facing the expansion and advancement of preprimary education were numerous including unclear benefits, scarce funds, a lack of agreement as to which government agency should have primary responsibility for policy, and a scarcity of qualified teachers. It was only after the 1990s, particularly following the Jomtien Declaration, the Dakar Framework of Action (DFA), and the “World Conference on Education for All,” that ECD agenda received more attention (Kamerman 2006; White 2011; Woodhead 2006). “Education for All” explicitly aimed at expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education for all children with a specific focus on the vulnerable and disadvantaged children (i.e., children living in remote locations and those belonging to economically poor and socially marginalized caste and ethnic groups). The issue was taken up internationally by national governments, United Nations (UN) agencies, and the World Bank, as well as by numerous other regional agencies and nongovernmental organizations. Moreover, ECD policies were increasingly informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and by the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (Kamerman 2006; White 2011; Woodhead 2006).

History of Education and Evolution of ECDC in Nepal

During the hereditary oligarchic Rana’s rule (1846–1950) in Nepal, education was exclusively reserved for palace elite. Expansion of education was perceived as a threat to their power. Receiving tuition of any kind was considered to be a capital offense (Caddell 2007; Onta 1996; Shields and Rappleye 2008). In the period

following the dawn of democracy (1951–1959), education was expanded to the masses as an avenue to achieving individual, social, and national development. Nation building was construed in terms of assimilation of different social identities and minority languages (Caddell 2007; Onta 1996). Diverse ethnic and linguistic groups in Nepal found themselves at a disadvantage, a problem that was attributed to the slow expansion of the education system and low retention rates in many areas (Caddell 2007; Shields and Rappleye 2008).

The establishment of the Montessori School in Kathmandu in 1948 marks the beginning of early childhood education in Nepal (MoE 2009b:78). However, the expansion was rather slow during the next four decades. In 1960, King Mahendra dissolved the parliament and established a partyless *panchayat* system stating that it was better than the parliamentary system and “rooted in the native soil and climate.” The dominant slogan of the ruling system became *ek bhasa, ek bhesh, ek dhash* (one language, one dress, one nation) (Caddell 2007; Onta 1996). It was the same time Nepal Children’s Organization (NCO) introduced ECED program by establishing childcare centers in the districts. Since one district had only one branch of the NCO, the coverage of childcare center was limited to the district headquarters only and rest of the communities had no access. Most of these childcare centers established during the early 1960s by the NCO have now been upgraded to primary and secondary schools (MoE 2009b). The National Education System Plan (NESP) introduced in 1971 was tailored to achieve the vision of unified modern nation (Caddell 2007; Onta 1996; Shields and Rappleye 2008). Modernization in education, in such a unified form, downplayed and marginalized the minorities’ perspectives, cultures, and languages.

The opening of preschool education classes by private schools from the early 1970s made ECD services more accessible to a larger number of children in the country. The implementation of rural development projects in the mid-1980s like *Production Credit for Rural Women (PCRW)* and *Small Farmers Development Project (SFDP)*, which aimed at bettering farmer women, emphasized on the establishment of childcare centers to free the mothers from childcare responsibilities and let them focus on income-generating activities (UNESCO 2008). ECDCs in its current forms were established and expanded in Nepal since the 1990s. It is one of the important elements of the School Sector Reform Program (SSRP) today and is operational in line with the Dakar Framework of Action for EFA (2001–2015). ECDCs involve children aged 3–5 years and aim at facilitating their physical, social, emotional, and mental development. There are school-based and community-based ECDCs alongside privately managed PPCs. Age group, services, and fee modalities differ according to the types and resources of the providers. For example, ECDCs in public schools offer 1-year free access for all children ages 4–5. Communities managed ECDCs primarily cater to children ages 2–4 years and are free to all. These centers receive technical support from the Department of Education (DoE) and District Education Offices (DEOs). Private schools usually offer 3 years of PPCs at the nursery, lower kindergarten, and upper kindergarten levels and target children between 3 and 5 years. Wide ranges of services are available in private schools. The cost of attendance to PPCs ranges from less than NRs 500 to more than NRs 15,000

a month (equivalent to US\$5–150 per month) depending on the services offered. With the increasing number of women working in formal sectors, there is also a growing trend toward establishing day care centers by the private sector and non-government organizations. The analysis of such day care centers is not included in this review. Instead, this review focuses on ECDCs run and managed by the public schools and communities.

Analysis of Policies and Legislative Framework

In general, ECD-related policies and legislative framework answer the questions like *What* (type, quality, content, and pedagogy), *Whom* (beneficiaries), *How much* (scale of provision and investment), *by Whom* (provider and payers – the government, the private sector, the individual parents), and *How* (structure and organization of service delivery) (Hasan 2007). Answers to these questions depend on the country's own context.

ECDC-related policies and legislations in Nepal are reflected in a number of documents; some are dedicated entirely to ECDCs, and others serve as useful reference points. The Interim Constitution (2007 Article 22) as well as recently promulgated Constitution of Nepal (2015) protects the right of children to identity and name, as well as to basic health, education, and social security, protection from physical, mental, and other forms of violence, and calls for special provisions to protect the orphaned, destitute, mentally challenged, conflict-affected, displaced, and street children. It also stipulates that no minor should be engaged in factories, mines or similar kinds of hazardous work, in the army or police, or in conflict (MoLJPA 2007, 2015).

The Basic and Primary Education Master Plan (1997–2002), the Education for All (EFA) Core Document (2004–2009), Strategic Paper for Early Childhood Development in Nepal, School Sector Reform Plan (2009–2015), Multi-sectoral Nutrition Plan (MSNP), and Education for All National Plan of Action (EFA/NPA) 2001–2015 along with the Education Act (1971) and Education Rules (2001) constitute the core documents, determining the contours of ECDCs in Nepal (MoES 2003, 2004; MoE 2009a; NPC 2013b). Besides these, subsequent periodic development plans of the GoN, National Plan of Action for Children, and particularly Local Self-Governance Act (1999) also contain provisions related to ECDCs (MoWCSW 2012; NPC 2002, 2007, 2010, 2013c). All of these documents together set the rules for the engagement of government, private sector, and other stakeholders and for the functioning of the centers. Though many of these policy documents have common themes and thrusts related to the need of ECD opportunities for young children and provisions of the ECDCs, an integrated policy document could give a greater sense of coherence and unity of purpose. Together all of these policy documents promise all preprimary-age children with at least 1 year of special service that addresses both preschool preparation and overall development needs.

While the policies mentioned above emphasize both the supply and demand sides of interventions to improve the accessibility and affordability, the Guidelines as well as Act and Rules tend to focus more on accountability and procedures. Together, they call for continuation and expansion of free school-based and community-based ECDCs and entrust local government bodies with the responsibility of managing them. Policies also underline the need to target remote districts and children from disadvantaged groups². Policies also underscore the need for enhanced partnerships with international nongovernment organizations (INGOs), nongovernment organizations (NGOs), and private sector in establishing and running ECD centers to increase the coverage (MoES 1997, 2003, 2004; MoE 2009a). They also call for an inclusive approach and synergies across sectors/subsectors focusing on cognitive development, nonformal education, mobile health clinics, school meal program, school health program, nutrition, health, Female Community Health Volunteers, and parental education along with information and communication. The important role of women facilitators is also acknowledged (UNESCO 2008). The NPA and SSRP adopt a demand-driven approach with partial government support for urban and accessible areas and full support for the centers in deprived and disadvantaged areas/communities. Policies also envisaged for establishing at least one and four ECDCs in each Village Development Committee (VDC) and municipality, respectively, by 2007 and encouraging innovative and community-based initiatives for expansion.

The Basic and Primary Education Master Plan (1997–2002) concentrates on the educational part of early childhood development of children ages 4–5 (MoES 1997) and underlines the need for concerted efforts to expand quality primary and preprimary education services throughout the country. Recognizing a need for multi-sectoral efforts for ECD as envisioned in the plan, the GoN has established a multi-ministerial National Steering Committee (NSC) on Early Childhood Care and Education under the leadership of National Planning Commission (NPC). Other ministries in the committee include Ministries of Education (MoE); Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD); Women, Children, and Social Welfare (MoWCSW); Health and Population (MoHP); and Information and Communication (MoIC). The committee is of the highest authority for overall policy making, coordination, and monitoring related to ECD in Nepal.

Reiterating many of the provisions of other plans and strategies mentioned above, strategic paper for ECDCs has assigned the full responsibility of the establishment and operation of the centers to VDCs and municipalities with government support (MoES 1997). The local governments are also expected to leverage the resource and mobilize locally in collaboration with other nongovernment actors. The strategy has envisioned the role of the government and its functionaries on: policy and program development, decentralized implementation and monitoring of parental education, and capacity building for effective functioning of ECDCs (*ibid*).

²“Disadvantaged groups” here denote individuals and households who are economically poor and socially excluded on the basis of remoteness, caste, ethnicity, religion, and gender.

On the matter of social justice, most of these policy documents underline the needs to reach out to the children of disadvantaged groups. SSRP also emphasizes the equity aspects of ECDCs and intends to expand free access to quality ECDCs focusing on those unreached. For example, ECDCs of 29 districts with low human development index (HDI) are provided with day meals so as to attract children from poor and food insecure households. The current phase of SSRP (2009–2015) identifies three key results to achieve by 2015 in relation of ECD. They are (a) 87% of 4-year-old children gain ECD experience, (b) minimum standards for the ECD are met by all ECD centers, and (c) 64% of children entering grade 1 have ECD experience (MoE 2009a).

All subsequent periodic plans have also focused on four broad objectives of education sector in terms of improvement of access, quality, equity, and governance. The plans underline the need for attracting children to ECDCs by creating a child-friendly environment conducive for their physical, emotional, mental, social, and psychological development and by eliminating all forms of exploitation, abuse, risks, and discriminations (NPC 2002, 2007, 2010, 2013c).

One of the strategic thrusts of current Thirteenth Plan (2013/2014–2015/2016) is to expand ECDC services in a coordinated way based on facility mapping and collaboration of government with local bodies, communities, and nongovernment organizations (NPC 2013c). The *LSGA* (MoLJPA 1999) entrusts local governments – VDCs and municipalities – with responsibility to establish preprimary schools/centers by themselves and to issue permission to community-based organizations (CBOs) or NGOs to establish such centers following the nationally set minimum standards. The Child-Friendly Local Governance (CFLG) initiative implemented by MoFALD includes several indicators of child survival, protection, and development like immunization, breast-feeding, access to safe drinking water, and birth registration as indicators to measure the performance of local government. The MoFALD has earmarked 35% percent of the total block grant provided to VDCs for projects designed to empower children, women, and other disadvantaged groups. This can be and has been used for establishing and running ECDCs targeting marginalized communities in several districts.

There are no policies or legislations focusing specifically on accountability and sustainability specific to ECDC services. However, though generic in nature, there are many acts, rules, and directives related to accountability that are applicable to all sectors including the ECDCs. Similarly, the outcome and effect of some of the accountability-related provisions such as Financial Acts and Rules and Procurement Acts and Rules and governance-related directives and guidelines apply beyond ECDCs and education, aiming at improving the accountability and transparency in service delivery as a whole. Some of the examples include *Seva Abhiyan Nirdesika* (service delivery directives) (OPMCM 2008) and National Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines (NPC 2013a). These provisions and institutional mechanisms require compliance from all sectors including that of ECD programs. Similarly, oversight agencies like Public Account Committee in Parliament, National Vigilance Centre, Commission on Investigation of Abuse of Authority, and Office of the Auditor General, which are mandated to ensure accountability, can also exercise

their authorities across all sectors and subsectors. Overall, a good number of policy documents and legislations are in place, emphasizing the improvement in the accessibility, affordability, and equity aspects of ECDCs. But accountability and sustainability aspects remain relatively less articulated. However, as elsewhere, two tensions continue to interfere in the whole policy and practices related to ECDCs in Nepal. One is related to the roles and responsibilities of parents/families and government/state, while the other is the degree to which education and care should be integrated (Hasan 2007). This ambivalence can be detected in policy and programs, which is accentuated by budgetary and capacity constraints.

Implementation Strategies and Institutional Arrangements

The Department of Education (DOE) has established norms and developed operational guidelines, which outline the minimum enabling conditions for setting up and running ECDCs. It entrusts the local government to provide a facilitator, build his/her competence, and provide financial resource and educational materials to the centers. Process wise, an organization aspiring to establish ECDC needs to apply to the concerned VDC or the municipality in a prescribed format with evidence of meeting the following prerequisite infrastructure (DoE 2005):

- (a) A wide, open, peaceful, and safe building
- (b) At least half a *Ropani*³ (in hills and mountains) or one *Kattha*⁴ of land (in Terai) in addition to the building
- (c) Provision of children park or playground
- (d) Provision of clean and healthy drinking water and toilet
- (e) Provision of at least two caretakers for 15–25 children

In addition, the ECDC rooms should have proper flooring, adequate number of child-friendly furniture, or mattresses, leaning corners, cupboards, and display boards (MoES 2004).

This infrastructure is followed by an assessment of the application and approval if basic criteria are met. Local government reserves rights to withdraw approval if the implementing organization does not comply with the terms and conditions agreed beforehand (MoLJPA 2002). ECDCs receive grant from the government on the basis of recommendation by District Education Officer. ECDC training packages, curricula, and learning materials are developed to cater to local needs and address children's diversity (DoE 2005). Networking of the relevant institutions is created to facilitate sharing of reference materials, knowledge, and experience for optimum benefit to each other. Membership in the ECDC National Network is open

³*Ropani* is local measurement for land used in the hills region of Nepal. One *Ropani* is equivalent to 5476 sq feet or 0.05 ha. Half a *Ropani* is equivalent to 2738 sq feet or 0.025 ha.

⁴*Kattha* is local measurement of land used in the Terai (plain) belt of Nepal. One *Kattha* is equivalent to nearly 3724 sq feet or 0.034 ha.

for all organizations and individuals working at the national level. Similarly, at the district/VDC/municipality levels, a provision for network of ECDC service providers has been made. These local and national level networks are used to harmonize action and measures at different levels (UNESCO 2008).

There is a provision of an ECDC Management Committee on the chairpersonship of a parent in which members consisting of one of the ward⁵ chairpersons of VDC/municipalities, the representatives of local CBOs, the head teacher of nearby school, and the parents. The committee is responsible for the establishment, running, and monitoring of centers (DoE 2005). Similarly, they mobilize and utilize the resources to recruit, develop, and monitor the performance of the facilitators and ensure community participation in the operation of center. The network of community-managed schools is encouraged and mobilized to run preprimary classes or child development centers wherever feasible (UNESCO 2008). Community participation is sought in the entire process from establishment to operation and from monitoring to evaluation. Parenting education and parental orientation programs are initiated to make the parents aware of the importance of ECDC services. Mass media is also being used to mobilize the stakeholders and raise their awareness (*ibid*).

Each ECDC run by the government has a provision of one facilitator with a basic qualification of school leaving certificate (SLC) (i.e., a national level board examination after the completion of tenth grade in school). Though the facilitators are not termed as “teachers,” they are used as teachers for early grades in primary schools. Emphasis is given to recruiting local female facilitators. The new facilitators receive 16-day basic training to facilitate ECDCs. These are followed by 12-day refresher training and other short-term training as needed. The salary of community- and public school-managed facilitators is at minimum, amounting to approximately US\$25 a month. MoE terms it as “seed money” and expects local government to support these facilitators. However, only few schools and local government are reported to provide them with supplements to their official salary. Because of this low remuneration, retention of facilitators remains a challenge. Turnover of facilitators is reported to be high in most of areas (Cumming et al. 2012). However, the numbers of facilitators per PPC, minimum qualification, and associated benefits differ from that of public schools and vary depending on the size of the classes, scale, and resources of the private school.

There are several institutions involved at different levels to make ECDCs more effective and for monitoring purposes. As stipulated by Basic and Primary Education Master Plan (1997–2002), a NSC is constituted under NPC at the central level to ensure sectoral coordination in policies and programs (MoES 1997, 2004). Similarly, Central Early Childhood Development Council has been formed under the MoE constituting of representatives from Ministries of Health and Population, Federal Affairs and Local Development, Women Children and Social Welfare, and relevant United Nations (UN) agencies and NGOs. The council is a decisive body to set

⁵Ward is the lowest administrative unit in Nepal. One Village Development Committees (VDC) consists nine wards.

curriculum and standards for ECDCs. The council also coordinates ECDC-related activities across all sectors for synergy. It conducts review, prepares periodic progress report, and explores ways for sustaining the programs at different levels (DoE 2005; MoES 2004; UNICEF 2011).

At the executive level, MoE is responsible for policymaking, forging collaborations and partnerships, mobilizing resources, and overseeing the implementation (DoE 2005; MoES 1997, 2004). An interagency coordination committee chaired by Director General has been set up under DoE since 2008 bringing together wide range of stakeholders from government, INGOs, and external development partners (UNICEF 2011). The DoE prepares annual and periodic programs and sets targets and indicators on ECDCs. The DoE is responsible for implementing existing policy and legal provisions in collaboration with different stakeholders. It also provides technical backstopping to organizations that are running ECDCs in communities; prepares and distributes learning, teaching, and reference materials; and develops networks of ECD centers for sharing and exchange (DoE 2005). In addition to the DoE, MoE also has provision of Regional Education Directorates (REDs) to engage in monitoring and supervision of implementation process in respective regions (*ibid*).

At the district's level, District Early Childhood Development Committee is constituted under the chair of District Development Committees (DDCs) for program management, coordination, monitoring, and resource mobilization. ECDCs' focal persons are designated in all 75 administrative districts that are responsible to facilitate and coordinate activities at the district levels (DoE 2005). These focal persons are linked to 1053 Resource Centers (RCs) throughout the country. RCs are responsible for technical backstopping and monitoring.

Despite all of these multilayered actors and institutional arrangements for implementation and monitoring, the effectiveness suffer due to number of shortcomings and constraints. For example, the capacity development plan prepared by the MoE focuses on training of ECD facilitators but is not explicit on capacity building of the ECDC Management Committees at VDC/district levels and ECDC Coordination Committees and caretakers. There is a conspicuous lack of emphasis on data collection, collation, and reporting at ECDC levels. The flash report does not include data and information on the number and training status of facilitator, nor does it show facilitator-children ratio. Although the flash reports cover both school- and community-based ECDC enrolment data, it is the schools that are given the responsibility of collecting data from community-based ECDCs. This is problematic not only because the schools do not have sufficient time and resources but also because it heightens the risks of inaccurate reporting of data.

Financing

Financial investment for ECDCs comes from public, private, and community contributions. Despite emphasizing its importance throughout major policies and programs related to education and children development, only about 5% of total education budget is allocated for ECDCs from the government that accounts for less than 0.1% of the GDP (The World Bank 2013a). The total cost allocated to early childhood development in School Sector Reform Plan where ECDC is one of the important elements is US\$62.87 million for 5 years.

The plan has acknowledged resource constraints for universal access and therefore has envisaged mobilization of additional funds through local governments, INGOs, NGOs, voluntary groups, civil society, and community organizations as well as from the parents' contribution (MoE 2009a). Within the government system, Financial Comptroller General Office (FCGO) tracks expenditure across the sectors. However, the fragmentation of programs and implementing agencies makes it difficult to come up with a consolidated report on expenditure at the district as well as at national levels. There is a lack of data to indicate the actual level of financing in the ECDCs that combines all investment from government, local bodies, community, and private sectors. Nor there have been effective efforts to coordinate funding between GOs, NGOs, and development partners. In many instances, funding agencies directly fund NGOs without reporting to the relevant government agencies and absence of elected local government since almost two decades has resulted into limited capacity of the local bodies to explore, coordinate, and regulate investment on and functioning of ECDCs in the districts.

Understanding the Accessibility of ECD Policies in Nepal

One of the main strategies to achieve the goal of “Education for All” is to increase the number of ECDCs especially in remote and disadvantaged communities (DoE 2015). As Fig. 7.1 shows, there has been a continuous increase in the ECDC facilities over the past 10 years throughout Nepal. Until 2014, there have been 35,121 ECDCs in the country that serve more than one million children every year.

As the figure shows, community-school-based ECDCs dominate with more than 85% share in total as compared to less than 15% run and managed by institutional (private) schools. This comparison indicates that access to school is a prerequisite for many children to attend ECDCs. In terms of coverage among children, in academic year 2014–2015 alone, a total of 1,014,339 children attended ECDCs, representing about 59% of the total population of children aged 3–5 years in Nepal. About 41% of children ages 3–5 years still have no access to ECDCs. Though Nepal has achieved gender parity in basic and secondary school enrollment, the ratio of girls to boys is 0.93 in ECDC attendance (DoE 2015).

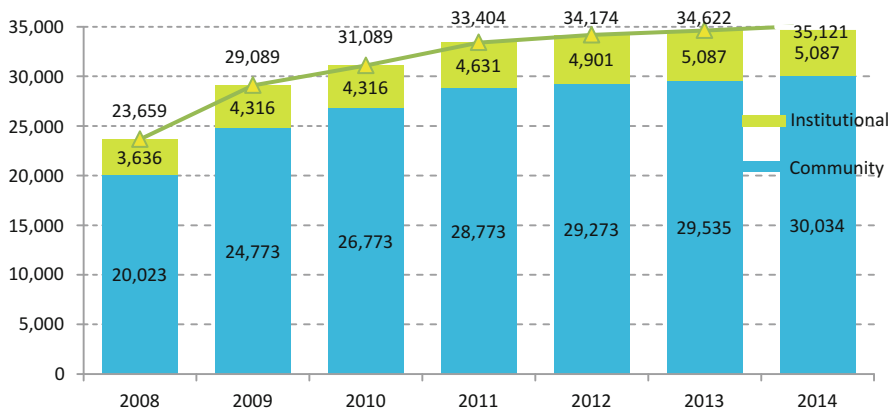


Fig. 7.1 Trends in the growth of ECDCs in the last 7 years (Source: Flash Report, MoE 2014/2015)

Despite the government strategy to expand the coverage of ECDCs throughout the country, universal access is still a distant goal. Some districts and communities, especially in remote villages, are not aware of the ECDC policy and provisions. Most of the ECDCs are still concentrated in urban and semi-urban areas. In some cases, ECDCs are established far from villages and therefore are inaccessible to young children. Poor road conditions and a lack of transportation facilities and lack of bridges across the rivers, particularly in the mid hills and higher mountains, remain important inhibiting factors. The community's engagement has worked well in most of the cases to expand the coverage. However, in some cases, they find the conditions set up by the local government and DoE too demanding to establish the center. Private schools and preprimary classes are also usually concentrated in more accessible areas. With these reasons, despite the government's plan to achieve universal coverage, access to ECDC facilities continues to be limited to the children, especially for those living in remote, marginal areas, and therefore the achievement of universal coverage is far from satisfactory. There is a need for a greater level of effort and collaboration on the part of government and other stakeholders to expand the coverage of ECDCs, reach the unreached, retain the reached, and help those retained to transition into grade 1.

Physical access is only one of the elements of accessibility as quality of service also determines access. Defining quality of education is always difficult, and once defined, measuring it is fraught with dangers (Cumming et al. 2012). The quality of ECDCs is determined by a number of factors, one of them being facilitator-child ratio. The present average facilitator-child ratio in ECDCs is 1:29, which falls short of the desired ratio of 1:20 (ibid). The ECDCs hosted by community schools have one teacher/facilitator each with the total number of facilitators standing at 30,034 at the moment.⁶ The preprimary classes run by private school usually allocate two teachers per class, but this is not the case in the majority of community-based and

⁶However, the exact number of total facilitators throughout the country is not available.

public school-managed centers. The situation is mostly attributed to the resource constraints.

Larger teacher-child ratio affects the ability of the teacher to pay individual attention to the children.

Another important factor in determining quality is related to the availability of trained human resources and physical and material well-being of the centers. Usually, the community and public schools managed ECDCs are constrained due to the lack of adequate level of physical infrastructure, learning materials, and trained human resources. The midterm evaluation of SSRP has suggested measures for improving quality by developing standards for ECDCs, providing adequate training to facilitators, developing a curriculum for the centers that relates to the age of the children, and engaging children in learning through play/activity and through their mother tongue (Cumming et al. 2012). Though the government has put a number of measures to improve the quality of both school-based and community-based centers with increased provisions of training and material support (MoE 2009a), a challenge that remains is to achieve minimum quality standard and uniformity across the country.

Understanding the Affordability of ECD Policies in Nepal

The concept of affordability is often understood in terms of monetary resources. However, affordability can also have connotations that are beyond the monetary or material resources. It may imply other more “symbolic” forms of payment including the costs in terms of time, “privacy or negative social and psychological consequences” (Roose and De Bie 2003: 478; Vandenbroeck and Lazzari 2014). In the context of low-income countries like Nepal, parents may not be able or willing to arrange ECD experience for the children. Therefore, basic education in public schools including preprimary schools and ECDCs is free in Nepal with learning materials. In most cases, school uniforms are not mandatory. Parents may incur some transportation costs. Thus, the direct private costs of ECDCs appear to be minimal for parents. In additions, in many districts (29 out of 75) that are characterized by low human development index (HDI) and/or low primary school enrolment and high dropout rates, children are provided with day meals to motivate attendance and retention. In private facilities, which constitute 14.5% of the total, however, parents need to pay for enrolment and meal as well as for the care and learning materials.

The government has introduced two outreach programs that are being piloted to address the issue of affordability. One is home-based child development program which extends interventions at the household level by focusing on children below 3 years of age. It brings together parents, grandparents, and other members of the family and provides them with information and knowledge about early childhood development. The family members in turn are expected to execute the knowledge in their daily care practices. The target children are engaged with and provided learn-

ing opportunities by other family members through interactions, inspirational behaviors, songs, and stories. The second outreach program is called entrance program, which is catered to children between 18 and 36 months of age. In this scheme, ECDCs are run in neighborhoods with seven to ten families as a group. The mothers are provided with orientation and training and are entrusted to apply concept of ECD to their children (DoE 2010). These interventions are still in the pilot phase and their effectiveness is yet to observe.

The stigma and discriminations attached to certain caste groups, particularly the Dalit, are progressively reduced which can be seen by the increasing enrolment rates among Dalit children. However, the availability and affordability of programs do not necessarily make provision accessible, as there are multiple obstacles, such as language barriers, limited knowledge of bureaucratic procedures involved in admission, and long waiting lists to get enrolment tend to exclude children from poor and especially new immigrant families (Vandenbroeck and Lazzari 2014). These barriers are not uniformly distributed in a highly diverse society like Nepal. Yet there are a few common barriers that influence the perception of affordability of programs for children among the parents. First, there is a low level of awareness among parents and communities, particularly in the rural areas of government provisions for ECDCs. Many rural women still consider sending children to ECDCs as unnecessary and expensive, as they are not fully aware of its importance on child development and free provisions of these programs by the government. Second, the coverage and quality of parenting education have been far less than required. Third, the learning environment and materials available at the centers often fail to attract the parents and children especially when the languages differ. Many of the parents, especially in urban and semi-urban communities, prefer to send their children to privately run centers, where available, on fee-paying basis because of the public perception that private is better in quality. Fourth, there is a high turnover rate of teachers in these programs due to a poor incentive structure, resulting in a lack of continuity. Fifth, there is an absence of effective regulating and monitoring mechanism to ensure that the centers are providing high-quality education to the children. Sixth, it is generally agreed that in poorer communities, the level of funding is too low to provide quality services. Retaining ECDC facilitators has remained a challenge unless communities are able to provide additional funding (Moriani 2012). Finally, though the local government bodies have increased their involvement according to the emphasis on CFLG, the system itself has not taken ECD agenda seriously nor has internalized its significance. As Vandenbroeck and Lazzari (2014) argued, policies that address the issues of accessibility and affordability should be planned at the local level, starting from the analysis of barriers that prevent children from different economic and social groups from using provision. This sensitivity, ownership, and capability of local bodies are yet to be realized, and lack of elected local government since almost two decades in the country has further aggravated the situation.

Understanding the Accountability of ECD Policies in Nepal

Making schools “accountable” is the current *mantra* of politicians, business leaders, and school administrators and has become a centerpiece of school reform programs (Hatch and Grieshaber 2002). In general, accountability systems refer to the mechanisms and instruments used to ensure that individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions meet their obligations (Hatch 2013). It carries a host of concepts and tools. Accountability components can include well-defined outcomes and a system of national tests and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that minimum quality standard is being met. It also needs to specify clear performance targets, develop more sophisticated monitoring systems, establish significant incentives and rewards for meeting those targets, and ensure that the system has expertise, motivation, financial, and human resources to function adequately (ibid).

Overall a well-functioning ECDC entails promoting two key aspects of accountability: answerability for the achievement of short-term goals and responsibility for the fulfillment of broader purposes. Nepal faces challenges associated with building capacity for both. Developing policies that address both answerability and responsibility and responding to the cultural, geographic, political, and economic realities are two major challenges (cf Hatch 2013) faced by the country. While accountability is important for the functioning of governance and the effectiveness of ECDCs, some scholars have advised caution against wholesale marketing of accountability framework as it can have serious negative consequences for young children’s experiences in early childhood programs (Hatch and Grieshaber 2002). As Kohn (2001) cautions, too much emphasis on accountability framework might create a situation when both teachers and children face heightened pressures for performance and can detract from true learning or at least interfere the learning process. Yet the absence of accountability framework can lead to another extreme of anarchy.

The education sector in Nepal suffers from a lack of a well-established accountability framework. Accountability provisions and procedures are scattered in various policy statements, program documents, Education Act, Education Rules, and other more generic rules applicable to all sectors of government. The enforcement of these policies and legal provisions are weak. Midterm review (MTR) of SSRP hinted that the large increase in funding have been creating perverse incentives leading to unintended consequences. It also advised stakeholders to develop a “robust accountability system” along with a viable system of incentives, linked to consequence for poor performance (Cumming et al. 2012). The emphasis on decentralization and empowerment of the local tiers of government for improving service delivery at the local level and the extensive roles assigned to local communities for managerial and monitoring functions of ECDCs have not been effective due to prolonged absence of elected local government and political instability in the country. As Moriani (2012:11) argued, it is “a situation in which decentralized delivery is carried out in the absence of decentralized government,” and the accountability context of ECD policy is not immune to the situation. The DEO is overloaded and unable to monitor the growing ECD centers in the districts.

Though a number of accountability mechanisms including the Public Accounts Committee, the Office of the Auditor General, the Department for Revenue Investigations, the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority, the National Vigilance Centre, and the Public Procurement Monitoring Office have been put in place to ensure accountability, none of them reach at the level of local schools and ECDCs. Center Management Committees in the communities are far from being capable for effective monitoring and ensuring accountability. The Right to Information Act was introduced in 2007, but due to procedural hurdles and costs involved, access to information continues to be constrained. These central level institutions and accountability process continue to be centric with limited reach at local levels where services are delivered (Moriani 2012). Similarly, a number of rules, regulations, manuals, and directions have been developed and disseminated. There exists a significant disconnect among teacher performance, incentives, and downward accountability (ibid). Similarly, there is an absence of organized, citizen-friendly mechanisms for public grievance redress. This contributes to general problems in accountability and discipline in the ways ECDCs are run today (ibid).

Midterm review of SSRP highlights a need to develop tools to make the implementers accountable for results by strengthening outcome monitoring and evaluation systems and to detect deviations and see whether or to what extent the programs achieved desired results (World Bank 2011 as cited in Cumming et al.) in order to enhance effectiveness of ECDCs. However, in practice, monitoring hardly takes place at the community levels, and when it does, it is based on input and not on outcomes. International evidence suggests that decentralized management is only effective when there is a strong accountability framework and incentive structure. There is some evidence suggesting that student achievement may suffer in decentralized systems in developing countries with weak governance structures (Cumming et al. 2012). The multiplicity of players and interventions reduce opportunities for streamlined, coordinated, and aligned implementation (ibid). The situation suggests that accountability in the education sector in Nepal is fragmented with the absence of an overarching education policy as each program- and project-specific policy (e.g., TEVET and nonformal education) proposes separate accountability systems, and often there is absence of effective coordination. Moreover, the accountability process is currently central government centric, while services are delivered at the local level and is therefore less effective (ibid).

For the local level, the government has introduced provisions of social audits, which have been tied up with fund release. In theory, the ECD centers are also required to conduct social audits every year. In practice, however, there is a weak enforcement of this provision. As Moriani (2012:11) illustrated, funds for ECDCs have been released even to the schools and centers that did not comply with social audit requirements. Where they are carried out, most often, the social audit activities and issues revolve around statements of income and expenditure of the center. The audits rarely cover the issues of accessibility, affordability, equity among the social groups, and quality of services. In addition, despite the wide acknowledgment of social audit process as an effective community-based oversight mechanism to

strengthen accountability, the process often ends as a ritual and therefore currently adds little value in terms of outcomes (ibid).

Understanding the Sustainability of ECD Policies in Nepal

Sustainability lacks generally binding operationalization (Hartmuth et al. 2008). The survival and welfare of systems are dependent on the well-being of the societies in which they are embedded (Link 2007). Mostly the case of sustainability is made in financial and environmental terms. According to Fiorino (2010), the challenge of sustainability involves appropriate balance among three systems: environmental, economic, and political/social. A major deficiency in common definitions is their narrow focus on political/social dimension. Social equity, fairness, participation, legitimacy, as well as just and effective governance – rule of law, integrity systems, security, and stability – are important to ensure sustainability. In the Nepalese case, program and institutional sustainability is usually measured in the context of financial sustainability. However, ensuring participation of relevant stakeholders in decision-making is equally important for the sustainability of process as well as outcomes.

Decentralization has been one of the key strategies in sustainable implementation of ECD centers. The LSGA has entrusted local governments with the responsibilities of establishing and running ECD centers in partnerships with NGOs, CBOs, and local groups. Guidelines empower the local government bodies with responsibility to coordinate and authority to approve/disapprove establishment of ECDCs, to monitor and sanction (DoE 2005). There is an increasing trend of different actors working together based on their expertise in coordination of DDCs. And all relevant stakeholders and partners are involved in planning jointly for the consolidation and expansion of ECD centers in the districts (UNESCO 2008). Since 2012, GoN has launched a new initiative of developing integrated district-level ECD plans. These plans aim to establish a coordinated planning of ECD centers from all stakeholders (private sector, government, and communities) and ensure equitable distribution of the centers across the districts. District Education Office has responsibility for coordination and enforcement of such integrated plans. So far, 20 districts, out of 75, are implementing such integrated plan for ECD centers. It is expected that such plans will help institutionalize ECDCs at the level of local government and help ensure sustainability of the ECD centers.⁷

Midterm review of SSRP highlights some evidence that government partnerships with NGOs and local communities have resulted in successful outcomes in sustaining ECDCs in terms of both finance and quality. Some DEOs have mobilized local resources for strengthening ECDCs to sustain them. However, there is a wide

⁷According to DoE records, districts implementing integrated plans for ECDC are Jumla, Mugu, Dolpa, Kalikot, Jajarkot, Bajura, Bajhang, Achham, Rukum, Baglung, Rautahat, Mahottari, Parsa, Dhanusha, Saptari, Panchthar, Sarlahi, Siraha, Rupandehi, and Udaypur.

variation in the ECDC models, and the result indicates the need to map and analyze different approaches for achieving efficacy. Stakeholders' participation in decision-making is ensured through ECDC Management Committees, but there is a need for strengthening capacity of the committee and its members, especially from the communities. In the case of poorer communities, the available resources are inadequate (Cumming et al. 2012). For sustainability, it is critical that the local government bodies internalize ECDCs as their mainstream agenda and own the process of its institutionalization. As Moriani (2012) noted, a stronger change management process needs to be in place, to enable smooth functioning of the local governments and to pave the way for improving the performance of SSRP in general and by extension of ECDCs and their sustainability component in particular.

The MTR also noted capacity gap among School Management Committees and Parent Teacher Associations to perform complex management and oversight tasks at the local level. A larger proportion of capacity-building funds are used at the central level, while a need to address the capacity gap is more at the local, i.e., districts and community levels. It is important to reorient capacity development efforts away from center (MoE and DoE) to district and schools to sustain the process as well as outcomes of ECDCs. The resource persons (RPs) and the school supervisors are important links in the chain for support and supervisions of ECDCs, yet they are provided with little incentives and opportunities for professional development (ibid). ECDC facilitators receive inadequate level of training and remuneration resulting in a lack of motivation and frequent turnover. These entire situations affect the sustainability of the program.

Understanding the Social Justice of ECD Policies in Nepal

Social justice is a complex and difficult concept to define as it means different things to different people and has temporal and spatial aspects (Rizvi 1998). Gewirtz (2006) drew our attention to multidimensional nature of justice with potential to conflict between its different facets. She identified two forms of distributive justice (1998): a weak form as in equality of opportunity and a strong form as in equality of outcome. In education, distributive models of social justice are reflected in compensatory programs, allocating designated resources for the disadvantaged. However, many of these compensatory programs do not question the curriculum itself, the pedagogy or the regimes of testing used in the classroom, and the role of these factors in creating educational inequality (Atweh 2011). The recognition paradigm, on the other hand, sees injustice as being entrenched in the political/economic construction of society (Hawkins 2014; Frazer 1996). Undoubtedly, a remedial action is essential in addressing the two forms of injustice: (1) lack of recognition and (2) lack of equitable distribution.

The very concept of mass education was virtually nonexistent in Nepal until recently (Reed and Reed 1968); however, in recent years, there has been significant improvements in access to education at all levels. The progress, especially in terms

of increasing coverage and achieving gender parity, has been significant, but still the inequality in access to quality education remains especially between the rich and the poor and between the urban and rural locations. Education in Nepal is figuratively (and literally) a landscape of hills and valleys, and those in the lowest positions are increasingly assertive in asking why the large investments in education have created so little tangible change in their lives.

Nepal is one of the most diverse countries in the world especially in terms of geography and sociocultural identity. The concentration of poverty and vulnerability is higher in some caste and ethnic groups especially among Dalits and indigenous ethnic groups and lesser in the others. Social and cultural variables such as caste, ethnicity, and gender also determine who can access to what type of education. While accessibility to education, notably at the ECDCs, has improved significantly since the past few decades and this progress applies to all economic and social groups, there is still significant inequality in terms of the access to quality education (DoE 2015). In general, people from poor households and from Dalits and disadvantaged caste and ethnic groups have less access to quality education compared to others (Acharya 2007; The World Bank 2013b). The same applies to access to ECDCs.

In line with the overarching principle of social inclusion which forms an essential part of the national plans and policies, the government has remained effortful to increase access of girls in ECDCs along with children from disadvantaged and marginalized communities, especially Dalits and indigenous ethnic groups. The accessibility of girls has improved over the years. As illustrated in Fig. 7.2, there is a narrow gap between enrolment of girls and boys in ECDCs in the past 7 years. The gender parity index (GPI) for ECDCs/PPC enrolment is 0.93 in 2014.

As the Fig. 7.3 shows, the enrolment of Dalits and indigenous ethnic groups in ECDCs has also gone up over the years. Out of the total enrolment of 1,014,339 in 2014–2015 in ECDCs/PPCs, 18.0% of them were Dalit and 38.6% ethnic groups. Among the Dalit children enrolled, 18.8% were girls and 17.4% boys. Similarly, among the children of indigenous ethnic groups, 38.8% were girls and 38.5% boys. It is encouraging that girls from disadvantaged caste and ethnic groups are increasingly enrolled in the ECDCs contributing to the parity.

The proportion of children entering first grade with ECDC experience has increased to 59.6% in 2014 from 56.9% the previous year. The current Thirteenth Plan of the GoN has set a target to reach to 64% by the end of 2015/2016 (NPC 2013c). As shown in Fig. 7.4 below, across the eco-belts, the Terai shows the highest intake (68.8%) of new children with ECDC experience in grade 1. In the Mid and Far Western regions and even in certain pockets in the Terai, particularly among Dalit communities, the participation in ECDCs is still low.

The increasing trend of participation in ECDCs has contributed to the reduction in repetition as well as dropout rates in grade 1 (see Table 7.1).

These silver lines notwithstanding, there are persisting disparities in access to ECDCs across the regions, districts, as well as among social groups. As shown in Fig. 7.4, only nearly 60% children out of those enrolled in primary school have ECDC experiences. The remaining 40% are yet to reach. There are inequities in

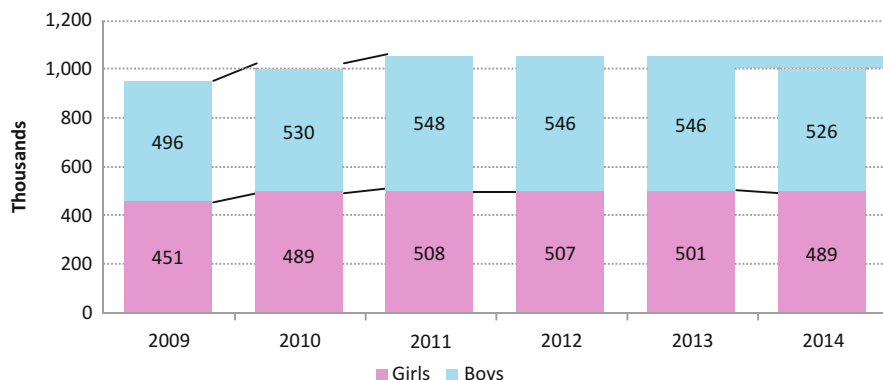


Fig. 7.2 Trend of girls' enrolments in ECDCs (Source: Adopted from DoE 2015)

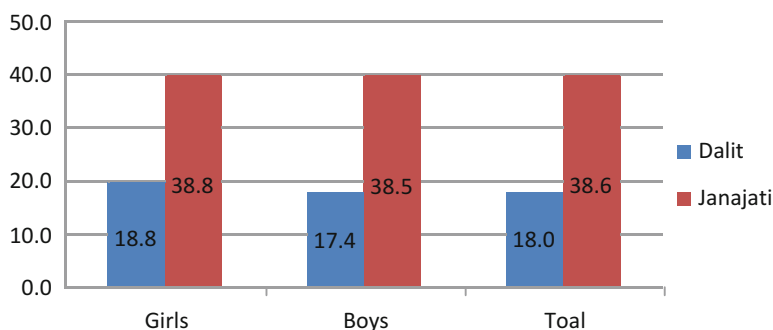


Fig. 7.3 Percentage of Dalit and Janajati in total number of children in ECDC/PPC (Source: Adopted from DoE 2015)

access to ECDCs across regions and mountain and hills lack far behind compared to national average. According to DoE 2015, there is variation between the districts even within the ecological belts. For example, 5 hill districts out of 75, namely, Khotang, Pyuthan, Jajarkot, Bajura, and Achham, have less than 30% of children in grade 1 with ECDC exposure (DoE 2015). The inequity is closely associated with the physical access and remoteness of these districts. Likewise, within the districts, there is also a noticeable urban bias in the enrolment. Urban centers have more number of children with ECDC experience compared with the rural. More efforts are called to reach out to the unreached in the remote and sparsely populated rural hinterlands where children do not have access to ECDCs.

Although the gender-disaggregated data at the basic level are available throughout the country, enrolment of children with various forms of disabilities is not. Nearly 2% of children in Nepal are living with some forms of disabilities. Dominant forms of disabilities in Nepal among the children are physically challenged, hearing and speaking difficulties and blindness. As public infrastructure in Nepal including

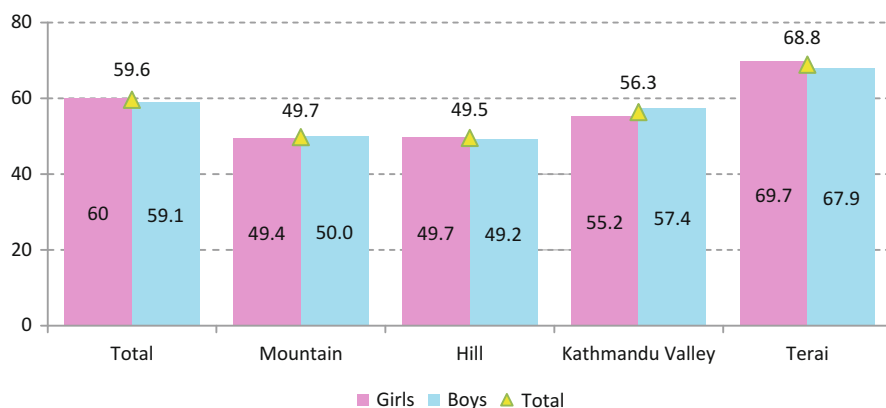


Fig. 7.4 Rate of children entering grade one with ECDC experience across ecological belts (Source: Adapted from DoE 2015)

Table 7.1 Declining trends of repetition and dropout rates in grade one

School year	Repetition rate %	Dropout rate %
2007	29.4	16.1
2008	28.3	12.1
2009	26.5	9.9
2010	22.6	8.3
2011	21.3	7.9
2012	19.9	7.7
2013	17.5	7.1
2014	15.2	6.5

Source: DoE (2015)

the health, education, and local government offices are yet to be friendly for persons living with disabilities (PLWD), children with disability usually find difficult to access and benefit from ECDCs. The concept of universal design to meet the needs of learners with diverse background within a common setting at the early childhood level (Conn-Powers et al. 2006; Darragh 2007) is yet to be fully applied.

On the one hand, there is a need to expand ECDC coverage and accessibility across the country to enable more children attending ECDCs prior to the enrolment in first grade. On the other hand, there needs specific strategies to address the inequities between the ecological belts, with a special focus on mountain and hills. The government is considering the option of residential schools for the grown-ups in these disadvantaged areas. However, this option would not be feasible for children under age 5. One of the possible strategies would be to strengthen capacities with resources at local government and community level to scale up ECDCs and ensure equitable coverage throughout the districts.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed at evaluating how the ECD-related policies and program in Nepal have been implemented, by using 3A2S framework. Nepal's historical context was outlined, and institutional architecture was elaborated to set the context for understanding how policies are framed and implemented for ECDCs and in which context the ECD policy is implemented. With the use of national and education sectoral data, the paper demonstrated that significant investment is made by the government to increase coverage and accessibility to quality education for young children in Nepal. Introducing ECD policy is one of those efforts. ECDCs in Nepal are established and run by government, community, and private sectors individually as well as in partnership. ECDCs exist in various forms today, majority are school based, while few are community managed. Government and community-managed centers are free of cost, while the ECDCs in private school charge tuition fee. The facilities and quality of ECDCs, however, vary significantly and so do the outcomes. While evaluating the ECDCs in Nepal, we have assessed how government policy is addressing the issue of accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice of ECDCs.

To summarize, accessibility of ECDCs and percentage of children enrolled in primary school with ECDC experience is increasing since the past few years. The country has nearly more than 35,000 ECDCs registered with more than one million children attending every year. In terms of access, the gender gap is being narrowed across all ecological belts and social groups. Nearly 60 % of children enrolled in primary school have ECDC experience. There are evidences that children with ECDC experience have better retention and performance compared to those who did not have the experience. Despite the increasing coverage and better gender parity, however, the country is yet to achieve universal access. More than 40 % children enrolled in primary schools, especially those from poor and remote communities, do not have ECDC experience. Most of the ECDC are concentrated in urban areas and accessible places. The lack of awareness and unavailability due to remoteness are the major reasons behind the gap. Access to ECDCs also varies across the ecological belts and regions. Mid and Far West regions and mountains have less access compared to the national average. ECDCs are yet to address the specific needs of children living with disabilities that consist nearly 2 % of the total population.

The government of Nepal has adopted a free education policy in public school starting from ECDC and has announced targeted activities such as free meal for children of remote districts and poor communities to ensure affordability. Except in private schools, the affordability issue has been addressed with tuition-free provisions. While such targeted interventions have been effective to increase the accessibility, the number of other constraints including high ratio of facilitator-children in the center, lack adequate level of infrastructure, and low level of remuneration, training, and teaching learning materials have negatively affected the quality of the services from ECDCs. There is a need for a comprehensive plan aimed at increasing coverage and to strengthen quality. This needs to be accompanied by implementing

quality assurance mechanism, curriculum, and teacher development activities and providing adequate level of incentives for facilitators of improvement in the quality of ECD centers and their resultant outcomes.

Several institutions and instruments have been introduced to strengthen accountability of government and stakeholders for better outcomes of ECD centers. However, most of the accountability mechanisms are central level centric, and there is limited monitoring and follow-up activities at the local levels. Social audit has been recognized as one of the good practices of establishing accountability at local levels. The application of social audit needs to go beyond the income/expenditure statement to check and improve the accessibility, equity, and quality of ECDCs for young children.

The government has adopted a number of strategies to increase the coverage and strengthen quality of ECDCs across the country and for the sustainability of the outcomes. Specifically, the government through SSRP has ensured funding to establish and run ECDCs throughout the country. Public-private partnership (PPP) modalities have been introduced for better coverage and quality. Active engagement of local communities, parents, and integration of ECDCs in the local government planning process all have aimed at strengthening local level accountability and the sustainability. However, a lack of elected government and political instability since the past two decades has remained as one of the major challenges in ensuring local level accountability and to ensure sustainability.

In conclusion, early childhood education and ECDCs are priority components of education sector of the GoN aimed at improving access to quality education and holistic development for children throughout the country. The government demonstrates a clear commitment to addressing the specific constraints faced by the children living in remote areas, from disadvantaged caste and ethnic groups and those with specific needs through targeted interventions. Such commitments are expressed in the national and local level policies and programs. However, there are major gaps between policy aspiration and achievement in reality. This policy review cannot provide a full picture of the free ECE policies in Nepal, especially in the context where the school enrolment, distribution among public, community, and privately run centers, school fees, and the numbers and quality of teachers are varied between public and private managed and even within these categories depending on the location, resource endowment, and capacities of the owner/manager. Furthermore, there is a lack of comprehensive updated and disaggregated database to provide a more complete picture on the status of ECDCs, facilitators, and participants. Nevertheless, with the use of government-produced flashcards and review reports, this chapter has at least raised an awareness of the importance of evaluating the ECDCs. Using the 3A2S framework, we have integrated our evaluation on the basis of not only quantities but also and more importantly the qualitative aspects and outcomes. Taking Nepal as a case study, we have identified important geographical, economic, and sociocultural factors that affect the processes and outcomes of ECD policies in Nepal. Similarly, we have highlighted structural and methodological constraints that need to be addressed to improve accessibility, affordability, accountability,

sustainability, and social justice of ECDCs. The findings could contribute for improvement not only in Nepal but also elsewhere in similar context.

Appendix: Full Names of the Terms and Their Acronyms

Full names	Acronyms
Community-based organization	CBO
Department of Education	DOE
Early childhood development	ECD
Early childhood education	ECE
Early childhood education and care	ECEC
Early childhood development centers	ECDC
Gross domestic product	GDP
Government organization	GO
Government of Nepal	GON
Gender parity index	GPI
Human development index	HDI
International nongovernment organization	INGO
Kindergarten	KG
Local government institutions	LGI
Ministry of Education	MOE
Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development	MOFALD
Ministry of Health and Population	MOHP
Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare	MOWCSW
Midterm review	MTR
Nepal Children's Organization	NCO
National Education System Plan	NESP
Nonformal education	NFE
Nongovernment organization	NGO
National Plan of Action	NPA
Production Credit for Rural Women	PCRW
Preprimary class	PPC
Resource Centers	RC
Small Farmers Development Program	SFDP
School Sector Reform Program	SSRP
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	UNESCO
Village Development Committees	VDC

References

- Acharya, S. (2007). *Social inclusion: Gender and social equity in education SWAPs in South Asia. Nepal case study*. Kathmandu: UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia.
- Atweh, B. (2011). Reflections on social justice, race, ethnicity and identity from an ethical perspective. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, 6, 33–47. doi:10.1007/s11422-010-9305-3.
- Bagdi, A., & Vacca, J. (2005). Supporting early childhood social-emotional well being: The building blocks for early learning and school success. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 33, 3. doi:10.1007/s10643-005-0038-y.
- Caddell, M. (2007). Education and change: A historical perspective on schooling, development and the Nepali nation-state. In V. Kumar & J. Oosterheld (Eds.), *Education and social change in South Asia* (pp. 251–284). New Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Conn-Powers, M., Cross, F. A., Traub E. K., & Hutter-Pishgahi, L. (2006). The universal design of early education: Moving forward for all children. *Beyond the Journal. Young Children on the Web*. Retrieved from <http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/200609/ConnPowersBTJ.pdf>
- Cumming, C., Acharya S., Moriani, F., Shakya, D., & Levine, V. (2012). Mid-term evaluation of the school sector reform programme (vol. 1). Report submitted to Ministry of Education, Government of Nepal.
- Cunha, F., J. Heckman, L. L., & Masterov, D.V. (2005). Interpreting the evidence of life-cycle skill formation. IZA discussion paper series, No. 1575. Bonn: Institute for the Study of Labour.
- Darragh, J. (2007). Universal design for early childhood education: Ensuring access and equity for all. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 35, 2. doi:10.1007/s10643-007-0177-4.
- DoE. (2005). *Early childhood programme operation guidelines*. Bhaktapur: Department of Education, Government of Nepal.
- DoE. (2010). *Training manual for ECD*. Bhaktapur: Department of Education, Government of Nepal.
- DoE. (2015). *Flash report 2014/15 (forthcoming)*. Bhaktapur: Department of Education, Government of Nepal.
- Fiorino, D. J. (2010, December). Sustainability as a conceptual focus for public administration. *Public Administration Review*, 70(Special Issue), S78–S88.
- Frazer, N. (1996). Social justice in the age of identity politics: Redistribution, recognition, & participation. The Tanner lectures on human values delivered at Stanford University April 30–May 2, 1996. Retrieved from tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a.../Fraser98.pdf
- Gewirtz, S. (1998). Conceptualizing social justice in education: Mapping the territory. *Journal of Education Policy*, 13(4), 469–484. doi:10.1080/0268093980130402.
- Gewirtz, S. (2006). Towards a contextualized analysis of social justice in education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 38(1), 69–81.
- Hartmuth, G., Huber, K., & Rink, D. (2008). Operationalization and contextualization of sustainability at the local level. *Sustainable Development*, 16, 261–270.
- Hasan, A. (2007). Public policy in early childhood education and care. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 1(1), 1–10.
- Hatch, T. (2013). Beneath the surface of accountability: Answerability, responsibility and capacity building in recent education reforms in Norway. *Journal of Education Change*, 14, 113–138. doi:10.1007/s10833-012-9206-1.
- Hatch, J. A., & Grieshaber, S. (2002). Child observation and accountability in early childhood education: Perspectives from Australia and the United States. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 29, 4.
- Hawkins, K. (2014). Teaching for social justice, social responsibility and social inclusion: A respectful pedagogy for twenty-first century early childhood education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 22(5), 723–738. doi:10.1080/1350293X.2014.969085.
- Kamerman, S. B. (2006). A global history of early childhood education and care: Paper commissioned for the EFA Global monitoring report 2007, Strong foundations: early childhood care and education UNESCO.

- Kohn, A. (2001). Fighting the tests: A practical guide to rescuing our schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*. Retrieved from <http://www.alfiekohn.org/article/fighting-the-tests>
- Li, H., Wang, D., & Fong, R. W. (2014). Editor's note – sound bites won't work: Case studies of 15-year free education in greater China. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 3(2), 161–170.
- Link, T. (2007). Social indicators of sustainable progress for higher education. *New Directions for Institutional Research*. No. 134.
- MoE. (2009a). *School sector reform plan. 2009–2015*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Education, Government of Nepal.
- MoE. (2009b). Compendium on education policy in Nepal (unpublished). Kathmandu: Ministry of Education, Government of Nepal.
- MoES. (1997). *The basic and primary education master plan (1997–2002)*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Education, Government of Nepal.
- MoES. (2003). *Education for all: National plan of action*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Education and Sport, Nepal National Commission for UNESCO in collaboration with UNESCO.
- MoES. (2004). *Strategy paper for early childhood development in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Education and Sports, Government of Nepal.
- MoLJPA. (1999). Local self-governance act, 2055. Kathmandu: Nepal Law Book Management Committee. Retrieved from www.lawcommission.gov.np
- MoLJPA. (2002). Education rules, 2002. Kathmandu: Nepal Law Book Management Committee. Retrieved from www.lawcommission.gov.np
- MoLJPA. (2007). Interim constitution of Nepal, 2007. Kathmandu: Nepal Law Book Management Committee. Retrieved from: www.lawcommission.gov.np
- MoLJPA. (2015). Constitution of Nepal, 2015. Kathmandu: Nepal Law Book Management Committee. Retrieved from www.lawcommission.gov.np
- Moriani, F. (2012). The school sector reforms plan in Nepal: Issues, imperatives and incentives. A report submitted to MoE as part of mid-term review of School Sector Reform Plan.
- MoWCSW. (2012). *National plan of action for children (2004/05–2014/15)*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Government of Nepal.
- National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2007). *The timing and quality of early experiences combine to shape brain architecture: Working paper 5*. Retrieved from <http://www.developingchild.net>
- NPC. (2002). *The tenth plan (2002–2007)*. Kathmandu: National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal.
- NPC. (2007). *Three years interim plan (2007/08–2009/10)*. Kathmandu: National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal.
- NPC. (2010). *Three years plan (2010/11–2012/13)*. Kathmandu: National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal.
- NPC. (2013a). *National monitoring and evaluation guidelines*. Kathmandu: National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal.
- NPC. (2013b). *Multi-sectoral nutrition plan*. Kathmandu: National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal.
- NPC. (2013c). *Thirteenth plan (2013/14–2015/16)*. Kathmandu: National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal.
- OECD. (2006). *Starting strong II: Early childhood education and care*. Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- Onta, P. (1996). Ambivalence denied: The making of *rastriya itihas* in Panchayat era textbooks. *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, 23, 1.
- OPMCM. (2008). *Seva abhiyan sanchalan nirdesika, 2065* (in Nepali). Kathmandu: Office of the Prime minister and Council of Minister, Government of Nepal.
- Pollitt, E. (1990). *Malnutrition and infection in the classroom*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. UNESCO.
- Reed, H. B., & Reed, M. J. (1968). *Nepal in transition*. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press.

- Rizvi, F. (1998). Some thoughts on contemporary theories of social justice. In B. Atwah, S. Kemmis, & P. Weeks (Eds.), *Action research in practice: Partnerships for social justice*. New York: Routledge.
- Roose, R., & De Bie, M. (2003). From participative research to participative practice—a study in youth care. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 13*, 475–485.
- Shields, R., & Rappleye, J. (2008). Uneven terrain: Educational policy and equity in Nepal. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 28*(3), 265–276. doi:[10.1080/02188790802270237](https://doi.org/10.1080/02188790802270237).
- Shonkoff, J. P. (2010). Building a new bio-developmental framework to guide the future of early childhood policy. *Child Development, 81*(1), 357–367.
- Shonkoff, J. P., & Meisels, S. J. (2000). Early childhood intervention: A continued evolution. In J. P. Shonkoff & S. J. Meisels (Eds.), *Handbook of early childhood intervention* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- The World Bank. (2013a). *Nepal: Early childhood development*. SABER Country report.
- The World Bank. (2013b). *Nepal report on human development: Access, equity and quality in education, health and social protection sectors*. Human Development Unit, South Asia Region.
- UNESCO. (2008). *Early childhood policy review in Nepal*. Kathmandu: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Kathmandu Office.
- UNICEF. (2011). *Evaluation of UNICEF's early childhood development programme with focus on government of Netherlands funding: Nepal country case study report*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund.
- Vandenbroeck, M., & Lazzari, A. (2014). Accessibility of early childhood education and care: A state of affairs. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 22*(3), 327–335. doi:[10.1080/1350293X.2014.912895](https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2014.912895).
- White, L. A. (2011). The internationalization of early childhood education and care issues: Framing gender justice and child well-being. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions, 24*(2), 285–309.
- Woodhead, M. (2006). *Changing perspectives on early childhood: Theory, research and policy*. Paper commissioned for the EFA global monitoring report 2007, Strong foundations: Early childhood care and education. UNESCO.
- Young, M. E. (1995). *Investing in young children*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Chapter 8

A Story of Changing State Priorities: Early Childhood Care and Education Policies in Aotearoa New Zealand

Liz Everiss, Diti Hill, and Anne Meade

Abstract During the last 30 years, the early childhood care and education (ECCE) system in Aotearoa New Zealand has undergone a significant change, starting with centralising ECCE policy-making and administration into the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 1986. The influential *Before Five* (Department of Education 1988b) policies, with a ‘children’s rights’ framework, aimed to ensure equitable access to affordable and good-quality ECCE for young children. In 1996, the internationally acclaimed values-based, bicultural ECCE curriculum framework, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education 1996), which was developed in partnership with the indigenous Māori people, was released. Market-driven policy approaches underpin the government’s mostly hands-off approach to the supply and management of early childhood education services (ECES). Analysis of recent Ministry of Education data indicates (1) steady growth in ECCE participation, with growing numbers of children under 2 years attending for longer hours, (2) a change from mostly community-based ECCE provision to the majority of ECES being provided by private for-profit organisations, (3) that children living in poverty are less likely to attend licensed ECCE services and (4) growing population diversity. Lately the government has focussed on participation/enrolment targets often at the expense of ‘quality’ initiatives, particularly in relation to teaching qualifications.

The original version of this chapter was revised. An erratum to this chapter can be found at http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-1528-1_14

L. Everiss (✉)

Open Polytechnic of New Zealand/Kuratini Tuwhera, Lower Hutt, New Zealand

e-mail: Liz.Everiss@openpolytechnic.ac.nz

D. Hill

Auckland University, Auckland, New Zealand

A. Meade

Anne Meade Associates, Wellington, New Zealand

© Springer Science+Business Media Singapore 2017

H. Li et al. (eds.), *Early Childhood Education Policies in Asia Pacific*,

Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues, Concerns and Prospects 35,

DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-1528-1_8

List of Acronyms

ECE	Early childhood education
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
ECES	Early childhood education services
MoE	Ministry of Education
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NGOs	Non-government organisations
NZD	New Zealand dollar
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund

The Aotearoa New Zealand Context

New Zealand Context

New Zealand is an island nation in the South Pacific. The main population groups are European, Māori, Pacific peoples, Chinese and Southeast Asian and South Asian.

Participation in the paid workforce is high for men and relatively high for women – 58% of sole mothers and 70% of partnered mothers are employed (Flynn and Harris 2015). Many women with young children work part-time. The trend in the last decade is for mothers of young children to resume paid work earlier. Parental leave paid by the government is 16 weeks (up from 14 weeks prior to 2015).

The Education Context

Full-time attendance at school is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16 years, and children can receive a free education from their 5th birthday. Most children start school on or near their 5th birthday. This has a significant impact on transition processes between early childhood education services (ECES) and schools.

Table 8.1 Categories of licensed ECE services and percentages of enrolments (June 2014)

Category	Percentage
Education and care centres	63.4
Kindergartens	15.9
Home-based care schemes	9.6
Playcentres	6.4
Ngā kōhanga reo	4.5

Source: Ministry of Education Annual ECE census summary report 2015

The Early Childhood Education Sector

Categories of Early Childhood Education Services

Until recently, the majority of ECES have been provided by community groups (NGOs), with a minority owned by a workplace, a family or ECE-specific commercial organisations. Only Te Kura (the Correspondence School) and early education classes in hospitals were – and still are – owned and fully funded by the central government. The community groups include kindergartens, playcentres, playgroups, community-based education and care services (e.g. Pacific language ECES), some home-based services (e.g. coordinated nanny services) and ngā kōhanga reo (Māori immersion services for children and their families/whānau).

In this century, education and care services (aka childcare services) have become the biggest category in terms of numbers. Moreover, there has been a rapid increase in corporate ownership of education and care services (through the building of new centres or buyout of existing ECES that had been owned by community cooperatives).

The latest enrolment data as at June 2014 show that there were 200,002 child enrolments in 4,300 licensed ECES (Ministry of Education 2015a, b). Some children are enrolled in two types of service; for example, they attend a home-based service for 8–9 h per day where the nanny takes the children to a licensed centre for a few hours each day or week. The percentages in different categories of ECES are set out in Table 8.1. In addition, there are 857 children enrolled in a variety of unlicensed services, generally called playgroups, which meet in community venues such as church buildings.

The last two categories of licensed services are described as parent-led services where family/whānau members play a significant role in running and leading the educational programme in the settings. Unlicensed playgroups are also parent-led.

A Brief History

The 1980s was a ‘watershed’ decade for early childhood education in New Zealand.

By the mid-1980s, the wider roles of care and education (Bronfenbrenner 1979) had become accepted. For example, the Social Advisory Council wrote that childcare benefits society by ‘the enhancement of children’s development, including the promotion of cultural identity, and the social integration of children with disabilities; the support of families [in bringing up children]; the facilitation of participation in society’ (Social Advisory Council 1985, p. 30).

Most of those benefits continue to underlie strategic goals for the early childhood care and education (ECCE) sector across the decades.

In the early 1980s, responsibility for the administration of early childhood care and education (ECCE) was carried by three government departments (Education, Social Welfare and Māori Affairs). Local government entities did not have a role in the provision or administration of ECES in New Zealand; nor do they today.

In 1986, childcare administration was transferred from the Department of Social Welfare to the Department of Education. Government ministers voted funds for childcare staff, training and advisory/support.

The rationale for the integration of ECCE administration shifted over the years. The reasons included women’s workforce participation, support for children and their families, improvements to the quality of childcare services and human rights. In the mid-1980s, there was a convergence of advocacy from diverse interested parties, and government ministers made a decision to integrate the administration of ECCE under Education.

In 1987, integration of training courses for childcare and kindergarten teachers was set in motion. Three-year teacher education programmes were implemented across all colleges of education/universities by 1989. New graduates were to have equal status as teachers regardless of the type of ECES employing them.

After 1986–1987, the focus of advocacy for ECES was shifted to equitable resources for childcare. In 1988, government ministers set up an ECCE working group – one of three such working groups for education. The tasks for the ECCE group included advising on more equitable access to ECES and more equitable funding and funding processes. Why was equity important? At that time, government grants and regulations, and teacher education provision, varied by ECES type, because government ministers had been reacting to separate lobbying from the different ECES organisations in previous decades.

The working group report argued for government to be involved in three elements in relation to early childhood education:

- ‘Features in the interests of the child’ – good-quality services that meets the rights of the child
- ‘Features in the interests of the caregivers’ – accessibility to affordable services
- ‘Features in the interests of cultural survival and transmission to succeeding generations’ – opportunities for young children and parents to learn their language and culture

‘It is essential for all three elements to be present in every early childhood care and education arrangement’ (Department of Education 1988a p. 6).

In 1988, sweeping new policies spawned by the three working groups for education were announced. The *Before Five* (Department of Education 1988b) ECCE policies relating to new structures were aligned with those announced for the school and tertiary sectors. The new structures were a Ministry of Education, an Education Review Office, a Teachers Council and Crown entities for administering qualifications, providing careers advice, special education services and support for ECES. Years later, the special education service and early childhood development unit were absorbed back into the Ministry of Education.

The *Before Five* reforms ‘proved to be an important opportunity for improving the status and resources for childcare as most of the new [operational] policies made no distinction between different types of ECCE services. For example, the 1989 Budget announced that all ECCE services would receive the same per child, per hour grant. ... The 1989 Budget also announced that the Department of Social Welfare would continue to pay a means-tested fees subsidy to reduce the cost of early education to low-income families’ (Meade and Podmore 2010, pp. 21–22). Attendance at ECES became much more affordable.

During 1987 and 1988, a separate government review team developed recommendations for the ngā kōhanga reo organisation. Subsequently, government ministers decided to integrate its administration under Education in 1990. As a consequence, ngā kōhanga reo came to receive the same per child, per hour grant announced in 1989 for ECES.

In 1987, government ministers decided on a staged plan for increasing the proportion of 3-year qualified teachers in teacher-led services. A change of government halted the implementation of this policy.

In 2002, a 10-year strategic plan for ECCE (Ministry of Education 2002) reinstated or revised the policies for equity for childcare services that were dropped in the 1990s.

In 2010, an independent advisory Early Childhood Education Taskforce was set up by the government. The recommendations in its report (2011) included improved quality by supporting professionalism in ECES, a better funding system, support for parents (for productivity purposes) and improved accountability. Since then, the global economic crisis has meant minimal expenditure on policy changes other than working towards a better funding system.

The Role of Government Departments

The old Department of Education was transformed into the Ministry of Education in 1989. Nowadays, the Ministry of Education develops policy and resources for education providers’ use, allocates grants-in-aid to ECES and for some professional development, supports some research and monitors regulatory compliance by ECES. It does not administer ECES themselves – committees, boards or owners do that. Another department, the Education Review Office, evaluates standards of children’s care and education.

NZ Teachers Council and Its Successor, the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand

The 1989 education reforms included establishing an NZ Teachers Council. Its main functions were to:

- Create graduating teacher standards and a code of ethics
- Approve tertiary programmes for initial teacher education whose students would reach the graduating teaching standards
- Register teachers against registered teacher criteria and discipline those who were in breach of the criteria or who were convicted of a crime

In 2015, an amendment to the Education Act disestablished the Teachers Council and established the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand in its place. Additional functions include education leadership.

The Regulatory Framework for Early Childhood Education

The rules that govern ECES are divided into three tiers:

- First tier – the Education Act 1989.
- Second tier – regulations for ECES and playgroups.
- Third tier – criteria which are the standards that services must comply with.
- There are different criteria for centre-based services, home-based services, hospital-based services and playgroups.
- The early childhood education curriculum framework is also part of the regulatory framework.

Teaching and Learning: Policy and Resources

Te Whāriki, *Early Childhood Curriculum (Ministry of Education 1996)*

Statements foreshadowing the development of a national ECCE curriculum were included in *Education to Be More* (Department of Education 1988a). Draft curriculum guidelines were developed by ECCE experts under contract to the Ministry of Education, and specialist working groups made suggestions for the curriculum for Māori language, Pacific language and home-based settings and children with special needs.

All agreed on a bicultural curriculum. ‘The framework begins with two sets of parallel aims. The English words are not translations of the Māori, but the ideas and concepts interconnect’ (Carr and May 1993, p. 43).

Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education 1996; hereafter referred to as *Te Whāriki*) was a radical departure from school curriculum models at that date: first and foremost because it is not subject based. It is a curriculum framework for the education of children from birth to starting school age that allows each ECES to develop a curriculum that is appropriate for its unique learning community. Second, *Te Whāriki* is a bilingual and bicultural document. Its focus on children's *mana* (prestige, status) and empowerment means adults are to focus on children's strengths, not deficits.

Soon the ECCE curriculum will be 20 years old. In 2011, the ECE Taskforce recommended that the implementation of *Te Whāriki* be examined. In 2015, an advisory group on early learning (AGEL) was charged, inter alia, with examining its implementation.

Kei Tua o te Pae, *Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars*

A significant investment in a published resource focused on assessment for learning was made in the first decade after the publication of *Te Whāriki*. There was a staged release of 20 books of commentary and exemplars to inform assessment practice in early childhood education (Ministry of Education 2004, 2005, 2007, and 2009). The framework for *Te Whāriki* shaped the development of the content of the books. Developers wanted assessment to be 'a powerful force *for* learning' (our emphasis). 'They introduce principles that will help learning communities to develop their own assessments of children's learning' (Ministry of Education 2004, Book 1, p. 2). The process for assessment *for* learning advocated in the books is for ECE teachers to be 'noticing, recognising and responding' to indications of learning (op. cite, p. 6).

Exemplars make visible the learning that is valued.

Participation

Supply and Demand Context

Since 1990, universal participation goals, incorporating accessibility and affordability criteria, have been important for successive governments. Prior to this time, the government took a targeted approach to its ECCE provision and prioritised support for services it classified as providing education, as opposed to care, such as sessional kindergartens and playcentres. It also had an ownership interest in these services. The *Before Five* (Department of Education 1988b) policy framework changed this focus by making it a 'right' for all children from age 0 to 6 years to have access to a choice of services meeting equivalent and approved quality standards. At the same time, the government preference for market-driven policy

approaches dictated that it take a mostly non-interventionist and facilitative, rather than directive approach, to ECCE supply and demand.

As a result of the new policies, the government divested itself of its previous ownership and employment responsibilities for kindergartens and playcentres and instead relied on competition within the market to determine the nature of ECCE provision including the location of services, opening hours, cost and the age range of the children who attend. A mix of universal and targeted funding subsidies were paid to licensed services, regardless of ECES type, to supplement the cost of providing ECCE and to incentivise ECCE attendance. As a result, over the last 20 years, there has been significant growth in the number of children accessing early childhood services and the hours they attend with the distribution of services becoming increasingly skewed towards wealthier families, with for-profit providers now dominating the network (Start Strong 2014).

Enrolment/Attendance Trends

In 2014, there were 200,002 child enrolments/attendances¹ in 4,299 licensed ECCE services (35.3% growth in services since 2004), with growth focused in all-day education and care services, which now form 88.8% of the total ECCE network, and home-based services (Ministry of Education 2015a, b). In contrast, enrolments have tended to fall for parent-led playcentres, Māori immersion kōhanga reo and sessional kindergartens, with these declines largely driven by the increased workforce participation of women and the need for more children to attend ECCE services and for longer hours (Ministry of Education 2014) (Fig. 8.1).

Time Children Spend in ECES

Enrolment/attendance rates tend to rise with the age of the child (Ministry of Education 2015a, b). Figure 8.2 shows that in 2014 these rates ranged from 15.9% for under 1-year-olds to 97.3% for 4-year-olds (Ministry of Education 2015a). A larger proportion of younger children (0–2-year-olds) use play centre (63% of under 2-year-olds) and home-based (58% of under 2-year-olds) services and ngā kōhanga reo (48%), while a greater percentage of older children use kindergartens and education and care services. This trend is consistent with the findings of a number of studies on parent choice of ECES which suggest that parents who prioritise the importance of a younger child's relationship with their caregiver are more likely to choose home-based care for infants and toddlers, while for older children, parents

¹The term enrolments/attendances refers to 2014 data, whereas the term enrolment refers to data up to and including 2013. This is due to a new data collection being utilised by the Ministry of Education for some services.

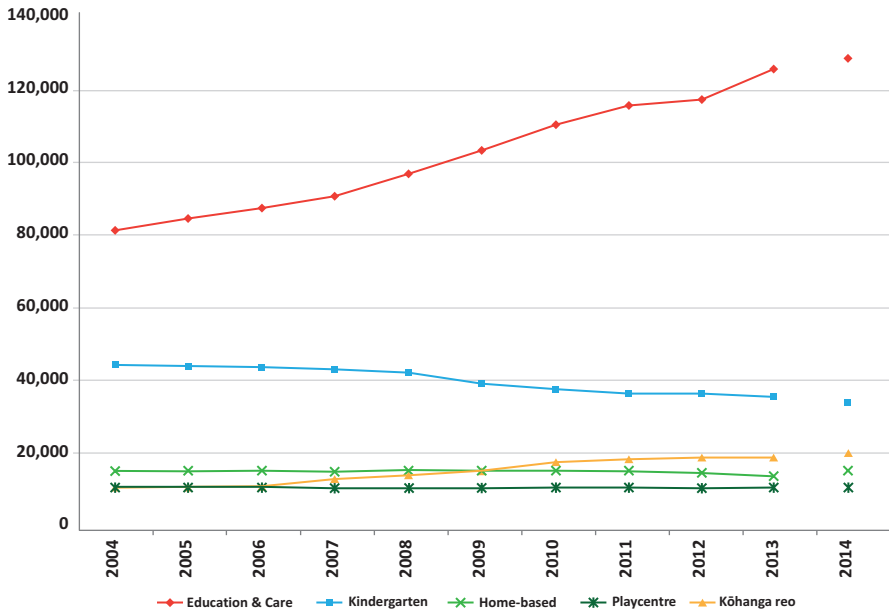


Fig. 8.1 Number of enrolment/attendances in licensed services, by service type, 2004–2014. Some double counting occurs because children who are enrolled/attending more than one service are counted more than once. This will change with the new counting system the Ministry of Education started implementing in 2014 (Source: Ministry of Education Annual ECE census summary report 2015)

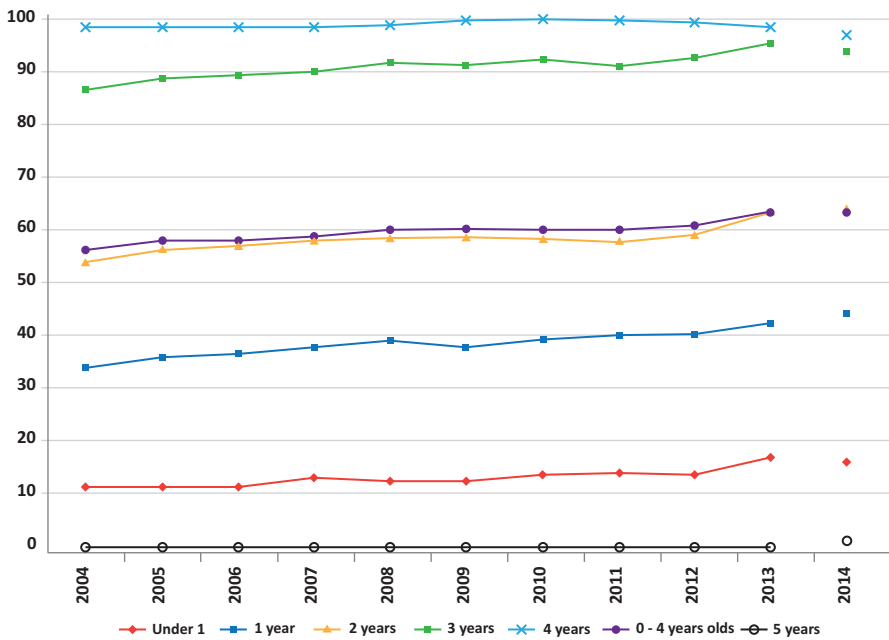


Fig. 8.2 Enrolment/attendance patterns in licensed services, by age of child, 2004–2014 (Source: Ministry of Education Annual ECE census summary report 2014)

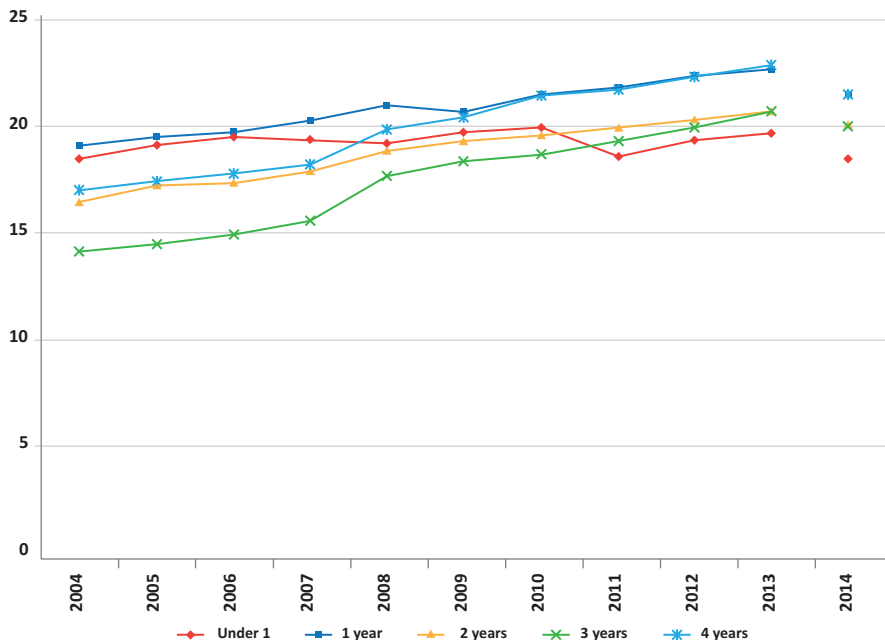


Fig. 8.3 Average number of hours per week of child attendance, by age, 2004–2014 (Source: Ministry of Education Annual ECE census summary report 2014)

were more likely to choose centre-based settings which they perceive to emphasise developmental and educational outcomes (Everiss 2010).

Children spend the longest number of hours each week in education and care services (average of 23.3 h in 2014) and home-based services (an average of 22.6 h a week in 2014), with just over half this number (56 %) attending for more than 6 h a day (Ministry of Education 2015a). Kindergartens are lower at 15.4 h, with the sessional nature of many kindergartens mediating this result. The Ministry of Education (2015a) describes the average hours a child attends an ECES as being age dependent, with under 1-year-olds attending for the least amount of time at 18.6 h a week and 4-year-olds for the longest time at 21.5 h a week. In the case of 3–4-year-olds, there was a significant jump in average hours of attendance in 2008 following the introduction of ‘20 Hours ECCE’ policy, which significantly reduced attendance fees for 3–4-year-old children (Ministry of Education 2015a) (Fig. 8.3).

The Ministry of Education data for the year ending June 2012 shows that 95 % of the 60,413 children starting school that year participated in ECCE and that those who attended ECES more regularly and for a longer time were likely to be from socio-economically advantaged backgrounds. It is a bleaker picture for the 5 % (2,816) of non-attendees who are more likely to be from impoverished backgrounds and/or experiencing forms of disadvantage (Dale et al. 2014). In the same year, government ministers announced Better Public Services targets to be achieved by 2017, which include a 98 % participation rate by children in licensed ECES prior to

starting school. This policy focuses on progressing education outcomes for children from low socio-economic backgrounds, Māori and Pacific learners and children with special educational needs (Ministry of Education 2014) and is accompanied by targeted initiatives designed to address barriers to participation in selected communities with relatively low child participation. These initiatives reflect the intensified government discourse of vulnerability where ECCE is positioned as a means of countering long-term welfare dependency and, thereby, reducing costs to the state (Alcock and Haggerty 2013).

Qualified Staff

In recent years, there has been a clear focus by the government on increasing children's participation in licensed ECCE services with only limited attention to policies designed to improve the quality of ECCE provision, particularly in the area of qualified staffing where there has been significant retrenchment. In 2010, government ministers abandoned the target of having 100% qualified teachers in teacher-led ECES by 2012, despite the strong body of international literature on quality in which higher staff qualifications are generally regarded as being the best predictor of good educational and social outcomes for children (Start Strong 2014).

While there has been growth in the number of qualified teachers, the proportion falls well short of the 100% qualified teacher target. In 2014, teacher-led services had a total of 25,284 teaching staff with 74.6% (18,862) of this number holding recognised early childhood teaching qualifications at either diploma or degree level (Ministry of Education 2015a).

Almost all kindergarten staff (95%) and home-based coordinators (99.3%) are qualified² with 77.5% of all qualified teachers working in mostly full-day education and care services which comprise the majority of the ECES. Māori staff comprise 9% of teachers (2,267) working in teacher-led services (Ministry of Education 2015a). It is important to note that the Ministry data on staff/child ratios do not differentiate between qualified staff who have a diploma or bachelor's degree of teaching (ECE) and are registered teachers and adults without qualifications who are counted in staff/child ratios for regulatory purposes. On this basis, kindergartens (with almost 100% qualified staff) and full-day education and care services (where 77.5% of staff are qualified) are shown to have an average of one adult to six children over 2 years old. Education and care services catering for under 2-year-old children have an average of one adult to three children which, although better than the legal requirement of 1:5, does not in itself guarantee that all staff in this ratio are qualified.

²Note that home-based coordinators are qualified ECCE staff who work directly with educators, rather than children, in home-based services. The majority of home-based educators do not have recognised early childhood qualifications.

Affordability

Funding Policy Framework

Funding for ECES in Aotearoa New Zealand comprises a mix of government funding, which utilises a range of universal and targeted funding strategies, and private sources such as parent fees and ‘payment in kind’ via voluntary input. A significant change of funding approach occurred in 1990 when the government moved from being a provider of education services to a competitive model where it became a purchaser of a quantum of education based on the number of children attending an ECES. This new approach was effected via the use of a universal funding formula where ECES meeting similar quality levels, as specified by government-prescribed regulations, received equivalent levels of funding per child per hour. The formula was based primarily on numbers of children attending (Mitchell 2005).

Just over a decade later, in 2004, the government moved to a cost-driver approach where funding became differentiated on the basis of cost, usually relating to service, community population profiles or programme features. The cost-driver approach was introduced to reduce the likelihood of services with higher operating costs making savings that lowered quality or alternatively raising fees and as a consequence inhibiting the accessibility of licensed ECES for lower-income groups (Mitchell 2005). Cost-driver funding is currently provided to all licensed ECES for up to 30 h per child per week, with the rates of the subsidy dependent on the ages of children being catered for (children aged under-2 or children aged over-2). Another cost-driver subsidy applies in relation to qualified teachers, wherein the government meets a percentage of costs for relevant staff. It is designed to incentivise the employment of up to 80% qualified teachers in ECES. All subsidies, including those related to fees, are paid directly to ECES providers.

Increasing Focus on Vulnerability

Recent information released by the government reveals that child poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand is worse than previously acknowledged with 285,000 children living below the poverty line and high levels of hardship amongst Māori and Pacific families and families on benefits (Ritchie et al. 2014). During the last two decades, base funding has been supplemented with targeted subsidies aimed at incentivising participation in ECCE by disadvantaged populations. As a result, noticeable gains were evident in child participation in ECCE during the period 2001–2004, although increases in participation were more evident for wealthier children (Ministry of Education 2014). The policy approaches that were used include increasing the level of the childcare subsidy which supplements fees for low-income families, and grants known as equity funding, which provide additional funding support for ECES with a bigger percentage of Māori children, low-income

and special needs children and those attending rural services. Participation also increased significantly between the years 2007 and 2011, when growth in the 0–4-year-old enrolments coincided with the introduction of the universal ‘20 hours ECE’ policy designed to offset fees paid by parents of children aged 3–4 years. More recently, it has become mandatory for parents being supported by government benefits to ensure their 3–5-year-old children are enrolled in and regularly attend a licensed ECES or for the parents to participate in a government-approved early parenting programme. Beneficiaries can lose up to 50% of their benefit income if they do not participate. Compulsory attendance in ECES applies only to children of beneficiaries.

State Investment in ECCE

A 2011 survey of income and expenditure and fees of ECCE providers showed estimates of fees, which apply in addition to the government subsidies, varied between service types (Arnold and Scott 2012). Playcentres which tend to rely on volunteer parent input were shown on average to charge less than \$1 an hour (NZD); the majority of kindergartens, with state-funded salaries and access to the 20 h ECE higher level of government funding for 3–4-year-olds, tended to charge an average of NZD2–4 an hour, while 68% of education and care services charged fees between NZD 4 and 7 an hour. The fees for attending home-based services at NZD5–6 an hour were said to be on a par with education and care centres (Ritchie et al. 2014).

According to the OECD Family Database Aotearoa (OECD 2014), the New Zealand government invested just over 1% of its GDP in ECCE in 2009. While lower than that for Scandinavian countries, at the 1% of GDP rate New Zealand achieves the internationally accepted benchmark for the level of investment in ECCE necessary to run a high-quality system (Start Strong 2014). A report from the Ministry of Education, Education Counts (2013) database shows also that public expenditure on ECCE increased significantly between 2002 with total expenditure of NZD532 million³ and 2012 with spending of NZD1562 million (a 190% increase over 10 years). For each full-time-equivalent child, this equated to NZD4570 in 2002 and NZD9600 in 2012 (Education Counts 2013). In 2014, the government announced a government expenditure on ECCE increase of NZD155.7 million. Nearly NZD54 million of it was for an immediate increase to subsidy rates to help keep fees affordable for parents. The remainder was to be allocated over the next 4 years to help meet the forecast extra demand. Despite the promise of incremental funding over 4 years, government subsidy levels at this point in time remain below those that applied before cuts to subsidies for ECES made in 2011. Lack of access to high-quality ECCE services in poorer areas remains an issue as a consequence (Ritchie et al. 2014).

³All expenditure cited in New Zealand dollars (NZD)

Accountability

Recurring goals in policy development in recent decades in Aotearoa New Zealand have been:

- Improving the quality of ECES
- Equitable access for children and families.

There has been considerable policy emphasis in the last two decades on structural quality, in particular on achieving increased numbers of qualified and registered teachers in the system and increased proportions in individual ECES. Much of the government's investment in quality ECCE has been at the 'front-end', although there have been smaller investments in incentivising improvements to quality via professional development.

There are multiple layers of accountability in the education system, some of them related to maintaining quality ECCE and increasing enrolments and some of them focused on checking on the proper use of taxpayers' money.

Ministry of Education Accountability

The present government has a set of 'better public service targets' and has chosen to target access to ECES by setting enrolment targets to be met by 2017. The Ministry of Education reports to government ministers at least twice each year on changes in enrolments, including data about Māori and Pacific population groups that have been under-represented as users of ECES.

Accountability for Initial Teacher Education Providers

The NZ Teachers Council and NZ Qualifications Authority have developed two types of standards for teacher education: graduating teacher standards and standards for approval of initial teacher education programmes. Both these agencies are directly involved in approving tertiary institutions that apply to be teacher education providers and teacher education programmes, as well as re-approval of those programmes every 3 years.

Accountability for Early Childhood Education Services

Ministry of Education Systems

Standards for ECES are a more recent phenomenon, associated with the introduction of licensing criteria by the Ministry of Education in 2008.

Licensing criteria are standards that services must comply with. These have been designed to be applied at the ‘front-end’ when a new service applies for a license to open (or a certificate in the case of playgroups). After the criteria were mandated in 2008, the Ministry relicensed existing ECES to ensure uniform compliance with the criteria/standards across the country. All licensed services were on the 2008 regulatory framework by the time the authors wrote this chapter.

The other time when ECES are mostly likely to attend to the criteria is when something goes wrong, i.e. when someone notices an ECES is non-compliant with criteria/standards. Reports about non-compliance can be supplied to the Ministry of Education by the service itself, parents, health or child protection agencies, fire departments, the Education Review Office or a member of the public. The person who is legally responsible in the service is required to furnish a report to the Ministry of Education about their non-compliance and state how the situation will be rectified; it will be within a tight timeframe.

The Ministry of Education also administers accountability systems in relation to government funding. Audited accounts must be provided annually by ECES. More onerous for ECES are the forms that must be submitted to the Ministry three times a year if the ECES is to receive government subsidies. Staff-hour counts have to be completed every half-day.

They record the qualified teachers and unqualified staff as well as the children in attendance that day. These are aggregated on the funding claim forms submitted three times a year. Each year, the Ministry of Education’s financial auditors visit a random selection of ECES, or ECES with known anomalies in their records, to examine child attendance, financial and payroll records held by the ECES.

Education Review Office Systems

The Education Review Office (ERO) undertakes reviews of individual ECES (and schools) on a rolling basis. The interval between reviews varies from 1 to 4 years, depending on ERO’s rating of how well placed the ECES is to promote positive learning outcomes for all children. Each review report is published online for any interested party to read. ERO’s ratings draw on ECES internal self-review reports and ERO external reviewers’ findings during site visits based on ERO indicators.

ERO also publishes national evaluation reports on topical educational practices. In 2015, the reports include one on *Continuity of Learning*, focused on transitions from ECES to schools, and one on *Infants and Toddlers*. These are based on collated data from a few hundred review visits.

Professional Accountability for Individual Teachers

When teachers graduate with their degree in education or teaching in early childhood education, they apply to the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (formerly NZ Teachers Council) to become a registered teacher. Then a fully registered teacher takes on the role of mentor to guide the provisionally registered teacher through a 2-year programme of on-job professional learning. The provisionally registered teacher gathers evidence to demonstrate that he or she satisfies the 12 registered teacher criteria and adheres to the teachers' code of ethics in their practice. School teachers go through an identical process to become registered teachers. All teachers must continue their professional learning and keep a portfolio of evidence related to the 12 registered teacher criteria in order to renew their practicing certificate every 3 years. A criminal conviction or serious breach in ethical/professional behaviour may result in the Education Council's disciplinary committee withdrawing a practicing certificate and/or registration.

Sustainability of the Policy Framework

Maintaining an Integrated System

To understand present times and to plan for a sustainable future, it is important to make sense of the past. Helen May (2009), a key researcher and writer on ECCE in Aotearoa New Zealand, describes the development of ECCE as a story of volunteering, advocacy, shifting state interest and increasing government investment which reflects not only changing social and political attitudes to children but also to the role of women in society (May 2009). May (2002) also argues that significant change for children and their families is only possible when there is sufficient agreement between those working with young children and government power brokers who make policies and fund ECCE services. She identifies the 1940s and 1980s as two such periods that resulted in big shifts in ECCE.

As described earlier in this chapter, New Zealand was the first country in the English-speaking world to recognise that care and education are intertwined and to work towards an integrated policy and administrative framework. The transfer of state responsibility for the administration of childcare services to Education in 1986 was a significant change and established the foundation for future coherent policy development. Many years later, in 2001, the OECD identified integration as a core international ECCE policy issue. The benefits of a unified approach include an enhanced ability to address inequalities and facilitate policy cohesion in relation to meeting social and pedagogical objectives, budgets, regulation, funding and parental costs (Mitchell 2005).

The effect of the integration of administrative responsibility by government for ECCE services was not fully addressed until 1990 following the release of

government's subsequent *Before Five* policies (Department of Education 1988b) which included an integrated framework for ECCE funding, staffing and regulation. Later, in 1996, Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood curriculum framework *Te Whāriki* was published and continues to apply to all ECES. The curriculum is notable as the world's first bicultural curriculum and for its inclusion of infants and toddlers as well as young children.

In 2002, the government released a comprehensive 10-year strategic plan for ECCE *Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (Ministry of Education 2002). The plan mapped a pathway for ECCE to 2012 and was underpinned by policy goals to improve the quality of services, to increase participation in quality ECCE and to promote collaborative relationships. Initially the plan resulted in gains for ECCE through multiple initiatives which included a new valuing of the role of teachers and qualifications, a review of regulations, increased research activity, funding for professional learning and development and a focus on improving connectedness across children's services, including government departments.

However, in 2008, with a change of government to one with more limited commitment to ECCE, a number of influential initiatives were discontinued such as the Centre of Innovation research programme where ECCE services partnered with researchers to explore elements of 'good' teaching practice to inform the teaching profession. The strategic plan ended in 2012 without a replacement one, leaving a policy vacuum that in the authors' view has resulted in a lack of a clear future vision for ECCE and ad hoc policy-making.

Links to the Schooling Curriculum

The bicultural early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* was developed in the early '1990s' at a time that the school curriculum was being reviewed and national curriculum documents written for subject areas, by level and with achievement-based assessments. While this created interest in curriculum in the ECCE sector, the development of a new curriculum for schooling was accompanied by concern that a similar model may be imposed on ECCE services (Carr and May 1994). In response, when the opportunity arose, the ECCE sector united in supporting the development of an ECCE curriculum which defined, protected and promoted early childhood philosophies. Those developing the curriculum for ECES based it on the premise that young children, indeed infants and toddlers, are active and capable learners who seek to make sense of their world. The broad learning outcomes in *Te Whāriki* are about children's thinking ('working theories', when knowledge, skills and attitudes combine together) and positive dispositions towards learning. The strands in the ECCE curriculum mesh well with the competencies set out in the *New Zealand Curriculum* for schools (Ministry of Education 2007).

Despite the forward-looking initiatives of recent decades, with their focus on ECCE as an important contributor to a healthy and just society, there are currently signs that global and economic trends characterised by an emphasis on marketisation

and privatisation are dominating education policy in Aotearoa New Zealand (Alcock and Haggerty 2013) and that there is increasing state control over curriculum (Mitchell 2014). Alcock and Haggerty (2013) borrow the term ‘schoolification’ to describe the increasingly narrow emphasis the government is placing on ECCE as a site to prepare young children for academic success at school and subsequently for the workplace. Government communications often focus on academic outcomes. Early childhood educators believe there is a risk that the holistic, embodied and interactive ways in which young children learn, grow and develop would become lost in the dominant schooling agenda (Mitchell 2014).

Social Justice

Human Rights

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) came into force in 1990; Aotearoa New Zealand government signed/ratified the Convention on the 6th April 1993. The UNCRC was developed by the United Nations to strengthen the position of children as holders of human rights and applies to everyone under the age of 18. The Convention has 54 articles about how governments and organisations will work to support children’s rights.

New Zealand also has a Bill of Rights (1990) and the Human Rights Act (1993) which is informed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); both of these sit alongside the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) to guide the citizens and residents of Aotearoa New Zealand to act as duty bearers or guardians of human rights.

The Human Rights Commission, funded by the government, operates as an independent government entity to promote and protect human rights for all. The Office of the Commissioner for Children, also an independent government-funded entity, has a statutory function to monitor the social services our government provides to children and youth, and the Commissioner advocates for and promotes the implementation of UNCRC.

The Ministry of Social Development is responsible for administering the UNCRC and its protocols and reports directly to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child every 5 years on how it is fulfilling its human rights obligations to children and youth in Aotearoa New Zealand. For the ECCE sector and for non-government organisations (NGOs), more broad-based groups with a childhood interest such as UNICEF, the Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa, collates responses from diverse NGOs in New Zealand and takes responsibility for sending the report to the United Nations. The United Nations Committee reviews both the Government Periodic Report and the NGO Alternative Periodic Report and draws up a list of issues for the New Zealand government to address. Through these actions, the country pledges certain rights to its children to ensure they are cared for and protected; have food, shelter and education; and are treated with respect (Ritchie et al. 2014).

The main points on how well the government is responding to issues of social justice in relation to ECCE in Aotearoa New Zealand in the most recent alternative periodic report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2010) include noting:

- That inequalities and disadvantage continue to exist for a disproportionate number of indigenous children (tamariki Māori), children of Pacific Island heritage and children from other minority ethnic groups
- That increasing numbers of children under the age of two are attending early childhood care and education services while their parents work
- That it is a concern to have the target for registered early childhood teachers in early childhood services reduced in 2010 from the 100 % for 2012 to 80 %, with no timeline for achieving this

Codes of Ethics

The development of *Te Whāriki* during the 1990s, a curriculum that would be common to all ECES, has been described as a process that united the early childhood sector (Dalli and Cherrington 2009). The release of draft curriculum was the trigger for a group of early childhood professionals from a range of organisations across Aotearoa New Zealand to work together to create a code of ethics for early childhood educators. The Early Childhood Code of Ethics Working Group used a questionnaire from NAEYC that was adapted by Australian academics and adapted again for Aotearoa New Zealand. The consultation part of the working group process created a discourse about early childhood teaching as a profession. The resulting code of ethics (Early Childhood Code of Ethics National Working Group 2001) and accompanying kits with scenarios of ethical difficulty that can face early educators and possible solutions were welcomed and used in ECCE for several years. In 2004, the New Zealand Teachers Council (now known as the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand) released a code of ethics for use by all qualified and registered teachers in the early childhood and compulsory school sectors (New Zealand Teachers Council 2004). The necessity to comply with this code of ethics has meant it has overtaken the voluntary code of ethics (2001) that was specifically designed for ECCE.

Accommodating Diversity

Aotearoa New Zealand, a country with a history of colonisation dating back to the eighteenth century, established a national commitment to the indigenous Māori people, the *tangata whenua*, under the 1840 *Tiriti o Waitangi* (Treaty of Waitangi), and *te reo Māori* (the Māori language) is one of three official languages, alongside

English and New Zealand Sign Language. Relative to the overall population of 4.4 million people, there is a high immigrant population in Aotearoa New Zealand. While this history of immigration began in the eighteenth century with the arrival of British subjects, the Pacific Island, European and Asian immigrant populations are now also well established, alongside a diversity of peoples from African and Middle Eastern nations. Early migrant families extend over more than four or five generations.

With New Zealand's annual immigrant population and an official United Nations-agreed refugee intake, a diversity of ethnic groups are – year by year – contributing to Aotearoa New Zealand's rich and vibrant multicultural population. Each new intake of migrants and refugees is introduced to the Treaty partnership and bicultural nature of life as partners with *tangata whenua* in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Treaty Relationships

Debates about the Treaty relationship and multiculturalism are now firmly embedded within the ECCE discourse of race relations, and while the Treaty guaranteed Māori their right to *rangatiratanga* (self-determination), it is also about inclusion for all citizens and generally implies that Māori and other cultures should have equal status and opportunities and work together towards a more equitable society (Ritchie, cited in Forsyth and Leaf 2010). The fact that Māori identity, language and culture originate only in Aotearoa New Zealand and will be lost to the world if they are not preserved adds significant weight to the right of Māori language and culture to state protection (May 2004). Defining multiculturalism from an indigenous point of view is something that is an ongoing social justice challenge for all nonindigenous people living in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This concern is clearly reflected in the conceptualisation of *Te Whāriki*, as a values-based, bilingual and bicultural document grounded in Māori pedagogy and principles that underpin an education for 'life'. Tilly Reedy, one of the Māori writers of *Te Whāriki*, describes it as 'offering a theoretical framework that is appropriate for all; common yet individual; for everyone but only for one; a *whāriki* (mat) woven by loving hands that can cross cultures with respect, and can weave people and nations together' (Reedy, cited in Nuttall 2013, p. 49). In recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi, the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand requires all registered teachers with a practicing certificate to work 'cross-culturally' and to have a 'good' understanding of Māori language and protocols so as to be able to engage effectively with Māori children and families in the education context and beyond (Education Council 2015). Despite this focus, inequitable delivery of culturally appropriate ECCE services to Māori and Pacific Island children and families remains an issue and a focus for government agencies and ECES (Education Review Office 2013).

Reducing Poverty

Even though New Zealand is supposedly a ‘first-world’ country, poverty is relatively high amongst families with young children when compared with other countries in the OECD. There has been a widening gap between the rich and the poor in Aotearoa New Zealand since monetarist economic policies became dominant in the 1980s. In 2015, this gap is one of the widest in the world with 18.4% of children, mostly comprising Māori and Pacific groups, being strongly represented at the lower socio-economic end of this continuum and more likely than other children to live in poverty. These children are also unlikely to participate in quality ECCE (Ritchie et al. 2014). This trend behoves the Ministry of Education and Education Review Office to act on the ten recommendations of the Child Poverty Action Group Report (2014) to ensure an equitable delivery of services and urges the government ‘to ensure that the children’s rights we have already committed to deliver will be applied, monitored and evaluated’ and to consider UNCRC as a guide to ending discriminatory policy ... putting the needs of children before the needs of the economy...’ (Ritchie et al. 2014, pp. 14–15).

These recommendations also challenge the government to ensure the provision of high-quality, age-appropriate and culturally and linguistically responsive ECES that are affordable to children in families living in poverty (Ritchie et al. 2014). The targeted funding approach of government, especially in relation to ‘vulnerable’ children through grants, fees subsidies and building grants paid to ECES services, appears to be falling short in its aim of incentivising participation in ECCE by those children living in poverty who are not yet accessing it.

Conclusions

Our account of early childhood policy development in Aotearoa New Zealand reveals that successive governments drew on a strong history of a partnership with the ECCE sector to provide ECES for all. In the last 30 years, ECCE has been prioritised by the government as a direct result of education reforms in the late 1980s and, specifically, the *Before Five* report (Department of Education 1988a).

Overall, the achievement of goals for ECCE provision has been pursued via a mix of market-driven policy approaches (mostly neutral in terms of category of service) and the utilisation by all ECES of the holistic, bicultural and values-based, national early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki*.

With just over 95% of young children now attending an ECES prior to starting school, the government can be deemed successful in addressing *accessibility* and increasing participation rates, especially those for children under 2 years of age. These children are now attending for longer hours. However, there are challenges ahead, particularly in respect to ensuring that staff in ECES are suitably qualified to provide appropriate learning opportunities alongside care for infants and toddlers.

The government's focus on initiatives to increase the participation of children in ECES, and especially the diversion of some funding from qualified teachers to meet participation targets, has given rise to concerns that there is slippage in the quality of services. Another challenge is the fact that the 5% of children not attending ECES are disproportionately those living in poverty who would benefit most from ECCE. Finding these children and requiring their attendance at ECCE are a current policy priority.

During the last 30 years, the state in Aotearoa New Zealand has addressed *affordability* through regulating and funding for quality ECCE in diverse ECES to meet a range of family, community and ethnic needs. Over the past decade, there has been a significant change in the 'balance of power' within the early childhood sector, with a majority of young children now enrolled in private, for-profit, full-day ECES, including home-based services. Many of these services are part of corporate for-profit chains. Increased policy-making targeted at areas of 'need' has necessitated the provision of targeted funding incentives to attract ECES to extend their ECES provision to lower socio-economic areas.

Marketisation, the funding model and the recent regulations that allow 150-place ECES, in combination, have attracted corporate providers and undermined the sustainability of smaller community-based ECES. With educational principles and goals underscored by the Treaty of Waitangi since the reforms of the 1980s, there has been a renewed focus over the past three decades on *accountability* to the people of Aotearoa New Zealand and to the significance of the Treaty as it pertains to education. The foregrounding of indigenous knowledge in *Te Whāriki* has occasioned a shift, from an educational approach that was largely monocultural to one that is bicultural, yet open to multicultural considerations. The government says it gives priority to fostering educational and life achievements for Māori people, but accountability is still weak in this area.

At the time of writing, the Minister of Education issued a press release identifying key policy priority areas for the future arising from the report of the Advisory Group for Early Learning (Ministry of Education 2015b). It suggests that the government intends to continue focusing on *sustainability* as a priority area, by developing a seamless education system to ensure continuity of teaching and learning across the non-compulsory early childhood and compulsory schooling sectors. A renewed focus on professional development is also suggested.

Aotearoa New Zealand is a signatory to UNCRC; this commits the government to *social justice* for children, through the adoption of a human rights framework to meet their objectives. Child-centred organisations that contributed to the NGO report to the United Nations in 2010 questioned the primary focus of government social policy on provision of ECES for parents to undertake paid work and reiterated previous requests for children's rights and needs to be placed at the centre of government policy (Action for Children and Youth in Aotearoa 2010).

References

- Action for Children and Youth in Aotearoa. (2010). *Children and youth in Aotearoa 2010: New Zealand non-governmental organisations alternative periodic review to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child*. Auckland: ACYA Inc.
- Alcock, S., & Haggerty, M. (2013). Recent policy developments and the “schoolification” of early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Early Childhood Folio*, 17(2), 21–26.
- Arnold, J., & Scott, D. (2012). 2011 Survey of income, expenditure and fees of early childhood education providers in New Zealand. Wellington: Ministry of Education. [http:// www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/ECE/income-expenditure-and-fees-of-ece-providers-in-new-zealand](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/ECE/income-expenditure-and-fees-of-ece-providers-in-new-zealand)
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Carr, M., & May, H. (1993). *Te Whāriki: Curriculum papers*. Hamilton: University of Waikato.
- Carr, M., & May, H. (1994). Weaving patterns: Developing national early childhood curriculum guidelines in Aotearoa-New Zealand. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 19(1), 25–33.
- Child Poverty Action Group. (2014). *Our children, our choice: Priorities for policy*. www.cpag.org.nz/resources-publications/our-children-our-choice-priorities-for-policy-7. Downloaded 13 July 2016.
- Dale, C., O’Brien, M., & St. John, S. (Eds.). (2014). *Our children, our choice: Priorities for policy, part one*. Auckland: Child Poverty Action Group.
- Dalli, C., & Cherrington, S. (2009). Ethical practice as relational work: A new frontier for professional learning? In S. Edwards & J. Nuttall (Eds.), *Professional learning in early childhood settings* (pp. 61–80). Rotterdam: Sense.
- Department of Education. (1988a). *Education to be more. Report of early childhood care and education working group*. Wellington: Government Printer.
- Department of Education. (1988b). *Before five: Early childhood care and education in New Zealand*. Wellington: Government Printer.
- Early Childhood Code of Ethics National Working Group. (2001). *Early childhood code of ethics for Aotearoa New Zealand*. Wellington: NZEI Te Riu Roa.
- Early Childhood Education Taskforce. (2011). *An agenda for amazing children. Final report of the ECE taskforce*. Wellington: Author.
- Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand. (2015).
- Education Counts. (2013). *Public expenditure on early childhood education (ECE)*. At <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/indicators/main/resource/public-expenditure-on-early-childhood-education-ece>
- Education Review Office. (2013). *Working with Te Whariki*. Wellington: Author.
- Everiss, L. (2010). Transitions and home-based care: A literature review. In A. Meade (Ed.), *Dispersing waves: Innovation in early childhood education* (pp. 49–56). Wellington: NZCER Press.
- Flynn, S., & Harris, M. (2015). *Mothers in the New Zealand workforce*. Wellington: Statistics New Zealand.
- Forsyth, H., & Leaf, G. (2010). Te Tiriti o Waitangi and bi-culturalism in early childhood education. In B. Clark & A. Grey (Eds.), *Ata kite ate pae: Scanning the horizon* (pp. 23–36). Auckland: Pearson.
- May, H. (2002). ‘Blue skies’ talk in the playground. *Delta*, 54(1/2), 9–28.
- May, S. (2004). Accommodating multiculturalism and biculturalism: Implications for language policy. In P. Spoonley, C. MacPherson, & D. Pearson (Eds.), *Tangata, tangata: The changing ethnic contours of New Zealand* (pp. 247–264). Southbank: Thomson/Dunmore Press.
- May, H. (2009). *Politics in the playground: The world of early childhood education in New Zealand* (Revised ed.). Dunedin: Otago University Press.
- Meade, A., & Podmore, V. P. (2010). *Caring and learning together: A case study of New Zealand*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whāriki: He whāriki matauranga mo ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early childhood curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.

- Ministry of Education. (2002). *Pathways to the future. Ngā Huarahi Arataki*. Wellington: Author.
- Ministry of Education. (2004). *Kei Tua o te Pae. Assessment for learning: Early childhood exemplars* (Books 1–5). Wellington: Author.
- Ministry of Education. (2005). *Kei Tua o te Pae. Assessment for learning: Early childhood exemplars* (Books 6–9). Wellington: Author.
- Ministry of Education. (2007). *Kei Tua o te Pae. Assessment for learning: Early childhood exemplars* (Books 10–15). Wellington: Author.
- Ministry of Education. (2009). An Introduction to Books 17–20: Symbol systems and technologies for making meaning. In *Kei Tua o te Pae. Assessment for learning: Early childhood exemplars*. Wellington: Author.
- Ministry of Education. (2014). *Participation in early childhood education evidence booklet*. Wellington: Author.
- Ministry of Education. (2015a). *Annual early childhood education (ECE) census summary report 2014*. Wellington.
- Ministry of Education. (2015b). *Report of the Advisory Group on Early Learning*. Wellington, New Zealand: Author. <http://beehive.govt.nz/sites/all/files/Report-of-the-Advisory-Group-on-Early-Learning.pdf>
- Mitchell, L. (2005). Policy shifts in early childhood education: Past lessons, new directions. In J. Codd & K. Sullivan (Eds.), *Education policy directions in Aotearoa New Zealand* (pp. 175–198). Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Mitchell, L. (2014). Alternatives to the market model: Reclaiming collective democracy in early childhood education and care. *Early Education*, 55, 5–8.
- New Zealand Teachers Council. (2004). *New Zealand teachers council code of ethics for registered teachers*. Wellington: Author.
- Nuttall, J. (2013). *Weaving Te Whāriki: Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood curriculum document in theory and practice*. Wellington: NZCER Press.
- OECD. (2014). *Family database*. Paris: OECD Social Policy Division, Directorate of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs. <http://www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database>
- Ritchie, J., Harvey, N., Kayes, M., & Smith, C. (2014). Part 2: Early childhood care and education, and child poverty. In M. Claire Dale, M. O'Brien, & S. S. John (Eds.), *Our children, our choice: Priorities for policy*. Auckland: Child Poverty Action Group.
- Social Advisory Council. (1985). *Child care services: Impact and opportunity*. Wellington: Author.
- Start Strong. (2014). *Childcare: Business or profession?* Ireland: Author.

Chapter 9

Understanding the Early Childhood Education Policies in Pacific Islands

Wendy Rich-Orloff and Ufemia Camaitoga

Abstract The practice of early childhood care and education (ECCE) has been in some form throughout the Pacific Island countries (PICs) – Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu – for decades. However, ECCE continues to be community based, privately run initiatives with little government oversight. In this chapter, we introduce a summary of the historical background of ECCE in PIC with a summary of the *Pacific Guidelines for the Development of National Quality Frameworks for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE): Programming for Ages 3–5* (to be henceforth referred to as the *Pacific Guidelines*) as the way to analyze each country in the Pacific region on the five system components or guidelines in terms of accessibility, affordability, accountability, social justice, and sustainability (3A2S) framework. Specifically, the *Pacific Guidelines* resonates with the education ministers’ regional Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF) indicators. A recent “stock-take” baseline was conducted using the most recent data obtained from each country. While examining how the region can continue supporting ECCE, we will analyze how these components can help the aforementioned countries address accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice.

The original version of this chapter was revised. An erratum to this chapter can be found at http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-1528-1_14

W. Rich-Orloff (✉)
Early Childhood Development Specialist, Consultant (UNICEF Pacific),
Washington, DC, USA
e-mail: wendyrichorloff@gmail.com

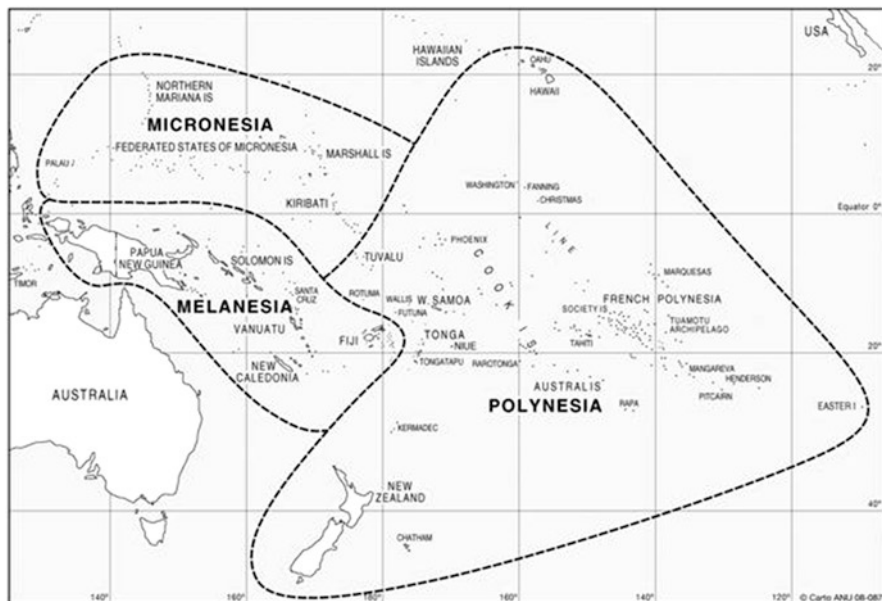
U. Camaitoga
Fiji Early Childhood Teachers’ Association, Suva, Fiji

Overall Context

Shown below is a map (see Map 9.1) featuring the three major cultural ethnic sub-regions, which boast a diverse and rich cultural history. It comprises three ethnographic groupings, namely, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. The 13 island countries that form the PRC4ECCE are spread out between the northern and southern hemisphere covering 300,000 mi² (800,000 km² of ocean). The region is not only geographically varied but also politically, linguistically, and culturally. These vast distances between countries and between islands within countries provide complex challenges to logistics.

Early Childhood Care and Education

With little government support and lack of coordination between community-based and/or privately owned ECCE services, this instigated the formation of the then Pacific Preschool Council through support from UNICEF. In March 2007, a regional workshop was the first attempt to take a regional approach to supporting ECCE. The establishment of the **Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Care and Education (PRC4ECCE)** was approved following the acceptance of a paper on “ECCE in the Pacific” at the Forum Education Ministers’ Meeting (FEdMM), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, in Papua New Guinea, 2010, of which UNICEF Pacific was requested to be the first secretariat.



Map 9.1 The designation between the three main ethnicities amongst the South Pacific region

In 2013, PRC4ECCE completed the *Pacific Guidelines for the Development of National Quality Frameworks for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE): Programming for Ages 3–5* (UNICEF Pacific and PRC4ECCE 2014) as the way forward for PIC. In 2014, the Forum Education Ministers' Meeting (FEdMM)¹ held in Cook Islands unanimously endorsed the *Pacific Guidelines*, which signaled a regional stand by all education ministers for improving the quality of ECCE services. It provides a user-friendly guide with ideas and thought-provoking questions, to provide a starting point for countries to develop a national quality framework on ECCE that reflects the unique and cultural priorities for the individual country, incorporating regional and international benchmarks in developmentally appropriate quality services.

As secretariat, UNICEF Pacific's role is to continue supporting PRC4ECCE and the region through ongoing monitoring of the implementation and impact of the *Pacific Guidelines* at a country level, specifically around the five system quality components as identified in the *Guidelines* as being the core for quality ECCE implementation by the region:

1. Policy/legislation and governance – overall strategy and regulations on how to support ECCE.
2. Human resources – foci include who will work with young children, what qualifications do they need, and how they will be compensated.
3. Curriculum, child assessment, and environment – foci include what will be done with the children, how they will be taught, and using what methods wherein they will be educated.
4. Performance monitoring and assessment – foci include how quality will be defined and ensured, who will provide oversight, what will be monitored and how often, what tools will be used, and how monitoring and assessment results will feed back into planning and implementation.
5. Family and community partnerships – foci include how community ownership and oversight will be maintained and how community and government coordination will be conducted.

Methodology

During the fourth quarter of 2014, a simple situation mapping exercise was done across the region through a questionnaire, which PRC4ECCE country representatives (often the early childhood officer within their country's Education Ministry structure) were requested to complete. The questionnaire explored the following key questions for each system component:

- What is currently in place for each component/subcomponent?
- What is planned to achieve this subcomponent?
- When do you hope to achieve this? (time frame)
- What kind of assistance is needed to meet this time frame?

¹FEdMM – is made up of the education ministers of 13 Pacific Island countries across the region. <http://forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/2014FEdMM.10.pdf>

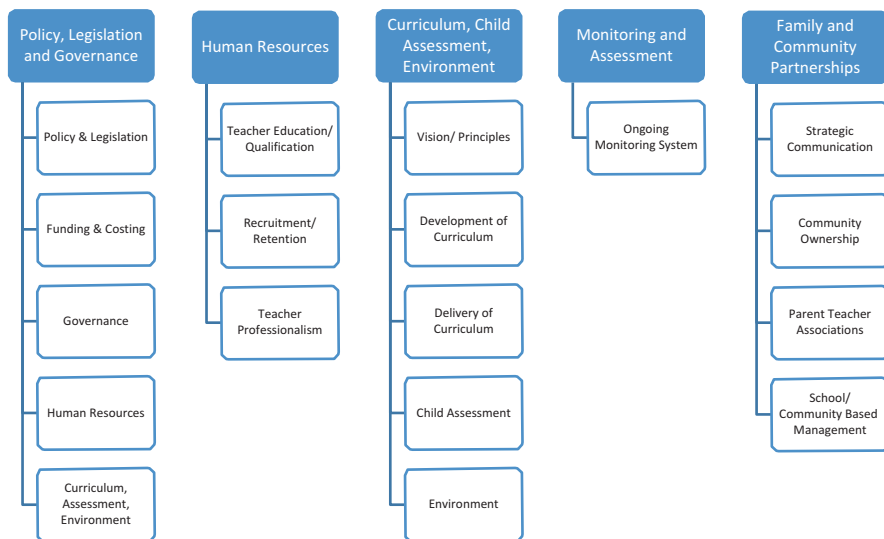


Fig. 9.1 Guidelines quality components and subcomponents

Questions were asked about the following components and subcomponents, found in Fig. 9.1:

As the countries across the Pacific region are at various levels of development and implementation – both were compared to one another and across system components in each country – this summary report and companion matrix uses an informal, qualitative “traffic light” approach to rate each country per system component: “latent,” “emerging,” and “established.” Ratings are not meant to be seen as comparative to one another, but are meant to provide countries with individual ratings based on a quick stock-take of what country ECCE representatives reported as currently in place and what they would like to focus on next.

The definitions of each are as follows:

LATENT	
Components, sub-components have not been developed and/or do not have funds allocated for implementation.	
EMERGING	
Had been established in the past, but funding/quality/implementation has decreased While some sub-components may be established, others are incomplete and/or not yet implemented	
ESTABLISHED	
Components, sub-components have been developed, have funding allocated for implementation, and implementation is monitored.	

There were a few limitations to the stock-take baseline. These included:

- The Senior Education Officers for Early Childhood Education (SEOs-ECE) within their respective countries’ Ministries of Education completed the questionnaires. It is unknown whether SEOs-ECE collaborated or confirmed responses

Table 9.1 Country implementation summary

PRC4ECCE Guidelines for National Quality Frameworks – Implementation Matrix					
System Component					
	Policy, Legislation, Governance	Human Resources	Curriculum, Child Assessment, Environment	Performance Monitoring and Assessment	Family and Community Partnerships
Cook Islands					
Fiji					
FSM					
Nauru					
Niue					
Solomon Islands					
Tonga					
Tuvalu					
Vanuatu					

with upper management (e.g., education directors, permanent secretaries). Therefore, it is unknown if the responses accurately reflect education work plans, and/or budgets (e.g., whether ECE is fully recognized within country Ministries of Finance accounts), or whether responses indicate the SEOs-ECE determination of what should be made as priorities in the future.

- The baseline did not include document review, so information was not verified. In addition, it is unknown if other country resources might exist but were not included in the survey responses.
- Budget and financial information was not reviewed.

Please note that all information, except formal data indicators sourced from public information, have been provided by Ministry of Education representatives. Please see Annex 1 for the list of references.

All 13 Pacific Island countries within PRC4ECCE completed and returned the baseline questionnaire (100% return rate). Each country was rated per component; Table 9.1 illustrates the results. Of the 13 member countries, 9 countries gave their permission to be included in this book chapter, reflected below and throughout. All 13 countries were included in a report submitted to the Pacific Heads of Education Systems in October 2015 (UNICEF Pacific & PRC4ECCE 2015), with a final update of all 13 countries to be reported to the Pacific Forum of Education Ministers in 2016.

Two countries rated as fully established, while three countries rated a combination of “established” and “emerging” indicators. Two countries rated as “fully emerging,” while two countries rated a combination of “emerging” and “latent.”

Key findings include:

- Most countries are making good progress toward their policy and legislative work but still lack that “legal” backing for ECCE in their Education Act.
- Funding for most countries is dependent on donor aid.
- In most countries, communities and local organizations continue to provide ECCE as a service but lack the quality assurance mechanisms.

- Budgetary allocations or grants by governments for ECCE are still a challenge for many countries.
- Data on ECCE is still very limited in most Education Management Information Systems (EMISs).
- Very few references to young children with disabilities and their access to ECCE services.

Accessibility

The latest draft report on the Education for All in the Pacific (UNESCO 2015) shows the gross enrolment ratios (GERs) in the Pacific Island countries, as illustrated in Chart 9.1.

While every Pacific Island country collects GER data, not every country collects and/or reports on net enrolment rates (NERs).²

As Chart 9.2 demonstrates, data collected on NER varies across countries, from a high of 91% to a low of 26.4%. This demonstrates that there are many young children aged 3–5 across the regions who are not receiving early childhood services.

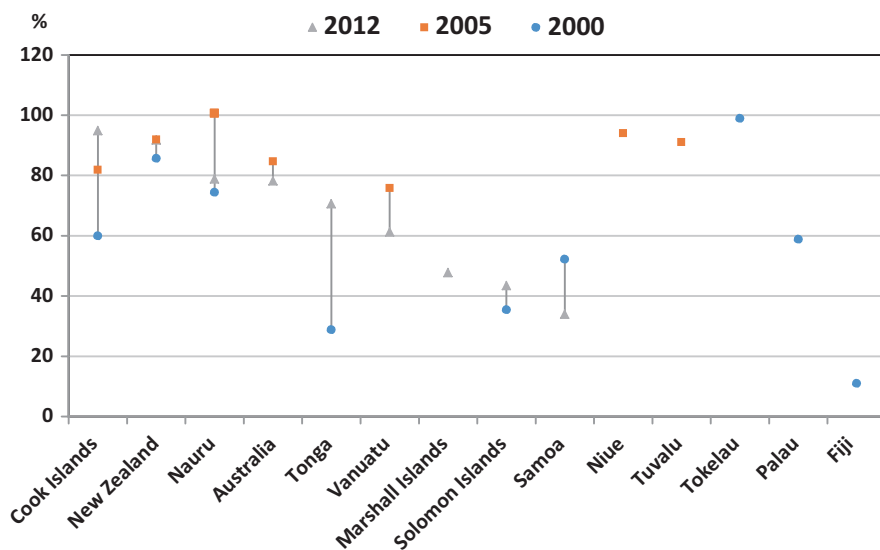


Chart 9.1 GER in the Pacific region (UNESCO Institute for Statistics October 2014)

²All the information is from the country's most recent Education Digest excluding Niue, whose information was reported by the Justice Department, Department of Social Services.

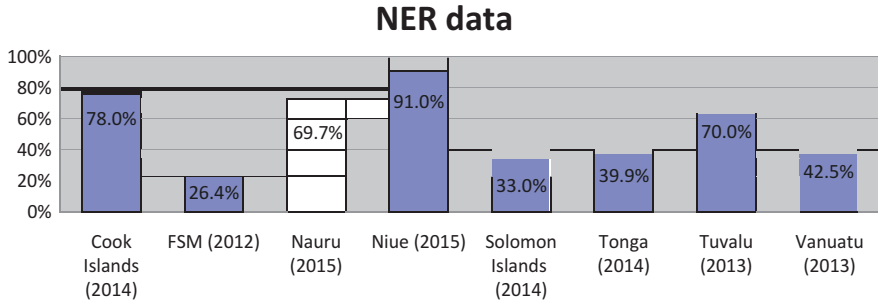


Chart 9.2 NER in the Pacific

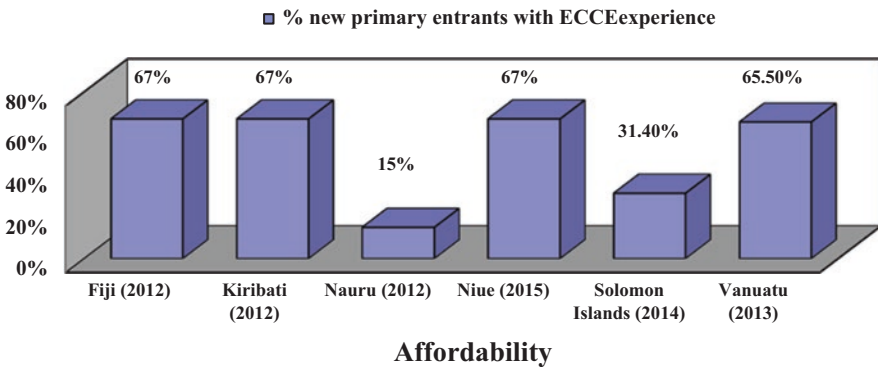


Chart 9.3 Percentage of new primary entrants with ECCE experience

Not all countries collect data on the percentage of new primary entrants who have received some form of ECCE experience prior to year 1, and those that do collect the data demonstrate that there is a wide range of whether children are entering primary with previous school readiness experience (see Chart 9.3).²

Affordability

Regarding funding and costing, most countries receive funds pooled from the government as well as donor aid, though all expressed funding is not 100% sufficient. However, donor aid is not sustainable, as it cannot be relied on over time, nor can it be guaranteed even from year to year. For example, FSM is seeing decreased funding for ECCE; donor aid (US funds) has been decreased, while government spending has not increased to meet budget shortfalls. This is also true in other countries, where funding for ECE is currently not adequate to meet the needs of the ECE subsector. It is concerning the number of countries that provides government funding according to enrolment. This is of concern since, while it makes all centers

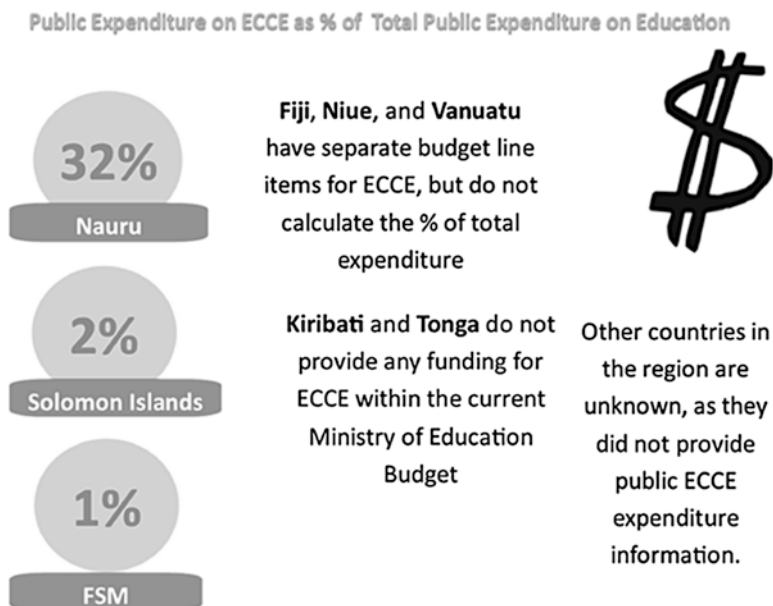


Fig. 9.2 Public expenditure on ECCE as percentage of total education expenditure

equal, it is not equitable – those centers in more populated, central locations have larger enrolment, meaning they may get more funds compared to smaller, more rural/remote centers in isolated islands which may need additional funding support to meet their basic implementation needs (e.g., improving infrastructure may cost more due to the transport of materials).

Funding and costing elements of ECCE vary by country, as illustrated in Fig. 9.2.³

In Niue, a distinction is clearly made between ECD (ages birth to 3 years) and ECE (ages 3–5 years), with ECE fully funded by the government and ECD seen as the responsibility of parents and communities (though Niue has reported considering offering funding to improve ECD in the future). The lack of data on public spending for ECCE means monitoring for quality investment, and the impact of that investment, is challenging to almost impossible. Additional challenges come when funding comes from multiple funding streams, without a clear picture of the total budget in relation to the different inputs (see Fig. 9.3).

What do countries spend their money on? Some examples include:

- Tuvalu indicated that school grants are provided to communities to cover such things as teacher salaries, resource replenishment, and/or center improvement.
- Solomon Islands provides school grants to ECE centers.

³Public expenditure for early childhood care and education sector expressed as a percentage of total public expenditure on education. The purpose is to show the relative share of expenditure for early childhood care and education sector within the overall public expenditure on education.

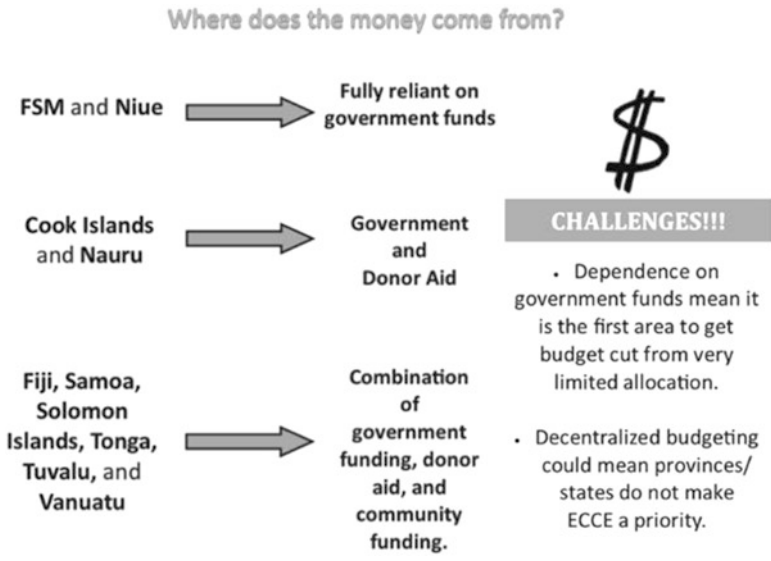


Fig. 9.3 Funding availability

- Tonga provides a Tonga School Grant Project (TSGP) of 50.00 per student to all ECE centers, regardless of whether they are registered or not.

Funding and costing for ECCE are the core for successful implementation. As most countries rely on donor and/or community funding, the ongoing financial security and sustainability for ECCE activities in the Pacific region are potentially fragile should donor funds be decreased/eliminated or should communities be unable to afford the financial burden. FSM specifically indicated a need for capacity building in grant writing workshops and networking, which could be useful for all countries.

Accountability: Policy, Legislation, and Governance

The policy, legislation, and governance component from the *Pacific Guidelines* is the most important for systems development and implementation and establishes the foundation for strong, quality programs. All country respondents indicated that policy and legislation elements are the most important subcomponent of them all.

While 69% of the 13 Pacific Island countries include ECCE in their Education Act, the main question is the quality of legislation addressing ECCE (see Fig. 9.4). Upon a closer review, we found that some Acts seem limited in scope to teacher qualifications, rather than being comprehensive in scope and reflective of a subsec-

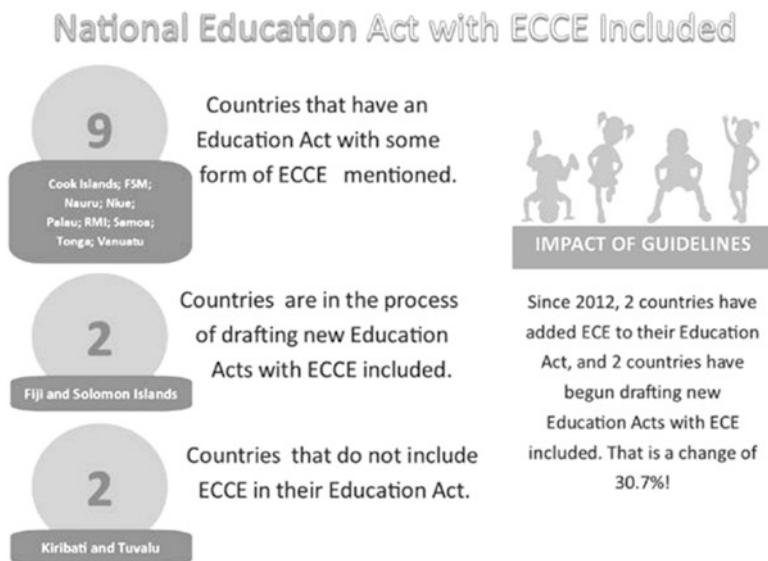


Fig. 9.4 Legislation supportive of ECCE

tor with all aspects of quality components addressed. Most do not clearly include roles and responsibilities of government and parents/communities, nor do they include multi-sectoral collaboration and methods of coordination. Vanuatu has said that a review of the Education Act will be done next year and wants advice to prepare for the review. Solomon Islands have ECCE reflected in their draft Education Bill, to be voted in parliament in November 2015.

Some countries have completed early childhood situational analysis and sector reviews. The World Bank has completed their Systems Approach for Better Education Results-ECD (SABER-ECD) study in Tonga, Samoa, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. UNICEF's National Situation Assessment was completed in Tuvalu and Vanuatu. UNICEF, in collaboration with the World Bank, completed a comprehensive situation analysis of ECCE using World Bank's SABER-ECD tool with UNICEF's National Situation Assessment in Kiribati and Solomon Islands. Solomon Islands has since commissioned an ECCE sector review, currently in process.

Many "subcomponents" addressed in the *Pacific Guidelines* are not yet institutionalized as part of the ECCE subsystem (i.e., staffing and funding); see Fig. 9.5. A lack of systemic data means there is an inability to properly analyze and plan accordingly.

As countries review and revise their existing ECCE policies, it is important to ensure that they align with the regional *Pacific Guidelines* to ensure quality content, implementation, and monitoring. Cook Islands, Niue, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu all expressed an interest in either reviewing or strengthening existing legislation to better synchronize with the regional *Pacific Guidelines*.

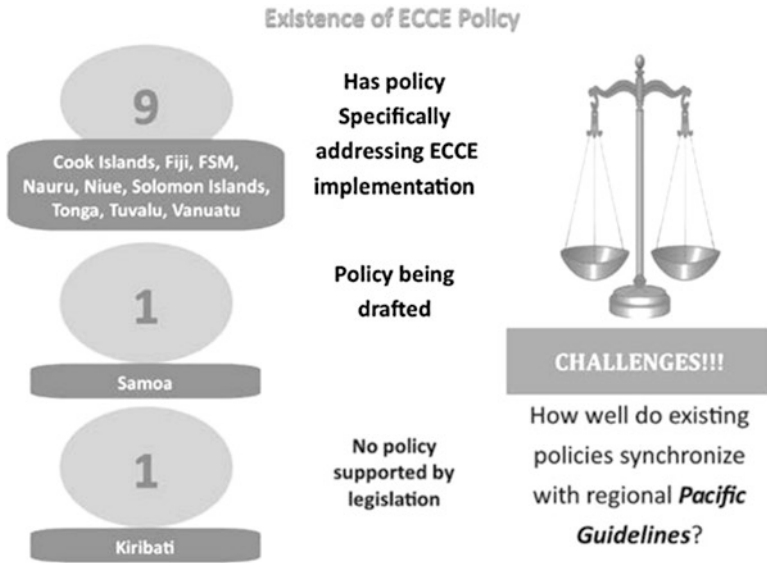


Fig. 9.5 ECCE policies

It should not be surprising that those countries with clear policies and legislation related to ECCE have well-defined ownership and responsibilities. Most countries (ten) have procedures in place that share responsibilities between government and communities. Eight countries provided examples, including:

- Governance within Ministry of Education (MOE) structure – Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, and Vanuatu
- Decentralized to states and provinces – FSM
- National ECCE Committee/Council which the MOE plans to strengthen collaboration with – Tonga
- Governance currently through school-based management – Tuvalu

All countries listed above indicated that they would like to strengthen current governance of ECCE. The Cook Islands indicated that, as the majority of ECE centers sit within a primary school management structure, principals needed to have a better understanding of the modality of ECE in order to provide leadership to that program. Nauru would like to improve coordination and integration with health. Niue, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu all indicated that documents would be reviewed to strengthen ECCE within the Ministry of Education structure and/or to strengthen governance implementation. Tonga aims to strengthen the ECE Council, establish a multi-sector network, and develop a quality framework as stated in the strategic plan (end 2017).

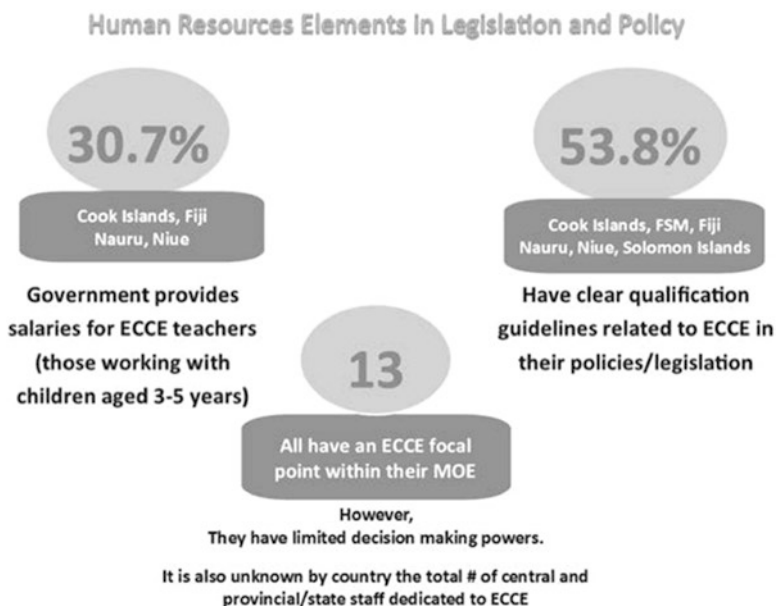


Fig. 9.6 ECCE human resources elements in legislation and policy

Most countries have clearly designated responsibilities within their existing ECCE-related policies and legislation. However, there is little to no monitoring of performance and limited accountability and consequences for poor performance (see Fig. 9.6). This affects all aspects of implementation, from ministry monitoring performance to teacher performance in the classroom to ECCE center management planning, and follows through. Strengthening governance will require strong collaboration between government and implementing partners, with governance agreements, expectations, and tools developed in partnership.

Accountability

Human Resources

Human resources were noted as the second most important quality component based on country responses. Recruitment, retention, and teacher professionalism are being analyzed together, as they influence each other. ECCE is a profession that has a high degree of responsibility for the health, safety, happiness, and foundational learning of the youngest children in a country. ECCE teachers are often seen as “parents away from home,” and they are required to love, accept, and encourage all children in their care. They must be creative, problem solvers, active, and engaging. They must be knowledgeable in child development and know how to support



Fig. 9.7 ECCE human resources

developmental achievement in all domains. They must be diplomatic in their relationships with parents. They are expected to develop the classroom resources, toys, and materials used with the children. They are expected to individualize their approach with young children and plan accordingly.

ECCE teachers, considering their roles and responsibilities, are mostly not acknowledged as the professionals they are by society, nor are they compensated. Teacher “burnout,” when a teacher gets tired of what they do and leaves their profession, is a risk for ECCE teachers if they see all the work they do yet do not clearly see the rewards they earn. Additionally, ECE teachers that are encouraged to upgrade their skills yet do not see any benefits are at a greater risk of leaving their place of work after obtaining increased certification for a work environment with more pay and benefits.

The human resources component takes some of the elements in the previous policy and legislation component and builds on them (see Fig. 9.7). Staff working with young children should meet minimum qualifications as a way to support quality classroom implementation; staff should also be offered ongoing professional development opportunities in order to maintain professionalism and provide ongoing best practices. Just as important is the issue of recruitment and retention; one does not only want to attract and recruit committed, knowledgeable ECCE professionals, but one also wants to keep them interested and engaged in maintaining their jobs so investment in training has longer-term returns. These factors help influence the view of ECCE teachers as professionals and help define how teachers can be held accountable for their actions.

Most PICs acknowledge the importance of requiring minimum qualifications before a person can work with young children and/or the provision of ongoing

professional development. However, the challenge is supporting the achievement of and monitoring and enforcing the qualification guidelines.

While nine countries provide in-service professional development within their structure, funding and staffing (those that can deliver the training) issues severely impact both access to and frequency of in-service training opportunities.

Recruitment/Retention

Seven countries (FSM, Fiji, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu) have noted the challenge to recruit quality ECE professionals due to low remuneration and/or limited professional status. Once trained, retention of ECE teachers has been a challenge as well, as teachers then leave for higher paying positions. Strategies countries are exploring include recruiting expatriate ECCE teachers (Nauru) and evaluating teachers based on performance and providing incentives (FSM is considering). Upscaling teacher qualifications help teachers access retention incentives, but if professional development opportunities are not available, this could lead to more teachers leaving the profession or populating the ECCE classroom with untrained teachers.

Teacher Professionalism

ECCE teachers are often seen as the “lowest” level of the professional scale. Due to misconceptions of being little more than “babysitters” or “mothers’ helpers,” communities may not see them as professionals, and ECCE teachers’ motivation and commitment may suffer from it. Six (46%) countries – Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu – all have Teacher Code of Ethics, which ECE teachers are also held accountable to.

ECCE is more than a job; it is a profession. As such, teachers should be expected to act as professionals, while at the same time, they deserve to be treated as professionals by communities, management, and MOE.

In summary, we found that:

- There is very poor data collected (EMIS) on the percentage of teachers meeting qualifications.
- While countries may have plans in place for professional development, a lack of funding minimizes implementation of training opportunities.

Human resources are key for not only quality implementation with the young children by trained teachers but quality monitoring and oversight by management and ministry staff who understand the methodologies and practices of ECCE within the country. It is important to note that while all responses were focused on teacher qualifications, the capacity of ministry-level officials (national, provincial, local) is just as important should countries decentralize ECCE oversight.

Curriculum, Assessment, and Environment (CAE) Elements

The system component curriculum, child assessment, and environment looks at what is in place for quality implementation (see Figs. 9.8 and 9.9). Curriculum looks at whether it has a vision, if it fits the country context for ECCE, and how it is

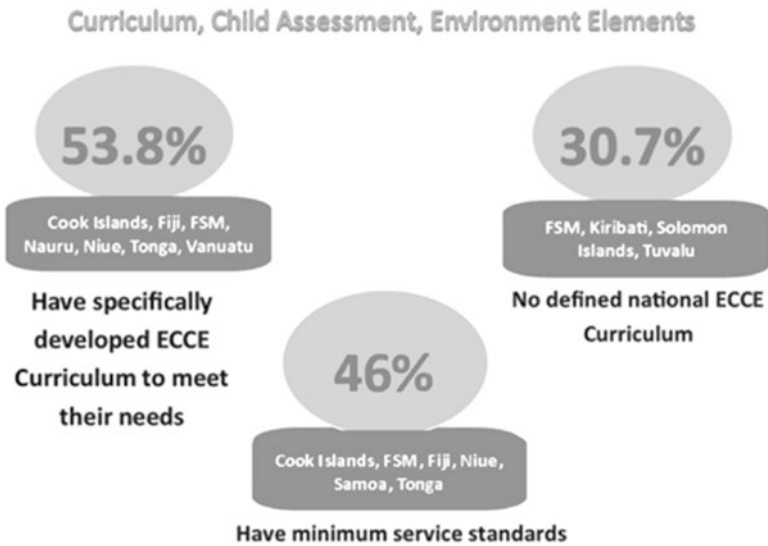


Fig. 9.8 Curriculum, assessment and environmental elements in policy

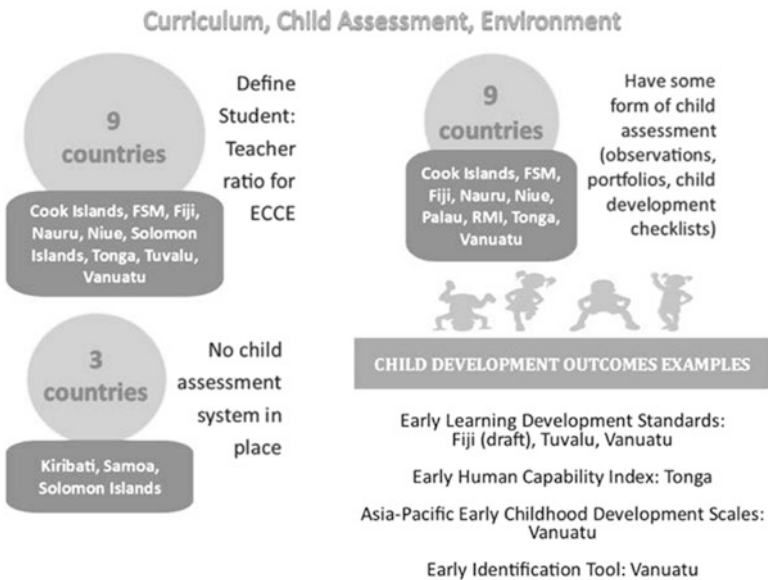


Fig. 9.9 Curriculum, assessment and environment implementation

delivered. Child assessment looks at whether countries have defined child development outcomes for ECCE and, if so, how child development is monitored. Environment looks at whether there are any standards in place not only for building infrastructure but for both indoor and outdoor learning environments that are complementary to the ECCE curriculum as well.

FSM is currently using a variety of ECCE curriculum that states can implement independently, without national-level coordination. Solomon Islands has an ECCE Teacher Handbook in draft which needs endorsement, and Tuvalu is currently using a variety of curriculum examples. Regarding Minimum Quality Service Standards (MQSS), of the five countries that have minimum standards for ECCE infrastructure, only three – Cook Islands, Fiji, and Niue – specifically apply operational health and safety policies to the ECCE context.

Curriculum

The curriculum used in ECCE centers provides a road map of instruction for teachers on what to do and how to do it with the young children. It is important that regardless of the curriculum used, it is child centered, uses a play-based methodology, and encourages active participation and exploration of the learning environment. It should be grounded on the natural developmental milestones of young children.

While many countries are interested in ensuring their ECE curriculum aligns with their lower primary curriculum, there is a concern that increased focus on alignment will bring primary tasks and principles “down” to the ECE classroom, rather than ensuring that ECE serves to build a strong foundation of learning with lower primary building upon that. Staff with clear understanding and technical expertise on ECCE should be involved with curriculum development and review to ensure that child development outcomes and child-centered learning are reflected appropriately.

As countries align their curriculum, another concern is the language of instruction. The 2007 Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report, “Strong Foundations: ECCE,” cites the importance of the use of vernacular with young children:

Linguistic specialists argue that children who learn in their mother tongue for the first six to eight years ... perform better in terms of test scores and self-esteem than those who receive instruction exclusively in the official language or those who make the transition too soon (before age 6–8) from the home language to the official language (Thomas and Collier, 2002). It is easier to become a competent reader and communicator in the mother tongue. Once a child can read and write one language, the skills are transferable to other languages.

Curriculum alignment should take language of instruction into consideration. For example, as FSM moves to align English standards with ECE as well, the importance of vernacular and slowly introducing bilingual education should not be forgotten, and English should not be forced as the main language of instruction too soon.

As previously noted, seven (53.8%) countries have specifically developed ECCE curriculum to meet their needs; four countries (30.7%) do not have national ECCE curriculum, but encourage the use of one (or have delegated to the province/state level). While an assessment of the quality of curriculum across the region was not conducted, six countries (46%) – Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu – specifically indicated the methodology used within the ECCE curriculum is play based and holistic⁴ rather than overly teacher directed and academic only.

Curriculum should be practical and “user-friendly,” so ECE teachers can easily pick it up and use it. For example, Solomon Islands has a curriculum framework that is theoretical, text heavy, and very difficult for ECE teachers to understand and implement. They have drafted an ECE Teacher Handbook that is more practical, contains a great deal of pictures and suggestions, and is user-friendly; however, it has not yet been finalized for use.

Curriculum methodology, principles, and implementation should be clearly understood by parents, so they understand the difference between ECE and primary instruction and can see what and how their children are learning through play.

Child Assessment

Child assessment looks at whether countries have defined child development outcomes for ECCE and, if so, how child development is monitored. This report asks countries if they have a child assessment system – including defined development outcomes and tools to use – in place. The appropriateness of tools – for age and stages of development, as well as country context – was not assessed.

The use of child assessment with young children is tricky. On the one hand, it is important to regularly monitor child development to catch any delays early to provide targeted intervention for later school readiness; however, tests are not appropriate at this young age. Most countries stated they used a combination of portfolios, learning stories, and/or observation. On the other hand, with these modes of data gathering in place, it is important and beneficial to have defined child development outcomes that are measurable in order to appropriately track developmental progress (or identify potential delays). These can be as comprehensive as country-developed Early Learning Development Standards, used in curriculum development and outcomes monitoring, or as simple as adapted parent questionnaires.

Not enough information was provided to determine how countries offer ongoing developmental monitoring of their young children and what they do with findings/results. However, there is a concern that this is a potential gap throughout the region. This assumption is made from the knowledge that only two countries have defined child development outcomes and only one country (Vanuatu) has taken the out-

⁴Holistic means it addresses all developmental areas of a child, including physical/motor development, cognitive and brain development, and language, emotional/social, and moral and spiritual development.

comes and developed a tool for use by teachers and parents to monitor child development. Vanuatu also had the opportunity to participate in the Early Childhood Development Scales (ECDS) project, phase 3 of validation, through Hong Kong University, which included the assessment of 900 children across all six provinces in all developmental domains (Rao et al. 2014). Vanuatu reported, “as soon as Hong Kong University completes the data analysis and shares the finding, we will work on weakness identified.”

While some countries have indicated the mode of how they monitor children (portfolios, observation, checklists), it is just as important to define what is being monitored and why. Ongoing child assessment provides the following benefits: individual child growth and intervention outcomes; diagnose, assess, and monitor individual progress; and programmatic monitoring and intervention outcomes and impact. More attention to planning and funding for the development of a child assessment system within the country and ECE curriculum context for the implementation with young children is needed in every country in order to provide research-based documentation of impact for school readiness.

It is unclear with some countries (such as FSM) how “formal” assessments are with young children and what they do with the “scores” they collect. It is also unclear with most countries if assessments are more academically based (math, literacy/language, science) or if they are more holistic in approach and include physical, social, emotional, and executive function (problem-solving, memory, self-regulation, perseverance) learning and developmental areas. Early Learning Development Standards have been drafted in Fiji (2008) and finalized in Vanuatu (2012) and Tuvalu (2015).

Environment

An appropriate early childhood learning environment is important not only for the health and safety (WASH facilities, first aid, and emergency plan) of the young children. A positive ECCE learning environment – both indoor and outdoor – is not only the infrastructure of the building but also encourages independence with child-height furniture; encourages learning with various learning resources, books, toys, and games (and has enough resources for the number of children enrolled); and has teachers that can positively implement the curriculum in a child-directed, play-based way. The guidelines recommend that countries have Minimum Quality Service Standards (MQSS), including indicators for all the abovementioned issues, which is used for ongoing quality assurance.

However, only 38.4% of the countries (five countries) have developed MQSS for infrastructure, with three of those linked to operational health and safety policies. MQSS, per the *Pacific Guidelines*, should not only address basic infrastructure but should also address minimum learning and teaching materials expected in the classroom, curriculum implementation, and teacher performance and interaction with the children. Established MQSS encourages communities to know what is required

and what needs improvement. MQSS also provides quality assurance. Without defined MQSS, a performance monitoring system for quality assurance cannot be implemented.

Accessing ECCE programs is very beneficial for young children with special needs. As ECCE programs are often community based, it serves as a way to get the child and family involved and included in community activities and lessens potential social isolation of the child and other family members. The opportunity to learn and play with the other children benefits the child and provides peer examples to learn and model from. Engaging in ECCE provides additional support to young children with special needs in increasing the likelihood of achieving school readiness for entrance to primary school. If a child has a severe enough special need, primary school may be through a “special school,” which might be located outside of a child’s home community; should this happen, ECCE might be the only community-based experience the young child may have.

We found that:

- While some countries have simple standards for ECCE stated in their ECCE policies, very few have developed MQSS that can be used as comprehensive monitoring tools.
- More comprehensive studies into the curriculum and child assessment tools used throughout the region could give greater insight into the content provided to young children for school readiness and can be used for future longitudinal studies in the region on the impacts of curriculum and child assessment on future literacy and numeracy achievements.

Sustainability: Performance Monitoring and Assessment

Performance monitoring and assessment is an important component of quality assurance. This is different from the child assessment discussed previously. An ongoing monitoring system ensures that all systems are working, as they should be. Monitoring helps identify areas where improvement is needed and what is working well so it can be continued. Monitoring, when linked with action plans, helps to hold those responsible for certain tasks accountable for their actions. A performance monitoring and assessment system includes the following:

- What and who is being monitored (the monitoring tools used)
- How often monitoring occurs (this requires budgeting for ongoing monitoring activities)
- Who will do the monitoring (this can range from community members, school-based managements/PTAs, district/provincial education officers, and national education officers and will require appropriate training)

The issue of monitoring tools has already been mentioned previously when discussing child assessment under curriculum and MQSS under environment. This

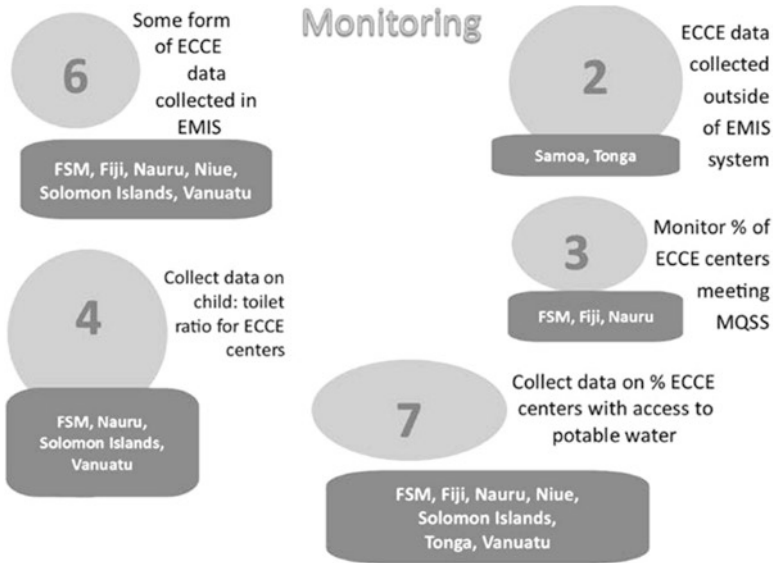


Fig. 9.10 ECCE monitoring

section asked countries about monitoring from a system perspective, to see if countries not only have the tools in place to monitor but do they monitor, and who is responsible for monitoring as well.

As mentioned previously, monitoring is the most important quality component according to country responses, which is telling as this component provides the ongoing quality assurances for best practices. It is also the component, which scored lowest based on questionnaires, in current practices across the region (see Fig. 9.10). The importance of having defined MQSS has already been discussed. Once developed, MQSS should be used within an ongoing monitoring system to ensure that quality is upheld beyond meeting initial registration requirements. Of the three countries that do monitor ECCE centers based on MQSS, the percentage meeting requirements range (see Chart 9.4).

The data in Chart 9.4 was provided by the Ministries of Education (see Appendix A). For those countries that are monitoring for quality, how do they interpret the data they collect and then use the data for future planning? For example, FSM records 72% meets MQSS. However, only 57% centers have access to potable water (see Chart 9.5). Is potable water included as an indicator for MQSS? If yes, then is data being interpreted correctly?

If no, does FSM want to make this indicator part of the MQSS for all centers to encourage increased support for and access to potable water in the centers?

The same can be asked about Fiji. Data can be used to specifically target funding or services support to achieve MQSS; for example, ECCE centers without access to potable water and/or toilets can be provided small-scale grants and/or linked with the Ministry of Health to help them achieve these quality indicators.

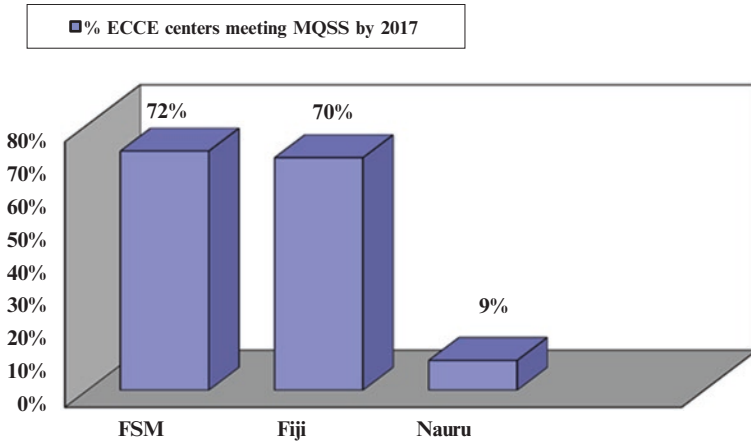


Chart 9.4 Percentage of ECCE centers meeting MQSS by 2017

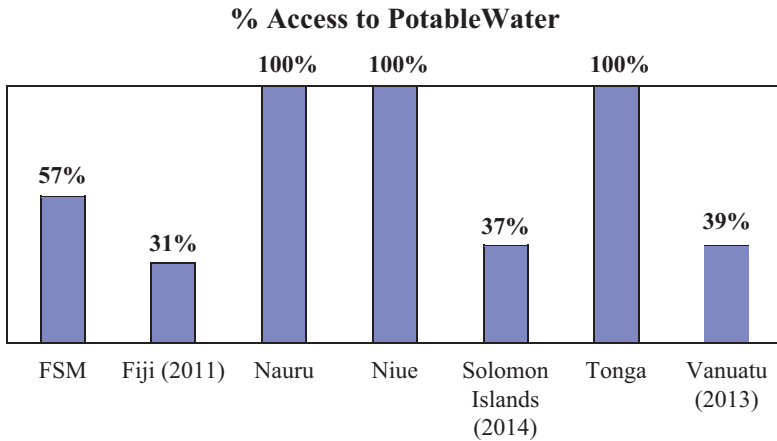


Chart 9.5 Percentage of access to potable water

The frequency of monitoring visits varies; countries reported:

- Every 2 years – Cook Islands
- Annually – Nauru and Tonga
- Biannually – Niue and Samoa
- Quarterly – FSM

Fiji noted that ECCE centers are required to submit monitoring and data forms, but there is currently no clear schedule for site monitoring (this may change, as newly hired district education officers will be responsible for monitoring). Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have clear registration procedures, but no ongoing monitoring system.

Only Cook Islands (follow-up visits) and Nauru (additional visits, training workshops) discussed mechanisms in place to provide feedback and ongoing support for ECCE centers and teachers not meeting minimum standards, for accountability and improvement, with links to an improvement plan (both are PD for teacher performance, not improvement plans for environment or infrastructure). Niue has a defined monitoring schedule and team and monitors both environment and teacher performance using ongoing peer review, but it was not reported to be linked to an improvement plan. Tuvalu has no monitoring system in place, and Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Tonga have all reported that their monitoring systems need strengthening and improvement.

The low number of countries with Minimum Quality Service Standards (MQSS) is a concern. MQSS ensure that young children are being taught in an environment that is safe and healthy and meets their basic WASH and nutritional needs (such as clean potable water to drink and encouraging healthy snacks and foods are brought into the program). In addition, MQSS ensures that the indoor and outdoor learning environments are filled with child-friendly resources and materials and they are used in a child-friendly way and that teachers are positively interacting with and implementing the ECCE program. MQSS also provides a defined standard for monitoring, as well as a baseline for improvement plans.

We found that:

- There are few countries with systems of monitoring and evaluation of ECCE services or a system of ECCE management and improvement plan.
- There is a severe lack of resources for ongoing monitoring – limited funding, few monitoring tools, limited trained personnel to implement monitoring, and poor data management infrastructure.
- For those countries that do monitor, most countries have no accountability systems in place for improvement.

Social Justice: Family and Community Partnerships

Communication is about the message and the receiver. Not only is it important to target families and communities for communication, but also it is just as important to advocate to upper government officials to ensure ECCE is included as a government priority and provided the needed financing and budget to implement effectively.

Per the *Pacific Guidelines*, “Strategic partnerships that promote the importance and involvement of community stakeholders in ECCE are essential for provision of quality ECCE services. While government should take the responsibility of setting systems in place, faith-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, private entities, and individuals implement most ECCE programming. In addition, an overarching principle of ECCE is the acknowledgement and respect of the parent and family unit as the young child’s first teacher.”⁵

⁵ *Guidelines*, page 41.

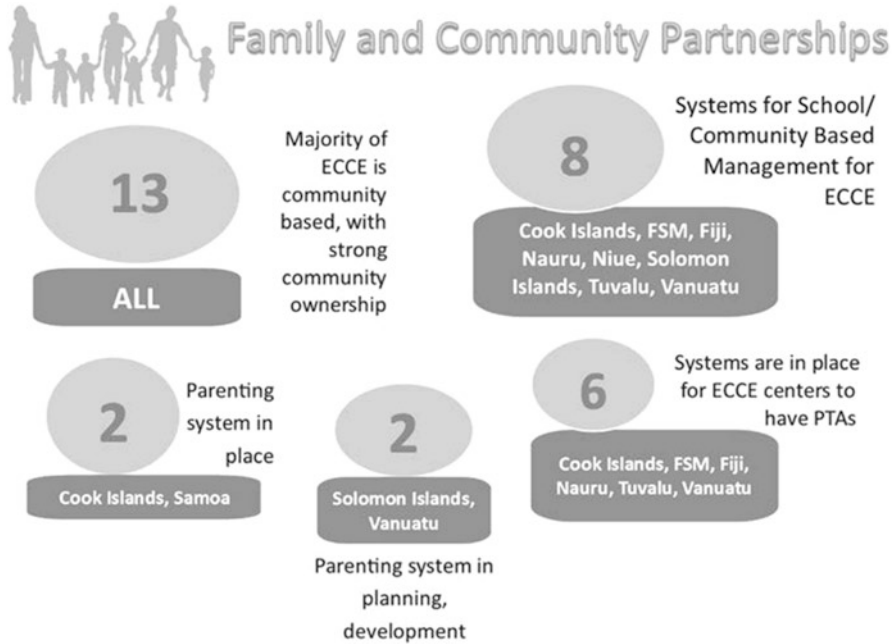


Fig. 9.11 Family and community partnerships in the region

Figure 9.11 provides an overview on how family and community partnerships are being implemented in the region.

Communications

One aspect of having strong partnerships with families and communities is to have clear communication of roles, responsibilities, and expectations of them regarding ECCE implementation and the methodology and implementation rationale for the ECCE curriculum. Communication can also include parenting support and sharing information on child development, child protection, and health and nutrition.

Two countries have parenting programs, while two others have the development and implementation of planning programs in their work plans. Some countries provide newsletters and brochures on ECE for parents (Niue, Vanuatu). Fiji, Niue, and Vanuatu have scheduled times to celebrate ECCE, from open days in the ECCE center (Niue) to ECCE week (Fiji, Vanuatu). A public-private partnership (UNICEF and The Little Ones Learning Centre) provides a demonstration kindy during Fiji’s annual Hibiscus Festival.

It is recommended that every country has an Early Childhood Development Association that the Ministry of Education is aligned and actively involved with; this public-private partnership can facilitate communication delivery, share in training,

and collaborate together. When asked if countries have a functioning National ECCE Association and what type of relationship the ministry has with them, responses included:

- No ECCE Association – Cook Islands, FSM, and Niue.
- Yes, the relationship is average – Fiji, Tonga, and Vanuatu.
- Yes, the relationship is strong – Nauru, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu.

Two countries – Solomon Islands and Vanuatu – have completed Parenting Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices studies (supported by UNICEF) in order to identify issues for advocacy and key messaging to develop their parenting program. Tonga is working with World Bank on the Pacific Early Age Readiness and Learning (PEARL) program, which included a national mapping of early childhood development outcomes (Early Human Capacity Index, EHCI). This regional pilot served as an initial way to determine how children are developing at the village level and served as a tool for awareness and advocacy for increased parent involvement and a call for improved ECE services.

Community Ownership

As most ECCE centers are community based, the responsibility of daily implementation and management falls to communities. To fulfill this leadership role responsibly and effectively, communities need to be provided the tools and training to do so. In general, Cook Islands, Niue, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu have some system in place to support community ownership, from parental-led clusters (Cook Islands) to local school boards. Fiji stated that the ECE policy clearly defines community roles and responsibilities for management but that “more should be done to promote community ownership.” FSM reported that community members along with the local leadership like the municipal chief, PTA members, school principals, and other stakeholders are involved in decision-making of ECE programs and activities. Kiribati and Samoa reported that community ownership is either weak or inconsistent and needs strengthening.

Those countries with some community ownership system in place reported that they would continue to support this system as an ongoing measure; Nauru wants to establish community ownership of ECCE and establish communication processes which informs parents about their children’s progress, Niue mentioned workshops to engage communities and disseminate information, and Vanuatu mentioned the establishment of criteria to encourage provinces to select “Community Champions.” FSM wants to encourage community involvement at the school level and hold an ECE community awareness week for the whole community with interagency collaboration with health and social affairs agencies. Samoa plans on using the ECE Policy to improve the effectiveness of governance under the ministry (rather than NGO) and to develop an ECCE Task Force and Sector Plan.

In Tonga, 100% of ECE centers are private community based. The government is currently working together with these communities in relation to ECE. The government also acknowledges the need to create stronger ties with the communities, which hopefully will be strengthened through various awareness programs.

Parent-Teacher Associations

One way to encourage community ownership is through the establishment of parent-teacher associations (PTAs). While six (54.5%) countries have systems in place to support PTAs, four countries (36.4%) – Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Tonga – report that PTAs are inconsistent across the country or are considered independent and based on community involvement.

School/Community-Based Management

School/Community-Based Management (S/CBM) is different from PTAs. While PTAs are run jointly between parents and teachers to discuss issues, fundraise, and identify center needs (such as volunteering), S/CBM tends to focus more on the “business” side of implementation – the costs and budgeting, local human resources needs related to teachers and teacher aides, and ensuring registrations are up to date, paperwork requirements are completed, etc. S/CBM is also the one that applies for, receives, and implements school grants for the running of the ECCE centers. While eight countries (72.7%) reported that ECCE centers have S/CBM systems in place, Samoa reported that S/CBM is inconsistent, and Tonga’s current S/CBM system does cater for ECCE.

In sum, we found that, while countries may have PTAs and S/CBMs in their ECCE policies, the implementation is inconsistent due to undefined roles and responsibilities between parents/communities and government, and there is lack of monitoring for quality oversight of PTA and S/CBM systems.

Conclusion

Throughout the Pacific region, early childhood has been implemented at the community level for decades. Over the years, countries have slowly engaged with communities on strengthening early childhood services. The Pacific region is making progress in strengthening services for young children under primary school age, with the region overall “emerging” toward quality ECCE systems and implementation. Ministries of Education are developing more guidance and oversight for ECE implementing partners, and with the endorsement of the *Pacific Guidelines for the*

Development of National Quality Frameworks for ECCE, the region's education ministers demonstrated future commitment for improved systems.

Based on lessons learned, in order for systems in the ECCE subsector to be strengthened, the following actions are required by Ministries of Education:

- The Education Act should have reference to early childhood education as a “sub-sector” of the education system, with clear accountabilities for both ministry and other actors, addressing the five quality system components found in the regional *Guidelines*. ECCE should be seen as a strategic priority in education sector plans and sector analysis with key indicators for evidence-based monitoring.
- National governments need to allocate funds toward an ECCE dedicated budget and establish implementation mechanisms using the existing regional Guidelines already endorsed by the Pacific Ministers of Education.
- **The danger:** If ECCE is not considered as part of the formal education system of the countries, as a subsector with clear strategic plans and dedicated funds for the priority areas, it will continue to be treated as an “ad hoc” program that will not be sustainable.
- Models of ECCE systems that are emerging/successful in Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Nauru, and Solomon Islands can be used as models for a system approach, where at least 1 year of ECE is fully supported and funded.
- To establish any formal system for ECCE, a cost and financing study and operational planning will be imperative.
- Every PIC needs to develop and implement an ongoing monitoring system for quality, with clear data collection and follow-up process.

In addition to the endorsement of the *Pacific Guidelines*, the region has agreed to track the following ECE quality indicators to track alignment with the guidelines within the Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF):

1. % ECE GER
2. % ECE NER
3. % ECCE centers meeting national minimum quality service standards by 2017
4. Existence of ECCE curriculum, monitoring for child development
5. National ECCE policy and planning frameworks
6. EMIS inclusive of ECCE data
7. Teacher qualifications (percentage of teachers meeting required qualifications)
8. Student-teacher ratio
9. Public expenditure on ECCE as a percentage of total public expenditure on education

This increased commitment to ECCE, as well as tracking of the above indicators, will align the region with the new post-2015 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It will also serve to support sustainability of ECCE as a subsector.

Key Message 1: Post-2015 – Align Regional ECE with Global Priorities

The newly endorsed global Sustainable Development Goals⁶ include – for the first time – an early childhood target within global development goals. **Goal 4** declares: **Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all.** The educational target that addresses early childhood states:

- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and preprimary education so that they are ready for primary education.

The SDGs will serve as the “primary component of the new international architecture for sustainable development.”⁷ The Pacific region’s support for ECCE is both reinforced by and strengthens the achievement of SDGs in the region. At a minimum, the addition of 1 year of preprimary education (PPE) to their basic education system, targeting children 1 year of age prior to enrolment age for primary, would support the achievement of the ECCE target in the SDGs. Other strategies could include the ongoing strengthening of community-based preschools and/or implementation of home visiting and/or parent-child play groups, in partnership with Ministries of Health and/or Social Welfare. Achievement toward the Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF) ECCE indicators will also serve toward the achievement of SDGs.

Key Message 2: Set the Foundation for Success with Enabling Legislation

The first, most important step for countries to take is to ensure that their Education Act includes early childhood and, if not, then to revise their Education Act to do so (such as 1 year of preprimary added to the basic school system, oversight/support for ECCE implementation for ages 3–5, parenting program for school readiness, etc.). Policies and procedures on ECCE are ineffective unless they are backed by strong legislative and political support. Legislation provides accountability not only for policy and procedure development but for implementation as well. This can be seen when comparing country statuses; those countries which scored “high emerging” (above 2) and “established” (3) in ECCE status have stronger legislative and political support for ECCE compared to countries which do not yet have established ECCE legislation or strong policy implementation.

Key Message 3: Invest in Early Childhood

Increased investment in early childhood is required in order for strong policy implementation to be accomplished and the achievement of the SDG target on ECCE as well as the Pacific region’s attainment of the PEDF’s ECCE indicators. As this status report shows, ECCE in the region has come far from its beginnings as unregulated, isolated, community-based activities run by individuals. However, the

⁶ Endorsed September 2015, until 2030.

⁷ Sustainable Development 2015: About, <http://www.sustainabledevelopment2015.org/index.php/about>

improvements and current investments made by governments have not yet guaranteed that ECCE implementation has reached an “established” level of quality. The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child wrote, “Responsible investments in services for young children and their families focus on benefits relative to cost. Inexpensive services that do not meet quality standards are a waste of money. Stated simply, sound policies seek maximum value rather than minimal cost” (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child 2007). Getting things right the first time is more efficient and ultimately more effective than trying to fix them later.

Leading international economists and finance ministers now rank ECD as the *number one* national social and economic investment, in terms of the rate of return on investment (Fig. 9.12). Dr. James Heckman, Nobel Laureate in Economics, studied the rate of return on investment in ECD in relation to other investments in education and training.

Findings indicated that investments in the early years of learning yielded greater returns compared to investments in later years of learning. Ability gaps between skills get larger over time and are more difficult to remediate; investment in early childhood lowers the cost of later investment by making learning in the future more efficient.

Research found that “non-cognitive skills” (perseverance, motivation, self-control, and the like) have direct effects on wages (given schooling), schooling, teenage pregnancy, smoking, crime, and achievement tests. Both cognitive and non-cognitive skills affect socioeconomic success and that “early investment in cognitive and non-cognitive skills lowers the cost of later investment by making learning at later ages more efficient” (Cunha and Heckman 2006).

Investment should be aligned with not only ensuring that key components are developed, but funding is key for two main areas: (1) accessibility for children and

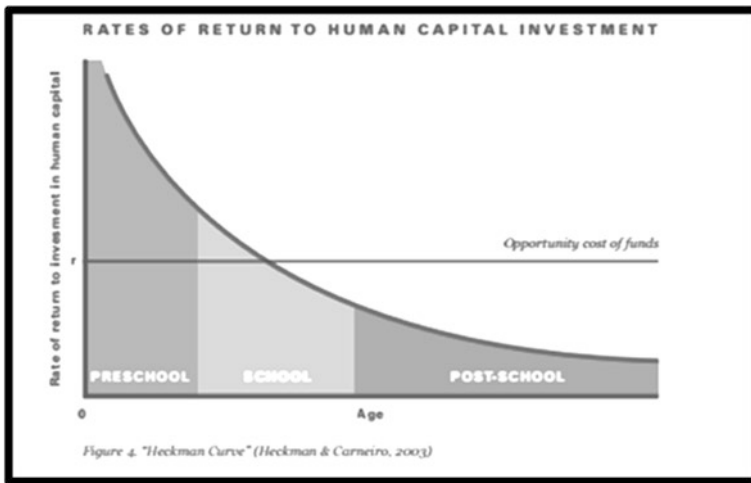


Fig. 9.12 Rates of return to human capital investment, Heckman

(2) quality environments for teaching and learning. Funding should be focused to support access to ECE programs for those most disadvantaged, whether by location (remote, isolated island), socioeconomic status, and/or disability of a young child or a parent. School grants should not be provided based on enrolment, but rather on need. Funding should be targeted to ensure all teachers meet minimum qualifications and/or for ongoing professional development, and funding should be used to apply ongoing monitoring for quality implementation. Linking funding to program improvement plans can also help fund those ECE centers most in need of support to reach standards.

Just as young children need the appropriate nutrition to grow, a quality ECCE system needs appropriate funding to “feed” the mechanisms in place and ensure appropriate logistics, planning, resources, implementation, and monitoring are aligned. As Heckman said, “We cannot afford to postpone investing in children until they become adults nor can we wait until they reach school – a time when it may be too late to intervene.”

Just as a child’s development is holistic, the approach to comprehensive, quality ECCE services should be as well (see Fig. 9.13). For a child to develop fully, they need experiences in all the below learning areas during ECCE to support school readiness. For a country to have a quality ECCE system, they should have structures in place that support all the below components.

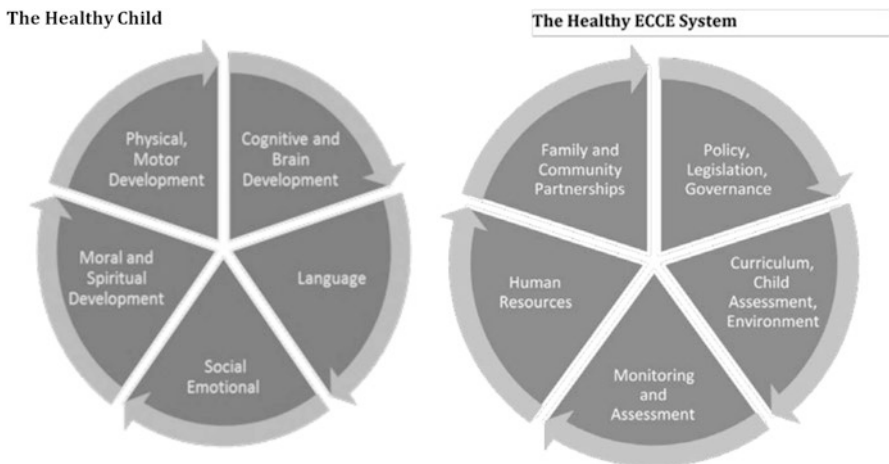


Fig. 9.13 Comparison of the holistic healthy child to the holistic healthy ECCE system

Appendices

Appendix A: References – Country Ministry of Education Representatives

The following country representatives reviewed, collected, updated, and validated all data and information reflected in this report:

- Country data provided September 2014–January 2015
- Data validated April–September 2015

Country representatives were responsible to discuss with relevant Ministry of Education colleagues in their country, and all information in this report is assumed accurate according to provided country reports:

	Name	Title
Cook Islands	Tania Akai Gail Townsend Ina Herrmann	Learning and Teaching Advisor (ECE) Executive Director
		Director of Learning and Teaching
FSM	Mario Abello	ECE Program Manager
Fiji	Jokapeci Kurabui	Senior Education Officer, ECE
Kiribati	Kimeata Kabumarou	ECCE Focal Point
Nauru	Sharon Kam	ECE Manager
Niue	O’Love Alison Hekesi	ECCE Coordinator
Samoa	Utumoa Seupule	ECE Coordinator
Solomon Islands	Bernadine Ha’amori	ECE Director
Tonga	Soana Kitiona	ECE Coordinator
Tuvalu	Teimana Avantele	ECCE Officer
Vanuatu	Jennifer James	National Preschool Coordinator

Appendix B: Baseline Questionnaire

PRC4ECCE Country Members’ ECCE Subsector Questionnaire

Introduction UNICEF and PRC4ECCE dedicated a significant amount of time to develop the *Pacific Guidelines for the Development of National Quality Frameworks for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE): Programming for Ages 3–5*. This document was formally accepted and endorsed by the Pacific Islands Forum Education Ministers’ Meeting (April 2014), to be adapted and implemented in each Pacific Island country, with early childhood education indicators included in the Pacific Education Development Framework Monitoring and Evaluation indicators.

Now that the *Guidelines* have been endorsed, the next phase, adapting the *Guidelines* for country-level implementation in the development of ECCE as a sub-sector, is to begin! The status of country-level adaptation and implementation is to be reported to the next FEdMM meeting in 2016.

This questionnaire is to get a sense of where each country is in relation to the *Guidelines* and strengthening ECCE as a subsector:

- What is currently in place
- What each country plans to address over the next few years
- What kind of assistance is needed to achieve your plans

Ideally, individual countries can then use this matrix to identify funding needs, discuss with donor partners, and write proposals for future funding opportunities.

***Please use the *Pacific Guidelines for the Development of National Quality Frameworks for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE): Programming for Ages 3–5* as a guide to complete this questionnaire!**

Country: _____

Name and position of person completing this questionnaire:

Component one – policy, legislation and governance		
Subcomponent	What is currently in place	What is planned to achieve this subcomponent?
Policy and legislation elements		
Funding and costing elements		
Governance elements		
Human resources elements		
Curriculum, child assessment, and environment elements		
Component two – human resources		
Subcomponent	What is currently in place	What is planned to achieve this subcomponent?
Teacher education/qualification/ongoing professional development elements		
Recruitment/retention		
Teacher professionalism		
Component three – curriculum, child assessment, and environment		
Subcomponent	What is currently in place	What is planned to achieve this subcomponent?
Vision/principles		
Curriculum development		
Curriculum delivery		
Child assessment (child development outcomes)		

Environment (minimum quality standards)		
Component four – performance monitoring and assessment		
Subcomponent	What is currently in place	What is planned to achieve this subcomponent?
Effective implementation of all components is monitored regularly to ensure quality outcomes		
Component five – family and community partnerships		
Subcomponent	What is currently in place	What is planned to achieve this subcomponent?
Strategic communication		
Community ownership of ECCE		
Parent-teacher associations		
School/center-based management (S/CBM)		

Appendix C: List of Acronyms

3A2S	Accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
ECD	Early childhood development
ECDS	Early Childhood Development Scales
ECE	Early childhood education
ECHI	Early Childhood Human Index
ELDS	Early Learning Development Standards
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GER	Gross enrolment rate
MQSS	Minimum Quality Service Standards
NER	Net enrolment rate
PEARL	Pacific Early Age Readiness and Learning program
PEDF	Pacific Education Development Forum
PICs	Pacific Island countries
PRC4ECCE	Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Care and Education
PTA	Parent-teacher association
RMI	Republic of Marshall Islands
S/CBM	School/Community-Based Management
SABER-ECD	Systems Approach for Better Education Results-Early Child Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
WASH	Water, sanitation, and health

References

- Cunha, F., & Heckman, J. J. (2006). *Investing in our young people*. Retrieved from <http://www-news.uchicago.edu/releases/06/061115.education.pdf>
- National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2007). *The Science of early childhood development: Closing the gap between what we know and what we do*. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu
- Rao, N., Sun, J., Ng, M., Becher, Y., Lee, D., Ip, P., & Bacon-Shone, J. (2014). *Validation, finalization and adoption of the East Asia-Pacific Early Child Development Scales (EAP-ECDS)*. UNICEF, East and Pacific Regional Office. Retrieved from http://www.arnec.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/6_Vanuatu-Evidence-Brief-March-11-2015.pdf
- Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. P. (2002). A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students' long-term academic achievement. ERIC report.
- UNESCO. (2015). *Pacific education for all 2015 review*. p. 13. <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/pacific-education-for-all-2015-review-en.pdf>
- UNICEF Pacific and PRC4ECCE. (2014). *Pacific guidelines for the development of National Quality Frameworks for Early Childhood Care and education (ECCE): Programming for ages 3–5*. [http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/Pacific_Guidelines_for_the_Development_of_National_Quality_Frameworks_for_ECCE\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/Pacific_Guidelines_for_the_Development_of_National_Quality_Frameworks_for_ECCE(1).pdf)
- UNICEF Pacific & PRC4ECCE. (2015). Implementation of the Pacific Regional ECCE Guidelines: Status report -presented to the Pacific Heads of Education Systems meeting, October 2015.

Chapter 10

The ECE Landscape Being Shaped by Cosmopolitanism: An Examination and Evaluation of Policies in Singapore

Mengguo Jing

Abstract Singapore has placed an unprecedented emphasis on early childhood education (ECE) in order to achieve the “top-rated education” aim proposed by the government at the beginning of the postmillennium. The major endeavors on ECE thus move from the local traditions of efficiency- and standardized-oriented education to a cosmopolitan outlook for the future. However, this shift and the accompanying reforms may have arisen tensions among participants in the sociocultural milieu. This chapter reviews the ECE policies that have been implemented over the recent decade through the “3A2S” framework (Li, Wong, & Wang 2010; Li & Wang in press). Using the most recent data obtained from the Ministry of Education, the Early Childhood Development Agency, and other governmental agencies, we examine the existing issues of ECE and analyze the current trends of relevant policy changes for this decade. The results indicate that (1) the accessibility rate of ECE is high with almost all children attending a preschool; (2) a variety of subsidies have been invested to improve affordability of ECE with an emphasis on low-income families; (3) quality assurance and accreditation system has been established to promote the accountability of ECE; (4) sustainability is well maintained in ECE policies; (5) social justice has been highlighted by the policymakers.

Introduction

Singapore is an island nation-state located in Southeast Asia between the Malay Peninsula and islands of Indonesia. This impact city-state country comprises a land area of some 740 km².

Singapore went through a colonial period since its foundation in 1819 until its independence in 1965. Within the subsequent three decades, it has steadily evolved

M. Jing (✉)

Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam, Hong Kong
e-mail: jingmengguo@gmail.com

into the eleventh richest country in the world and considered as a major business and financial center. To date, with an established political and financial base, Singapore achieves a high standard of living, literacy, employment, housing, and health services for all, with standards comparable to that of developed countries.

As a largely migrant nation, Singapore comprises three ethnic groups, Chinese, Malay, and Indian, and has a population of approximately four million that is made up of a majority of Chinese (75.2%) and a minority of 13.6% Malays, 8.8% Indians, and 2.4% others (Eurasians, Europeans, and Arabs) (source: Department of Statistics 2007). For decades, the government has been making every endeavor for the solidarity and unity of the country. It cultivates a sense of belonging and national identity, which bonds together the different cultures and ethnic groups and provides the base for the country to progress and prosper throughout the years.

Globalization, as the overwhelming trend today, prevails across the world. The recent years have witnessed Singapore's stepped-up involvement in cosmopolitanism, with its ethnic diversity, cultural hybridity, and social multiplicity (Ang 2006; Tzuo 2010). As a place where the East meets the West, Singapore is characterized by its duality – inheritance from various cultural heritages and increasing influences from the West.

The undertaking process of cosmopolitan in Singapore may propose challenges to the developmental progress of various fields of the society, including the state police, state judiciary, public affair, local government, and education (Tzuo 2010).

Context of Preschool Education Policy and Practice

Singapore in the new millennium is a stable, cosmopolitan, multiethnic, and multicultural society. The government understands that Singapore is a small country without any natural resources other than its people, so the country's survival, growth, and development have to depend on an educated and skilled workforce to drive economic development (Ting 2007). Undoubtedly, education is particularly valued in Singapore, especially in the new world of globalization. Hence, the government strives so hard to foster excellence in education that education has become a crucial public policy. This generated educational initiatives and schemes, such as "Towards Excellence in Schools" in 1987 and the "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation" framework (Gopinathan 2001). Such endeavor toward a quality education has definitely molded the way children, their development, child care, and education are perceived and the landscape of early childhood education.

In Singapore's education system, economic functionality has long been an important consideration in the introduction and implementation of new educational policies (Ting 2007). During the 50 years of post-independence development, in order to promote the economy, Singapore government has made every endeavor to establish a world-class formal education system. In the wake of globalization and knowledge-based economy, Singapore's education system has shifted its outlook from a "survival-driven education" to an "efficiency-driven system" (Tzuo 2010). In the 1960s, with a survival-driven education, principal efforts were made to provide

education infrastructure, such as school places and facilities, and thereby give access to all citizens to learn basic knowledge, including numeric, literacy, and technical skills, to uphold industrialization. However, with the theoretical trends of constructivist and child centeredness at the turning of the twentieth century, focus of education has been placed on catering to children's varied needs, discovering their potentials, and promoting their diverse interests, talents, and creativity in addition to academic knowledge.

In Singapore, children enroll in formal school education from primary school, which is compulsory for all children at the year they turn 7, whereas the provision of early childhood education, denoted as preschool education in Singapore, is not compulsory and is virtually in the hands of the private sector. Even so, the government has always concerned with the developments and trends in the preschool sector by putting preschool sector under market forces; the government intends to allow for more diversification and choices. As explained by the Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education (Zulkifli 2008), at present parents are provided with a wide variety of choices for preschools. This diversity gives raise to innovation and various types of programs catering to children with different needs, which is healthy. Rather than taking a mandating or regulatory role, the government acts as leverage on fostering a quality preschool education by, particularly, providing supports to children from less advanced families.

Overview of the Preschool Education System in Singapore

In Singapore, the child care sector and kindergarten sector make up the preschool education. There is currently a total of 1196 registered child care centers and 499 registered kindergartens (ECDA 2015). As preschool education in Singapore, kindergartens are operated by social organizations, religious bodies, business organizations, or community foundations. The child care centers are licensed by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), they provide care, and are regulated under the Child Care Centers Act (1988). They provide education for children aged between 18 months and 6 years. On the other hand, kindergartens are registered with the Ministry of Education (MOE) and are regulated under the Education Act (1958). They provide education for children from 4 to 6 years old. The child care centers and kindergartens collectively provide a 3-year preschool education; the program lasts 2 h for nursery classes, which targets 4-year-old children while 3–4 h for kindergarten classes, with kindergarten 1 classes catering to 5-years-olds and kindergarten 2 classes catering to 6-year-olds. Since 2014, MOE has started operations of public kindergartens by establishing ten MOE kindergartens in January 2014, which aim to provide quality and affordable preschool education.

The government aims to give leverage on fostering a quality preschool education and, in particular, on helping children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Government subsidy for preschool fees is universally available, and the eligible families in need can further receive financial supports from the government or non-

government agencies. Furthermore, under the pro-family policies, government subsidy is accessible to families with more than one child as a source of financial assistance to their children's preschool fee.

Key Reforms of Preschool Education in Recent Years

In this new millennium, the growing competitions and challenges demand a high-quality education to prepare our children with good values and dispositions, relevant knowledge, and skills for the globalization and knowledge-based economy. Singapore is actively involved in the global prevailing trends with respect to early childhood education in the following areas: (1) inquiry-based learning, (2) child-centered education, and (3) teachers as reflective thinkers (Tzuo 2010). Since the start of the twenty-first century, the Singapore government, represented by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), has been keenly engaged in educational reforms and launching initiatives for quality preschool education.

In 1999, in order to improve the quality of preschool education while retaining provision in the hands of the private sector, MOE introduced a policy framework where judicious and measured approaches were employed in high-leverage areas that significantly influence learning outcome of children. Under the policy framework, a variety of initiatives have been introduced since 2000 with a focus on the definition of desired outcomes, development of a curriculum framework, establishment of structures and systems for teacher training, introduction of self-appraisal for quality enhancement, and school readiness improvement of disadvantaged children, which are regarded as “levers” of the government. In 2003, in order to move forward these reforms in preschool education, MOE announced the initiatives and mandated all the preschools. The preschool initiatives taken by Singapore MOE in 2003 aim to:

1. Delineate the desired outcome of preschool education
2. Develop a curriculum framework
3. Conduct pilot research to study the benefit of preschool education and the new curriculum
4. Raise the standards of teacher training
5. Enhance the regulatory framework for kindergartens (Tharman 2003, p. 1)

With the education reform proceeding, in 2010, as the MOE (Ministry of Education, Singapore) explained in a speech, three key leverage areas for uplifting the baseline quality of preschool education had been put forward by a joint MOE-MCYS Steering Committee that:

1. Require higher qualifications for teachers and principals in the preschool sector
2. Provide resources and sharing of best practices to enhance the quality of programs within the preschool sector
3. Develop a quality assurance and accreditation scheme to raise the overall quality of preschools as well as to facilitate the decisions of parents when they enroll their children into preschool (MOE 2010, p. 1)

The aim of MCYS and MOE at enhancing the quality, accessibility, and affordability of preschool education has been emphasized (MOE 2011). A series of resources in varied forms are made available to all preschools, including financial inputs in improving preschool teachers' professional qualifications and developing the Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework. MOE is also committed to uplift the quality of preschools by providing a range of resources for curriculum development and opportunities for professional development such as workshops, learning forum, and learning journeys to all preschool teachers.

Under such social context, the Singapore government has triggered a variety of education reforms over the last decades. The policies cover key domains in preschool education, such as curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher qualification, and address a variety of issues, including accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice of preschool education. Key reforms in Singapore preschool education are initiated over the past years including the Desired Outcomes of Preschool Education in 2000, Framework for Teacher Training and Accreditation in 2001, Kindergarten Curriculum Framework in 2003 and revised version in 2012, Framework to Enhance School Readiness of Preschool-Aged Children in 2007, Kindergarten Curriculum Guide (2008), Anchor Operator (AOP) Scheme, and launch of public kindergartens in 2014.

Accessibility

A quality preschool education is on the premise of the favorable access to educational opportunity. Thus, two crucial factors interpreting the accessibility of preschool education are (1) the number of preschools available, including child care centers and kindergartens, and (2) the number of children eligible to enter a preschool.

Capacity of Preschool Services

As mentioned previously, there are currently a total of 1196 registered child care centers and 499 registered kindergartens in Singapore (ECDA 2015). In 2007, the government statistics indicated that more than 95% of children aged 4–6 years received formal preschool education by enrolling in a kindergarten or child care center (Ting 2007). This rate doesn't include children who were educated at homes, international schools, special education schools, playgroups, or other enrichment centers. By 2010, the preschool attendance rate of Singapore has been ranked among the highest in the world (MOE 2010). The percentage of 6-year-olds or children of kindergarten 2 who don't attend preschool had dropped from 5% in 2006 and 2.1% in 2009 to 1.2% in 2010. Some of the 1.2% children not attending preschool are homeschooled, enrolled in special education schools or enrichment

Table 10.1 Enrollment in child care center from 2009 to 2015

Year	Total enrollment in child care centers ^a	Enrollment in full-day program	Enrollment in half-day program	Enrolment in flexi-care program
2009	57,870	47,379	8319	2172
2010	63,900	53,903	7922	2075
2011	73,900	63,091	8734	2075
2012	75,530	65,826	7808	1896
2013	73,852	65,650	6478	1724
2014	83,928	75,518	7086 (Feb 14)	2285 (Feb 14)
May 2015	92,583	83,273	NA	NA

^aNo. of children enrolled in full-day, half-day, and flexi-care programs. Source: Early Childhood Development Agency (<https://www.ecda.gov.sg>)

Table 10.2 Rates of birth from 2000 to 2014

Year	Number of birth	Birth rate
2000	NA	13.7
2005	NA	10.2
2006	NA	10.3
2007	NA	10.3
2008	39,826	10.2
2009	39,570	9.9
2010	37,967	9.3
2011	39,654	9.5
2012	42,663	10.1
2013	39,720	9.3
2014	42,232	9.8

Source: Registry of Birth and Deaths (<http://www.ica.gov.sg>)

centers, or residing overseas. By 2015, the access to preschool education is very high, with more than 99% of primary 1 children attending at least 1 year of pre-schools (MOE 2012).

As indicated in Table 10.1, the total enrollment in child care centers and different types of child care centers from 2009 to May 2015 indicates an increased accessibility of preschool education. The only decline of the number of child care centers in the past decade is between 2012 and 2013, as a possible correspondence to the dramatic decrease in the number of children born as presented in Table 10.2. Under this presumption, the accessibility of preschool education in Singapore keeps growing. This positive trend can gain support from the sustainably increasing number of child care centers and child care center places shown in Table 10.3.

We have summarized the number of child care centers available throughout Singapore from 2009 to 2015 in Table 10.3. As it indicates, the total number of child care centers displays a steadily continuous growth at a favorable rate from 2009 to 2015, even between 2008 and 2009, 2009 and 2010, and 2013 and 2014, during which the number of birth decreased noticeably. In sum, the accessibility of

Table 10.3 Children centers survey from 2009 to May 2015

Year	Total no. of child care centers	Total no. of child care center places
2009	785	67,980
2010	874	77,792
2011	955	85,790
2012	1016	92,779
2013	1083	101,597
2014	1143	109,694
May 2015	1196	116,013

Source: Early Childhood Development Agency (<https://www.ecda.gov.sg>)

preschool education in the recent decade is favorable to almost all Singaporean children and displays a positive developmental trend.

By 2012, there were 22 child care centers located in the central business district and 241 centers located in commercial premises, government, or other buildings (ECDA 2012). These centers merely account for 27 % of all centers. It is an unfavorable ratio of accessibility with respect to the families who prefer a center in the vicinity of parents' workplace. As DCDA pledged in 2013, more support should be given to expand child care places in high-demand areas and at work places.

Participation of Preschool Education

The favorable ratio of preschool education attendance in Singapore over the recent decade can be attributed to the continuous efforts made by the government. MOE has consistently given dedicated focus on and initiated investigation to look into the issue of preschool accessibility. It has been found that children from high socially economic backgrounds are more likely to attend preschool than those from lower-income families (Zulkifli 2006). It is important to note the relationship between preschool attendance and language backgrounds of children. Children from English-speaking backgrounds, who generally display more confidence and competence in communicating in English, are more likely to be school ready than their counterparts from the non-English-speaking families. Therefore, in March 2007, MOE forged a framework to raise the school readiness of children from disadvantaged backgrounds through a targeted and three-pronged approach that involves:

1. Identifying children with a weak language foundation and providing focused language assistance while they are in preschool
2. Identifying 5-year-old children not attending preschool and making it possible for them to attend preschool
3. Identifying 6-year-old children not attending preschool during registration for primary 1 and encourage them to attend preschool so as to gain exposure to the English Language and school socialization (Ting 2007, p. 41)

As the proportion of children unable to enroll in preschool primarily comes from families of low socioeconomic status, the main strategy to achieve universal preschool education is to concentrate resources on these families. As such, MOE conducted a major review of preschool education in 2008 and identified the foremost area as a social leverage to achieve a quality preschool education. That is, the goal was to achieve universal access to preschool and, in particular, focus on breaking down barriers that have prevented low-income families from accessing child centers or kindergartens (MOE 2012). Hence, MOE set up the joint MOE-MCYS Steering Committee to identify and reach out to children who do not attend a preschool, via the coordination and collaboration with community-based organizations (MOE 2012).

Awareness campaigns have been launched to help parents, especially those from low socially economic backgrounds, to perceive the value of preschool education. The Steering Committee is working closely with grassroots leaders and social workers and reaching out to the target families to persuade the parents to send their children to preschool. However, for children who can't afford preschool, the committee will place them into preschools with the collaboration from preschool providers and community support groups. Financial assistance will be provided to these families, including government schemes such as Kindergarten Financial Assistance Scheme and MCYS' schemes, which will be addressed in the subsequent part, as well as other community-based financial assistance schemes.

Affordability

In the past decade, the Singapore government has sought to make preschool education more affordable to families of young children, especially those from low- and middle-income backgrounds. Preschool education is primarily maintained affordable by recurrent grants from the government, such as the Baby Bonus and other financial subsidies. By 2015, a total of S\$360 million has been invested in preschool sector to subsidize 79,000 children in child care centers (ECDA 2015). According to the government statistics in 2010 (MOE 2010), among the 30 outstanding kindergartens that received the Distinction or Merit Awards, a majority of 21 charges school fees at around the average or below. This phenomenon more or less demonstrates that quality preschool education can be generally affordable.

Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)

ECDA, which is under the joint oversight of MOE and MSF, is an autonomous agency established by the government to oversee and promote the holistic development of children in child care centers and kindergartens. As one of its principal commitments, ECDA aims to improve the affordability of preschool education by

providing subsidy to parents, including the Kindergarten Fee Assistance Scheme (KiFAS) and the Basic and Additional Infant and Child Care Subsidy. In addition to providing subsidies, ECDA also supports Voluntary Welfare Organizations and Anchor Operators to uplift the affordability of preschool education. Last year, ECDA appointed three new anchor operators, which are expected to provide at least 8000 child care places with cap fees over the next few years (Ng and Chia 2014).

Basic and Additional Infant and Child Care Subsidy

For all families with children, who are Singaporean citizens, attending child care centers licensed by ECDA, they receive the Basic Infant and Child Care Subsidy, which provides a financial assistance at the current rate up to S\$600 for infant care and up to S\$300 for child care. Since 1 April 2003, additional subsidy is available for families whose family monthly household income is S\$7500 and below, and the lower their income, the more they will receive. In order to improve the availability of the subsidy to financially needy children, large families with many dependents can choose to compute their additional subsidy according to a per capita income (PCI). The families with a PCI not exceeding S\$1875 are eligible to receive the subsidy.

Kindergarten Financial Assistance Scheme (KiFAS)

Since 2006, KiFAS can be claimed by the families whose children are enrolled in eligible nonprofit kindergartens, which subsidize 99% of the school fees or up to S\$170 per month. And for the families needing further support, KiFAS also provides a start-up grant of up to S\$200 per child to assist them with their children's registration fee, uniforms, and insurance at the beginning of the school year. In addition, community-based organizations also provide a variety of financial assistance schemes to support the disadvantaged families with children's preschool education fees (Table 10.4).

Anchor Operator (AOP) Scheme

Aiming at improving the quality and affordability of preschool education for lower- and middle-income families, AOP scheme for child care centers and kindergartens was initiated in 2009. Under this scheme, recurrent grants from the government will be provided to help the eligible preschool operators with the operating costs. Since the start of AOP scheme, the government has invested a total of S\$69 million to lower the operating costs of AOPs (Ng and Chia 2014). The fiscal input consists of

Table 10.4 Kindergarten Fee Assistance Scheme (KiFAS) framework

Gross monthly household income (HHI)	Gross monthly per capita income (PCI)	Maximum % of fee assistance up to	Maximum fee assistance up to (inclusive of GST)
S\$2500 and below	S\$625 and below	99 %	S\$170
S\$2501–S\$3000	S\$626–S\$750	98 %	S\$165
S\$3001–S\$3500	S\$751–S\$875	90 %	S\$150
S\$3501–S\$4000	S\$876–S\$1000	75 %	S\$130
S\$4001–S\$4500	S\$1001–S\$1125	50 %	S\$85
S\$4501–S\$5000	S\$1126–S\$1250	35 %	S\$60
S\$5001–6000	S\$1251–S\$1500	20 %	S\$35

The amount of fee assistance receivable is based on the maximum percentage of fees that can be covered by KiFAS capped at the maximum fee assistance

Source: ECDA (<https://www.childcarelink.gov.sg>)

two parts: salary grants that attract, retain, and develop quality teachers and development grants that build up new preschools. As return to the government funding, AOPs are obligatory to foster quality preschool education with primary target at the low- and middle-income families. They are required to provide affordable preschool places, and the monthly fees cannot exceed S\$720 for full-day child care centers and S\$160 for kindergartens.

Initially, two governing bodies, the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and PAP Community Foundation (PCF), were appointed to set up more than 200 child care centers catering mainly to the children from middle-income backgrounds. In 2013, another S\$3 billion from the government was invested to expand the AOP scheme from the two existing AOPs to nongovernment organizations. In 2014, three commercial and locally owned religious organizations have been appointed. Under the extended scheme, the government expects to add up to 20,000 child care places by 2017.

As for the non-anchor operators, the support schemes were introduced as a measure to enhance the affordability of preschool education. Under this scheme, the eligible non-anchor operators will receive funding from the government and, meanwhile, have to limit their school fees with fee caps that will be reviewed by ECDA periodically.

Public Kindergartens

As their mission indicates, the MOE kindergartens are dedicated to provide a quality preschool education that is affordable to Singaporeans (source: MOE Kindergartens). To this end, under the Financial Assistance Scheme for MOE kindergartens, the Singapore citizen children who satisfy either the gross household income or the per capita income criterion will receive financial assistance in the form of monthly fee subsidy (Table 10.5).

Table 10.5 Financial assistance scheme for MOE kindergartens

Gross monthly household income	Gross per capita income	Monthly fees subsidy	Monthly fee after subsidy
≤S\$2000	≤S\$500	S\$140	S\$10
S\$2001–S\$2500	S\$501–S\$625	S\$110	S\$40
S\$2501–S\$3000	S\$626–S\$750	S\$80	S\$70
S\$3001–S\$3500	S\$751–S\$875	S\$40	S\$110

Source: MOE Kindergarten (<http://www.moe.gov.sg/moekindergarten/>)

Accountability

Accountability denotes the mechanisms and instruments that ensure individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions to fulfill their obligations (Hatch 2013). Aiming at improving the accountability of preschool education, Singapore government has made every endeavor to improve the quality of preschool and develop quality assurance mechanism for preschool sector. Over the last two decades, a variety of policies have been implemented by the government to stipulate desired outcomes of preschool education, introduce new curriculum frameworks, conduct research investigating quality preschool education, prompt the standards of professional training and teacher qualification, and develop the accreditation and regulatory framework for preschools (Ebbeck and Chan 2011).

In the new era of globalization, local traditional education has been challenged, and the Singapore government are actively adopting a cosmopolitan outlook for preschool education. Thus, new provision of preschool education, which emphasizes the philosophy of cosmopolitanism, and the accompanying quality assurance and accreditation framework are in urgent need.

Assurance and Accreditation for Quality Preschools

Even though the provision of preschool education is in the hands of the private sector, the government ensures the quality of preschools by evaluating and accrediting child care centers and kindergartens. A quality assurance mechanism ensures centers and kindergartens that pass the accreditation process will be registered with the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) and MOE, respectively.

Under the provision of Education Act, kindergartens will be registered with MOE if they fulfill the following requirements:

1. Suitable premises approved for use as kindergartens and meeting all health and safety requirements stipulated by the relevant authorities
2. A program that is assessed by MOE to be appropriate for young children
3. Principals and teachers meeting the minimum academic and professional qualifications stipulated by MOE

4. A properly constituted management committee to administer and manage the kindergarten efficiently (UNESCO 2006, p. 4)

The above registration process is the elementary step to quality assurance of preschool. The government further raises the standards of preschools by providing clear guidelines to improve the quality of programs in all child care centers and kindergartens. To this end, in 2000, MOE issued a set of Desired Outcomes of School, to outline the skills and dispositions that children are supposed to acquire at the end of preschool education.

In 2008, MOE formulated the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework as efforts to elevate the way preschools are managed and began to develop a quality assurance instrument, the Quality Rating Scale (QRS). To support the internal self-assessment of preschools, MOE disturbed the quality assurance instrument to kindergartens in 2009 and child care centers in 2010. In 2010, the Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework (SPARK) was announced, which aims to assist preschools in raising their quality. This quality assurance framework is designed to recognize and support preschool leaders in improving teaching and learning and administration and management processes to foster the holistic development and well-being of children. As an integral component of SPARK, the QRS provides a structured framework for preschools to conduct the internal assessment and evaluation to their programs. In addition to self-assessment, preschools can also apply for external quality assessment and accreditation by MOE-accredited assessors.

Preschools with a good SPARK rating or accreditation status will receive the SPARK certification, which is an endorsement of the quality of the preschool and its program. These SPARK-certificated preschools will be listed in the MOE website for parents to make more informed choices in their selection of preschools for their children. Using SPARK, each preschool would be measured in seven key areas:

1. Leadership
2. Planning and administration
3. Staff management
4. Resources
5. Curriculum
6. Pedagogy
7. Health, hygiene, and safety (MOE 2010, p. 1)

Furthermore, to support preschool to be ready for SPARK, ECDA conducted regular SPARK training and workshops for preschool practitioners to learn about the framework and better use it for self-improvement. In addition, MOE also launched the Quality Assurance (QA) Consultancy scheme to assistant preschools in the evaluation and accreditation process. Preschools can apply for advice and guidance from experienced early childhood practitioners and educators with regard to plan and execute quality improvements in preparation for assessment. And ECDA will offer financial support up to 80% of the consultancy fees.

Catalyst for Quality Pedagogy

To improve the leverage function and accountability of the government in assuring the quality of preschools, new forms of kindergarten have been created. In 2014, five MOE kindergartens under the operation of public kindergartens were set up. Pedagogy is the key to the quality of preschool education and is characterized by change according to region, culture, and time. As Singapore moves forward in a globalization and knowledge-based economy, increasing challenges and competitions require updated preschool education and innovative pedagogy to equip the children with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for the new economy and society in this new millennium. To this end, MOE kindergartens are established to serve as an experiment base to pilot and develop, thereby catalyzing best pedagogy and practices that can be shared with the whole sector (MOE 2013a, b).

They employ researchers, educational psychologists, and qualified teachers using creative strategies and innovative pedagogy to support children's learning and conduct innovation and research. The practices that are identified as scalable, sustainable, and suitable for the Singaporean context will be applied to the whole preschool sector. In 2015, five more MOE kindergartens were set up, and a total of 15 will be established by 2016 (MOE 2015a, b).

Motivation for Quality Preschool Teachers

Assurance of teacher quality is another important matter in an effort to improve the accountability of preschool education. All teachers are required to be registered with MOE under the Education Act. Since 2009, the minimum academic qualifications of preschool teachers in both child care centers and kindergartens have been elevated to have five "O" level credits for new teachers, including a credit in English Language (EL) and a Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education-Teaching (DECCE-T), and an "O" level credit in EL and a DPE-T for existing teachers. In 2006, this criterion can merely be met by less than 20% of child care centers and kindergartens. However, with this policy, 68.2% of child care centers and 72.1% of kindergartens have achieved this target by the end of 2010 (MOE 2010). By 2012, more than 90% of child care teachers are diploma trained or undergoing the diploma in early childhood education (using creative strategies and innovative pedagogy to support children's learning) (ECDA 2012). As for the in-service teachers, the minimum criterion is raised steadily. Adequate time has been provided to in-service teachers to upgrade their qualification. In addition, since 2008, MOE and MCYS have provided incumbent teachers, principals, and preservice teachers with a total of S\$3.8 million in forms of scholarships, bursaries, and training awards (MOE 2010). The outstanding early childhood educators can also apply for scholarships to pursue a Bachelor's or Master's degree in ECE.

Furthermore, for the professional improvement within the preschool sector, annual platforms for professional sharing and development, such as the Child Care Seminar, Kindergarten Conference, and the Kindergarten Learning Forum, have been established to prompt teachers' professional capacity. Good practices and innovative pedagogies can be spread and adopted by others, which contribute to a culture of innovation and collaboration.

The government has sought actively to equip preschools with quality teachers. The expenditure by MOE on improving the quality of teachers increased from S\$17 million in 2008 to S\$36 million in 2009 (MOE 2010). The MOE grants also provide to nonprofit kindergartens in facilitating their teaching and learning resources. In 2011, The Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) began to offer supports for child care teachers by enabling child care centers to recruit and train para-educators and para-educarers. With the introduction of the two occupations, child care teachers and educators will be assisted in the care and development of children, including preparation and supervision of developmental activities, routine care, and administrative supports.

Innovation for Quality Curriculum

Before 2003, the rooted long-standing value of preschool education in Singapore is preparing children for primary school. An efficiency- and standardized- oriented education mainly focuses on developing children's academic skills through an instruction-driven pedagogy. However, more recently, this local tradition has been overturned by an inquiry-based and child-centered philosophy from Western education system. Thus, there is a move away from "an approach that is subject specific and purely academic" (Ang Ling-Yin 2006, p. 206) to foster children's varied interests, talents, and creativity. In particular, as Singapore heads to globalization and a knowledge-based economy, the ability of "creativity" and "innovation" has been valued in preschool education.

The shifted emphasis with respect to education paradigm and pedagogy inevitably influences the provision of curriculum. Since curriculum is an integral component in the quality assurance mechanism of preschool education, conscious attempt has been made by educators and policymakers to introduce the updated curriculum. To this end, referring to the Desired Outcomes of Preschool Education, MOE began to formulate a curriculum framework with an emphasis on balancing the provision of academic knowledge with the need to foster creativity.

In 2012, based on the review conducted by MOE on "Nurturing Early Learner: A Framework for a Kindergarten Curriculum in Singapore" published in 2003 and "Kindergarten Curriculum Guide" published in 2008, MOE introduced a curriculum framework, "Nurturing Early Learner: A Framework for a Kindergarten Curriculum in Singapore (revised)" to all child care centers and kindergartens. This curriculum framework serves as guidelines for developing a holistic preschool education to customize the direction of the curriculum and meet the specific needs of

children according to their interests, needs, and abilities. It aims to equip children with knowledge, skills, and dispositions for lifelong learning and defines children as curious, active, and competent learners. Six learning areas have been outlined in the framework, including aesthetics and creative expression, environmental awareness, language and literacy, motor skills development, numeracy, and self and social awareness, and a set of learning goals children are expected to achieve for each area that has been defined. This framework suggests the “thematic approach” that purposefully and constructively integrates the use of rhymes, songs, stories, games, inquiry activities, and group activities.

Like other Asian contexts, such as Hong Kong, South Korean, and Taiwan whose government embraces Western ideas and progressive pedagogies, Singapore faces the challenges when adopting its play-based and child-centered approaches recommended in the preschool curriculum framework (Cheah 1998; Ebbeck and Gokhale 2004). It was reported that teachers struggled in adjusting themselves to these pedagogy approaches and curriculum guidelines, while parents seemed still driven by the pragmatics of merit-based and examination-orientated culture (Sharpe 2002; Lim 2004). The government has accordingly paid much effort to maintain the accountability of the preschool education by fitting the recommended curriculum into the local context.

In order to support kindergartens’ adoption of the curriculum framework and reorient preschool teachers to align their beliefs and practices with the new trends, MOE also develops an educators’ guide for teachers in translating the principles into appropriate practices in the classroom. Curriculum resources and materials have been distributed to preschools, and seminars and workshops have been set up for professional sharing and development with respect to the implement of this curriculum framework. MOE also provides consultation visits to preschools to give guidance and obtain feedbacks. On top of that, the curriculum framework has been introduced to all teacher training agencies, which aligns the training courses with the values of the curriculum.

Sustainability

As a paramount precondition to participation and quality of preschool education, sustainability is an essential complement to the evaluation of preschool education with respect to accessibility, affordability, and accountability. In the present context, the sustainability of preschool education is discussed mainly by analyzing the past and current government policy and strategies in preschool education and their impact and predictably examine whether they could be economically and socially sustainable. Sustainable preschool policy depends on various factors, such as the sustainability of the policy provision per se over time, continuous financial input from the government, and perspectives of main stakeholders in the policy. We adopt the evaluation framework of sustainability of ECE services as suggested by the MOE of New Zealand.

This evaluation of sustainability assesses:

1. Changes in patterns of expenditure and revenues of ECE services that may be associated with the implementation of the policy
2. Whether services have become more sustainable since the introduction of the policy and the new funding system
3. Whether the new funding system is having the intended effects of avoiding cost increases to parents and providing incentives for teacher-led services to meet teacher registration targets
4. The impact of sustainability on quality and participation outcomes (King 2008, p. 1)

Sustain Fiscal Input

It is generally found that financial sustainability is more likely to benefit childhood education with a better quality and collaborative relationships (King 2008). According to a census on the economic conditions of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASAN) member countries, by 2010, the government expenditure on education in Singapore was a total of S\$9.9 billion over the last 5 years; however, only S\$150 million was spent on preschool sector. It merely accounts for an average of 0.01 % of GDP per annum. This is apparently lower than most OECD countries, where the annual average proportion of GDP spent on child care and early education services is 0.6 %, of which two thirds (0.4 % of GDP) is spent on preschool education (Fig. 10.1). Actually, the low government funding on preschool sector is mainly because preschool education in Singapore is in the hands of the private or community sector and not part of the national education system. As mentioned above, the government believes and puts continued efforts to verify that the government can foster a quality preschool in Singapore by focusing on “leverage” areas

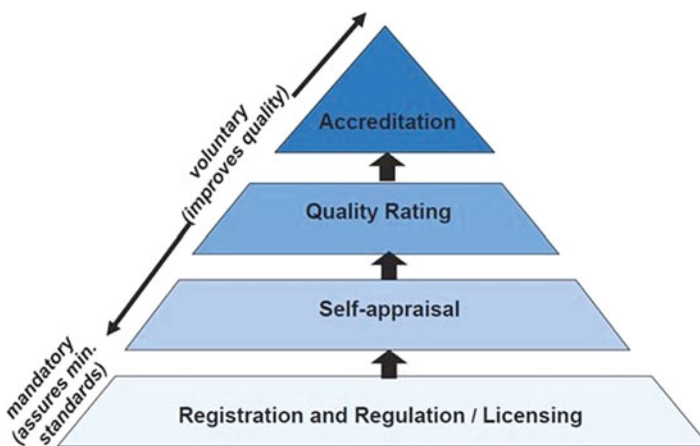


Fig. 10.1 Four-tier framework of SPARK (Source: SPARK (<https://www.ecda.gov.sg/sparkinfo/Pages/Spark.aspx>))

while keeping the provision of preschool education in the hands of the private sector. In this case, the government manages to uplift the quality of preschool education by concentrating its fiscal input on a variety of subsidies in the form of financial assistance. As a result, the preschool landscape is kept diverse, and the government’s burden on finance and management is reduced. This administration mode of preschool services is considered to be the economically, socially, and culturally sustainable for the preschool education in Singapore (Fig. 10.2).

The recent years witness a remarkable increase of government financial input in preschool education, especially for low- and middle-income families. This can be identified as an important indicator of a sustainable education system as it contributes to enhancing social mobility for all. Referring to the government statistics (ECDA 2012), in the financial year of 2011, a total of S\$606.8 million was distributed to child care centers, kindergartens, the Baby Bonus Scheme, and other subsidies; S\$28.9 to kindergarten and child care subsidies under Comcare for children from low- and middle-income backgrounds; and S\$10.3 to support preschool children with special needs. In 2013, the government pledged to invest S\$3 billion in the preschool sector the next 5 years, which will more than double the spending of that year (Spykerman 2013). This investment from the government definitely indicates a positive tendency of financial sustainability of preschool services.

Sustain Capacity of Preschool Sector

As discussed above, accessibility is the key determinant in a quality preschool education. Thus, whether the government policy ensures the accessibility align with the increasing demand over time or not is crucial to the sustainability of preschool

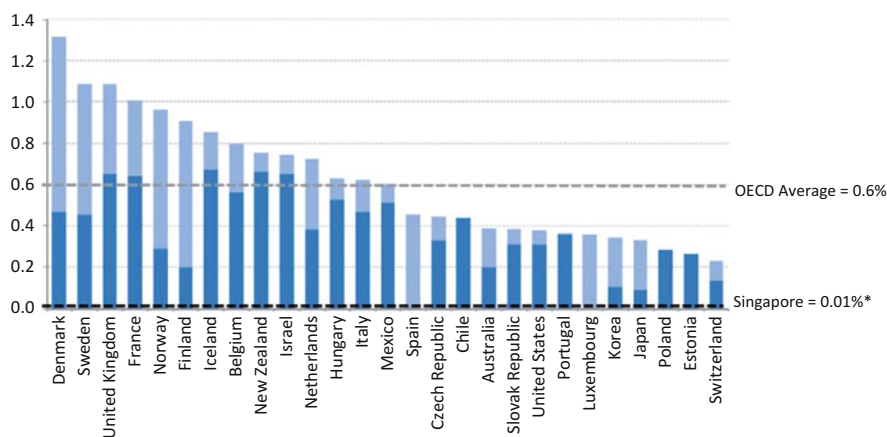


Fig. 10.2 Public expenditure on early childhood education and care in 2007 (percentage of GDP) (Source: OECD and Eurostat (<http://www.oecd.org/dev/49954117.pdf>))

services. The policy the government introduced to sustain the accessibility of preschool education, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, is AOP scheme. As mentioned above, implemented since 2009, this scheme has remarkably increased the number of child care centers from 987 in 2012 to 1196 in 2015. By funding these preschools and capping their monthly fees, the government has improved both the accessibility and affordability of preschool education. To sustain this policy, in 2013, another S\$3 billion from the government was invested to expand the AOP scheme from two operators to five, which is expected to add 20,000 child care places by 2017 (Ng and Chia 2014). This extended scheme expands from the government organizations to commercial locally owned religious organization, which can be seen as efforts to enhance its sustainability by involving in market forces.

Sustain Provision of Preschool Education Policies

An effective, sustainable education policy is supposed to refresh and innovate with the contemporary economic and social needs over time. Therefore, we turn to preschool education policies in Singapore to examine whether they have been adapted and updated with the times changed.

Introduced in 2001, the Baby Bonus Scheme provides parents who have more children financial assistance in raising children. As Singapore takes a pro-family policy, recent years witness more families tend to have a larger family. Accordingly, the scheme was revised on 1 August 2004 to increase the funding amount for families with more children. The latest enhancement was on 17 August 2008, which increased the bonus to the first and second child and expanded the benefits to children beyond the third child.

As for curriculum, in 2003, MOE launched the first curriculum framework “Nurturing Early Learner: A Framework for a Kindergarten Curriculum in Singapore” for early childhood-aged children, where desired outcomes of preschool in Singaporean context were delineated. In this framework, children’s holistic development and the role of play were emphasized as a result of Western education philosophy prevailing worldwide, and six learning areas in preschool were identified. In 2008, as an update and extension to the above curriculum framework, the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide was introduced. This curriculum guide shifted its focus on helping teachers develop appropriate curriculum and assessment that facilitate and motivate children’s holistic learning and development. As Singapore moves further in the era of globalization, the government has engaged in educational movement with a cosmopolitan outlook. In 2012, MOE developed a revised curriculum guidelines based on the previous ones. This revision extends the six learning areas to outline a set of learning goals children are expected to achieve for each area. The stable continuous modification and changes made on the curriculums from 2003 up to the present cater to the need of country’s development, sociocultural environment, and people’s perception on children and education, which reflects a sustainable progress of preschool curriculum.

Sustain Innovation of Pedagogy

Pedagogy is the integral component of early childhood education and is characterized by change in regard to region, culture, and time. An important initiative in Singapore preschool education is the establishment of MOE kindergartens. To catalyze quality enhancement in the preschool sector, MOE kindergartens serve as an experiment base to pilot and develop best practices that can be shared to the whole sector. The first five MOE kindergartens were set up in 2014, where innovation and research, especially in curriculum and teaching strategies, are conducted. They employ researchers, educational psychologists, and qualified teachers experienced in using creative strategies and innovative pedagogy to support children's learning. The practices that are identified as scalable, sustainable, and suitable for the Singaporean context will be applied to the whole preschool sector. As this initiative moves forward, five more MOE kindergartens were established in 2015, and a total of 15 will be set up by 2016. By steadily expanding the MOE kindergartens as well as the innovation outcomes in preschool education generated from these kindergartens, the MOE Kindergarten undertaking should be considered as an integral approach to a sustainable preschool education.

The above analyses with respect to the policy, capacity, qualification, and curriculum suggest that the majority of preschool services in Singapore are operating at a fair good level of sustainability.

Social Justice

Social justice can be analyzed based on a range of aspects, such as gender, language, religion, and socioeconomic status. Social justice with respect to preschool education also takes into account various factors, including accessibility, affordability, equity, family background, and socioeconomic status. As has been discussed, the Singapore government has made actively continuous endeavor to improve the accessibility and affordability of preschool education, with great emphases on low- and middle-income families. A great amount of fiscal input has been invested to support the preschool education of vulnerable students.

As discussed previously, Singapore is characterized as a heterogeneous country. This constitutionally multiracial state has to satisfy the demands of different subnational groups. Racial tension has existed in Singapore society even today, especially in the social and educational policies of the government (Alviar-Martin and Ho 2011). The Singapore government has made every endeavor to the country's "unity in diversity." As education is the important force to sustain social equality, social justice principles and goals are explicitly indicated in Singaporean education policies. As MOE indicated the role of preschool education on children in a multicultural, multireligious, and multiracial society:

They also learn values such as respect, responsibility, integrity, care, and harmony; all of which are important for safeguarding our cohesive and harmonious multiracial and multicultural society. (MOE 2015a, b, P. 6)

The government's efforts in addressing the importance of social justice can be revealed in the provisions of preschool program and curriculum and teacher professionalism. For instance, the Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education-Teaching (DECCE-T) is the basic qualification for all preschool teachers in Singapore. The training course addresses the issue of social justice by equipping trainees with the skills, including respecting for diversity in a multicultural society, implementing a developmentally and culturally appropriate curriculum, developing an understanding of the need to acknowledge cultural diversities in early childhood programs, and planning and implementing a developmentally and culturally appropriate environment for young children (MSF 2015).

In addition, the government also involves social justice into the curriculum and classrooms. Based on the revised kindergarten curriculum, MOE introduced a specially developed program that features distinct Singapore flavor in 2013 (MOE 2013a, b). This program targets at improving children's bilingual ability and a multicultural sense. It was designed on the basis of unique cultural and linguistic features of different languages and delivered both in English and Mother Tongue Language. Such efforts paid on accommodating diversity of culture and language as well as providing culturally appropriate curriculum will help children to develop a positive attitude and values on social justice. Furthermore, the government also strengthens social justice by supporting Mother Tongue Language (MTL) in preschool curriculum. MOE has developed guides for both MTL children and preschool educators. The "Nurturing Early Learner (NEL)" framework defines goals for MTL learning of children that should be achieved by the end of Kindergarten 2. To facilitate MTL educators' use of the curriculum framework, MOE made NEL framework available for MTL including Chinese, Malay, and Tamil in 2014. MTL teachers can better refer to the framework when they review, plan, and implement their MTL curriculum and observe and evaluate their students' MTL learning (MOE 2014).

As for the social justice within classrooms, it can also be extended to children with special needs attending preschools. In 2011, The Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) began to offer supports for child care teachers by enabling child care centers to recruit and train para-educators and para-educarers (ECDA 2012). With the introduction of the two occupations, child care teachers and educators will be assisted in the care and development of children as well as providing better instructional attention to those who require additional supports.

Conclusion

To sum up, the preschool education policy in Singapore has been steadily and positively developed over the past decade. By analyzing the statistics obtained from MOE, ECDA, and other governmental organization in Singapore, most ideas in 3A2S framework are found to display a favorable development tendency.

With increasing fiscal inputs from the government, the accessibility of preschool services has been effectively improved, especially for the families from low- and middle-income backgrounds. This has also made some contribution to the social justice as the equal preschooling opportunities are promoted. Despite of the disadvantaged families, we recommend more attention on geographical distribution of child care centers and kindergartens. Increasing support to expand child care places in high-demand areas and at workplaces will achieve a more favorable accessibility of preschool services.

The preschool education in Singapore today is generally found to be more affordable to most families, with financial support from various avenues, such as the Baby Bonus Scheme, the KiFAS, the Basic and Additional Infant and Child Care Subsidy, the AOP scheme, and the MOE kindergartens service, benefiting families with varied needs.

To better adapt to globalization and adopt cosmopolitanism, the government has sought actively to assure the quality of preschool education with quality teachers, updated pedagogy, and innovative curriculum. The quality assurance and accreditation mechanism for preschools and assessment and evaluation for teacher qualification have been established. Related teaching and learning resources for professional improvement are also available.

Furthermore, the Singapore government has addressed the issue of social justice in the policy development, by investing heavily in enhancing the accessibility and affordability of preschool education to vulnerable families and allocating education resources in a fair way to each stakeholder among different strata and groups.

To conclude, over the past decade, the policies of Singapore government have made remarkable progress in achieving its goal – raising the quality of preschool education. Their efforts to address many concerns of families in accessing and affording a quality preschool education are evident, and indeed some achievement has been yielded. And also, as the available official statistics are limited, reviewing government documents may merely generate a snapshot of the development of preschool education in Singapore. In order to obtain a complete picture integrating stakeholders' views, more research is deserved to evaluate the policies in Singapore's preschool education with varied methods and from different perspectives.

Appendix

List of Acronyms

AOP	Anchor Operator
ASAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
DECCE-T	Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education-Teaching
ECDA	Early Childhood Development Agency, Singapore
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EL	English language
EPE-T	Diploma in Preschool Education-Teaching

GDP	Gross domestic product
KiFAS	Kindergarten Fee Assistance Scheme
MCYS	Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, Singapore
MOE	Ministry of Education, Singapore
MSF	Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore
MTL	Mother tongue language
NEL	Nurturing Early Learner
NTUC	National Trades Union Congress
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAP	People's Action Party
PCF	PAP Community Foundation
PCI	Per capita income
QA	Quality assurance
QRS	Quality Rating Scale
SPARK	Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

References

- Alviar-Martin, T., & Ho, L. C. (2011). "So, where do they fit in?" Teachers' perspectives of multi-cultural education and diversity in Singapore. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(1), 127–135.
- Ang, L. (2006). Steering debate and initiating dialogue: A review of the Singapore Preschool curriculum. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 7(3), 203–212.
- Cheah, Y. M. (1998). The examination culture and its impact on literacy innovations: The case of Singapore. *Language and Education*, 12(3), 192–209.
- Early Childhood Development Agency. (2012). *Ensuring quality early childhood education and childcare services*. Retrieved from <https://www.ecda.gov.sg/PressReleases/Pages/Ensuring-quality-early-childhood-education-and-childcare-services.aspx>.
- Early Childhood Development Agency. (2015). *The Preschool landscape in Singapore*. Retrieved from <http://skoolopedia.com/preschool-singapore-2015-infographic/>.
- Ebbeck, M., & Chan, Y. Y. Y. (2011). Instituting change in early childhood education: Recent developments in Singapore. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 38(6), 457–463.
- Ebbeck, M., & Gokhale, N. (2004). Child-rearing practices in a selected sample of parents with children in childcare in Singapore. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 5(2), 194–206.
- Gopinathan, S. (2001). Globalisation, the state and education policy in Singapore. In J. Tan, S. Gopinathan, & W. K. Ho (Eds.), *Challenges facing the Singapore education system today*. Singapore: Prentice Hall.
- Hatch, T. (2013). Beneath the surface of accountability: Answerability, responsibility and capacity-building in recent education reforms in Norway. *Journal of Educational Change*, 14(2), 113–138.
- King, J. (2008). *Evaluation of the sustainability of ECE services during the implementation of pathways to the future-ngā huarahi arataki*. Auckland: Health Outcomes International.
- Li, H., & Wang, X. C. (in press). International perspectives on early childhood education in Chinese societies. In N. Rao, J. Zhou, & J. Sun. (Eds.), *Early childhood development in Chinese societies*, Springer.

- Li, H., Wong, M. S., & Wang, X. C. (2010). Affordability, accessibility, and accountability: Perceived impacts of the pre-primary education vouchers in Hong Kong. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 25, 125–138.
- Lim, S. M. Y. (2004). Looking at education through a Deweyan lens: How play can take shape in Singapore's preschools. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 5(3), 396–401.
- Ministry of Education Singapore. (2010). *Parliamentary replies – 24th, Nov, 2010*. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/parliamentary-replies/2010/11/Preschool-education.php>.
- Ministry of Education, Singapore. (2011, March 20). *Uplifting Preschool education* <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/forum/2011/03/uplifting-Preschool-education.php>.
- Ministry of Education Singapore. (2012). *Parliamentary replies – 24th, Aug, 2012*. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/parliamentary-replies/2012/08/preschool-education-1.php>
- Ministry of Education, Singapore. (2013a, August 31). *MOE kindergartens' curriculum features distinct Singapore flavor and flagship programs*. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/2013/08/moe-kindergartens-curriculum-features-distinct-singapore-flavour-and-flagship-programmes.php>.
- Ministry of Education, Singapore. (2013b, March 27). *MOE's first five pilot kindergartens in primary schools and the community*. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/2013/03/moe-first-five-pilot-kindergartens-in-primary-schools-and-the-community.php>.
- Ministry of Education, Singapore. (2014, September 20). *Nurturing early learners framework for mother tongue language – Chinese, Malay and Tamil version now available*. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/2014/09/nurturing-early-learners-framework-for-mother-tonguelanguages.php>
- Ministry of Education, Singapore. (2015a). *Bring out the best in every child*. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/about/files/moe-corporate-brochure.pdf> framework for mother tongue language – Chinese, Malay and Tamil version now available. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/2014/09/nurturing-early-learners-framework-for-mother-tongue-languages.php>.
- Ministry of Education, Singapore. (2015b, February 17). *MOE kindergartens launch new program to help parents better support their preschool children's holistic development*. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/2013/03/moe-first-five-pilot-kindergartens-in-primary-schools-and-the-community.php>.
- Ministry of Social and Family Development. (2015). *Diploma in Early Childhood Care & Education – Teaching (DECCE-T)*. Retrieved from <https://app.msf.gov.sg/Portals/0/Files/DECCE-T-course-content.doc>.
- NG, J. Y., & Chia, A. (2014, January 28 published). 3 new anchor operators set to provide 8,000 more childcare places. *Today*, p. 1. Retrieved from <http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/3-new-anchor-operators-set-provide-8000-more-childcare-places>.
- Sharpe, P. (2002). School days in Singapore: Young children's experiences and opportunities during a typical school day. *Childhood Education*, 79(1), 9–14.
- Spykerman, K. (2013, February 25). Budget 2013: Govt to spend S\$3b on Preschool sector over next 5 years. *Chanel NewsAsia*, p. 1. Retrieved from <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/budget-2013-govt-to-spend/590362.html>
- Tharman, S. (2003). *Speech by Mr. Tharman Shanmugaratnam senior minister of state for trade and industry & education official launch cum seminar of MOE's Preschool curriculum framework at Nanyang Polytechnic auditorium*. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/speeches/2003/sp20030120.htm>.
- Ting, T. C. (2007). Policy developments in Preschool education in Singapore: A focus on the key reforms of kindergarten education. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 1(1), 35–43.
- Tzuo, P. W. (2010). The ECE landscape in Singapore: Analysis of current trends, issues, and prospect for a cosmopolitan outlook. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education*, 4(2), 77–98.

- UNESCO International Bureau of Education. (2006). *Singapore Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programs*. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001472/147238e.pdf>.
- Zulkifli, M. (2006). *Speech by senior parliamentary secretary (education) Mr Masagos Zulkifli BMM, for opening of parliament (2006, November 8–14)*. Singapore: Ministry of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/speeches/2006/sp20061108.htm>.
- Zulkifli, M. (2008). *Improving the quality of Preschool education. Ministry of Education, Singapore*. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/speeches/2008/03/04/fy-2008-committee-of-supply-de-5.php>.

Chapter 11

An Examination and Evaluation of Postmillennial Early Childhood Education Policies in Taiwan

Suzannie K.Y. Leung and Eva E. Chen

Abstract Since the first kindergarten was established in the late nineteenth century, the early childhood education (ECE) system in Taiwan has steadily evolved into one that aims to support all young children, regardless of their socioeconomic background. Reforms to the ECE system have rapidly increased since the millennium. In this chapter, we examine the ECE policies that have been proposed and implemented in Taiwan from the year 2000 to 2014. Specifically, we review these policies through the 3A2S framework: accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice. Using the most recent data obtained from the Ministry of Education and other governmental agencies in Taiwan, we describe and analyse the trend of policy changes, examining whether these policy changes have yielded an ECE system that truly better serves the children of Taiwan. Our review indicates that the current governmental reforms have made Taiwanese ECE more accessible, affordable, and accountable to the families of young children, especially those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. With continued support at the federal and county level, these reforms should be sustainable in the years to come. In summary, the postmillennial governmental policies in Taiwan have vastly improved early childhood education for its future generations.

Taiwan, the Republic of China, is a sovereign state in East Asia with the total land about 36,000 km² (Info Taiwan 2015). Approximately 23 million people live in Taiwan, speaking a wide variety of languages, including Mandarin Chinese

This research was completed with the help of Yu-wei Lin, Han-wen Liu, and Veronica Ka Wai Lai.

S.K.Y. Leung

Early Childhood and Elementary Education Division, Hong Kong Baptist University,
Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong

E.E. Chen (✉)

Division of Social Science, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology,
Room 2346, Academic Building, Clear Water Bay, Kowloon, Hong Kong
e-mail: evaechen@ust.hk

(*Putonghua*), *Taiwanese*, *Hakka*, and *indigenous languages*. Taiwan is a democratic society, with its politics dominated by two main parties (American Institute in Taiwan 2012): the Kuomintang (KMT), the historically ruling party, and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the party traditionally in opposition, although it gained political control from the year 2000 to 2008. Although early childhood education was created long before Taiwan became a democracy, its current form has been largely shaped by governmental policies and legal reformations, as well as by the efforts of nongovernmental stakeholders.

Early childhood education (ECE; please see [Appendix](#) for a full list of acronyms) has existed in Taiwan for over a century, growing rapidly from humble beginnings to a formalized system. The first recorded kindergarten was established during the Japanese occupation in the late nineteenth century. The private Taipei kindergarten was formed in 1901 to provide day care to young Japanese children residing in Taiwan and was later expanded to include local Taiwanese children as well (Lin and Yang 2007). During the 1950s, in response to the increasing number of women joining the workforce, the demand for early childhood care services also increased, leading the government to recognize childcare centres officially as “kindergartens” educating young children from ages 4 to 6 (Chen and Li [in press](#); Lin and Ching 2012).

Through a series of government-initiated regulations since 1970, the ECE system in Taiwan has become more structured (see Chiu and Wu 2003; Lin 2002; Lin and Tsai 1996 for the specific governmental policies).

In 1987, the Taiwanese government published the standards of kindergarten curriculum (SKC) to regulate the quality of kindergartens (Lin and Tsai 1996). The following two decades saw a surge in efforts from the government and the private sector to improve ECE in Taiwan (Chiu and Wu 2003; Chen and Li [in press](#)). More public kindergartens were built, and schools received more resources from the government (Ho 2006). Starting in the year 2000, the government further streamlined the ECE system through:

- (a) The provision of free education through public ECE providers to 5-year-old children
- (b) The introduction of vouchers and additional support to children from economically disadvantaged families
- (c) The integration of kindergarten and day-care services
- (d) The establishment of government-supported, privately-operated kindergartens (i.e. allowing private kindergartens to be built on publically owned land)
- (e) The initiation of a teacher certification system to enforce consistency in instruction (Chen and Li [in press](#); Li and Wang [in press](#); Lin 2007)

From this brief overview of the development of the ECE system in Taiwan, it is clear that the importance of ECE has increasingly been acknowledged, especially from the Taiwanese government. Policies and laws concerning ECE continue to be created, debated, and revised; but the research on how these policies have shaped the ECE system in recent years has been relatively sparse. Therefore, we turn our attention to the postmillennial developments of Taiwanese ECE, with a focus on

accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice (henceforth known as the 3A2S framework; see Li and Wang *in press*; Li et al. 2010).

Given that the evolution of ECE in Taiwan has been largely driven by governmental initiatives, we focus on government documentation after the year 2000 as the primary source of information in this chapter. Specifically, we analyse the policies, laws, surveys, and other statistical information provided by the Taiwanese government using the 3A2S framework. The 3A2S framework allows us to assess the Taiwanese ECE policies in a more structured, rigorous manner, evaluating its appropriateness for all of the ECE stakeholders.

The 3A2S framework encompasses the following five dimensions: accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice. *Accessibility* refers to whether every kindergarten-aged child can easily attend a kindergarten (e.g. the kindergarten should be in near vicinity to the child's home). *Affordability* refers to whether kindergarten fees are within the financial means of the child's family, including families of low socioeconomic status. *Accountability* refers to whether kindergartens are held responsible, typically by a governmental agency, for the quality of education offered. *Sustainability* refers to whether the quantity and quality of educational services provided can be maintained, also typically with the aid and supervision of the government. Finally, *social justice* refers to whether educational resources and opportunities are distributed fairly among different social strata and groups.

Examining the Taiwanese ECE policies in terms of their accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice allows us to evaluate the effectiveness of these policies in improving the kindergarten early educational experiences of young children. Thus, using the 3A2S framework, we review the most recent government documents on ECE policies in Taiwan. Through this systematic inquiry, we intend to investigate whether the policies implemented after the millennium have yielded an ECE system that addresses the needs of children living in Taiwan.

Accessibility: Making ECE Available to All Qualified Children

A quality kindergarten education is beneficial only if it is readily accessible to kindergarten-aged children. Thus, the number of children who are eligible to attend school (i.e. the target population) and the number of kindergartens available are both critical to review the accessibility of ECE. We summarize (a) the number of kindergartens, both public and private, that were available throughout Taiwan from 2000 to 2014 and (b) the number of children these schools enrolled in Table 11.1.

The total number of public and private kindergartens has remained fairly consistent from 2000 to 2011, averaging at 3,326 schools per year during this period. However, there was a dramatic increase from 2011 to 2012, from 3,195 schools to 6,611 schools. This increase can be largely attributed to the passage of two laws. First, in 2011, a new law on ECE and care proclaimed that kindergartens could enrol

Table 11.1 Kindergarten surveys in Taiwan from 2000 to 2014

Year	School	Public		Private		Total
	quantity	Number of kindergartens	Number of children enrolled	Number of kindergartens	Number of children enrolled	number of children enrolled
2000	4,050	2,130	73,434	1,920	169,656	243,090
2001	3,234	1,288	75,956	1,946	170,347	246,303
2002	3,275	1,331	76,382	1,944	164,798	241,180
2003	3,306	1,358	74,462	1,948	166,464	240,926
2004	3,252	1,348	73,177	1,904	163,978	237,155
2005	3,351	1,474	69,186	1,877	155,033	224,219
2006	3,329	1,507	73,334	1,822	128,481	201,815
2007	3,283	1,528	73,224	1,755	118,549	191,773
2008	3,195	1,544	73,329	1,651	112,339	185,668
2009	3,154	1,553	72,991	1,601	109,058	182,049
2010	3,283	1,560	72,027	1,723	111,874	183,901
2011	3,195	1,581	71,335	1,614	118,457	189,792
2012	6,611	1,888	131,423	4,723	328,230	459,653
2013	6,560	1,919	131,910	4,641	316,279	448,189
2014	6,468	NA	NA	NA	NA	444,457

Source: Taiwan Ministry of Education (MOE; <http://www.moe.gov.tw>)

children aged 2–6, thus extending ECE to children who formerly would only qualify for day care due to their younger age (Laws and Regulations Database of The Republic of China 2011). Second, in 2012, another law allowed day-care centres to apply to become kindergartens (Laws and Regulations Database of The Republic of China 2012a, b). As a result, day-care centres were integrated into the kindergarten system overseen by the Taiwan Ministry of Education (MOE), thus increasing the number of schools that were classified as kindergartens in 2012 (Chen and Li *in press*).

Birth rates from 2000 to 2014 are displayed in Table 11.2. As shown in the table, the number of children born declined from 305,312 in 2000 to 210,383 in 2014. A slight increase in births was observed following the historic low 7.21 % birth rate in 2010, but the birth rate in Taiwan has remained under 10 % from 2004 onwards.

Logically, a decrease in the number of children born should correspond to a decrease in that of children enrolled in kindergarten. With the decrease in target population and the increase in the number of kindergartens, ECE services should be increasingly accessible in Taiwan.

We find support for increased accessibility by examining the numbers of kindergartens, kindergarten teachers, and students (see Table 11.3). The number of students enrolled in kindergartens averaged at 213,989 in the years prior to 2012. However, following the integration of kindergartens and day-care centres in 2012, student enrolment became more than doubled, reaching 459,653 children (MOE 2013). As of 2014, there were 6,468 schools and 444,457 enrolled students throughout Taiwan, indicating that on average, the ratio of school to child was

Table 11.2 Rates of birth from 2000 to 2014

Year	Number of births	Birth rate
2000	305,312	13.76
2001	260,354	11.65
2002	247,530	11.02
2003	227,070	10.06
2004	216,419	9.56
2005	205,854	9.06
2006	204,459	8.96
2007	204,414	8.92
2008	198,733	8.64
2009	191,310	8.29
2010	166,886	7.21
2011	196,627	8.48
2012	229,481	9.86
2013	199,113	8.53
2014	210,383	8.99

Source: Taiwan Ministry of the Interior (MOI; <http://sowf.moi.gov.tw/stat/month/m1-02.xls>)

Table 11.3 Number of kindergartens, kindergarten teachers, and students from 2000 to 2014

School year	Number of kindergartens	Number of kindergarten teachers	Number of students
2000	3,150	20,099	243,090
2001	3,234	19,799	246,303
2002	3,275	20,457	241,180
2003	3,306	21,251	240,926
2004	3,252	20,894	237,155
2005	3,351	21,833	224,219
2006	3,329	19,037	201,815
2007	3,283	17,403	191,773
2008	3,195	17,369	185,668
2009	3,154	16,904	182,049
2010	3,283	14,630	183,901
2011	3,195	14,918	189,792
2012	6,611	45,004	459,653
2013	6,560	45,296	448,189
2014	6,468	45,341	444,457

Source: MOE (<http://www.moe.gov.tw>)

Table 11.4 Average number of kindergartens per 1,000 km

Region	Kindergartens/ 1,000 km
Changhua County	305.29
Chiayi City	1,299.45
Chiayi County	78.80
Hsinchu City	1,555.41
Hualien County	28.73
Kaohsiung City	242.57
Keelung City	790.91
Kinmen and Matsu area	177.33
Kinmen County	164.85
Lienchiang County	243.06
Miaoli County	96.69
Nantou County	43.83
New Taipei City	558.81
Penghu County	181.30
Pingtung County	105.92
Taichung City	305.65
Tainan City	250.04
Taipei City	2,604.86
Taitung County	34.42
Taoyuan County	424.26
Yilan County	51.78
Yunlin County	109.23

Source: MOE (<http://www.moe.gov.tw>)

v1:68.7 (i.e. there was one kindergarten for approximately every 69 children). Of course, given that schools and students are not evenly distributed throughout Taiwan, the ratio only provides a general sense of the availability of kindergartens for Taiwanese children.

Finally, we examine whether every kindergarten-aged child can easily attend a nearby kindergarten in one's district. Referring to the latest statistics from the MOE (2015a, b) shown in Table 11.4 (cities and counties listed in alphabetical order), there are on average more kindergartens per 1,000 km in the cities (950.96) than in the counties (146.11). In particular, Taipei City, the capital of Taiwan, has an extremely large number of kindergartens (2,604.86 schools per 1,000 km), while Hualien County, one of the larger, more rural counties in eastern Taiwan, has a much lower number of kindergartens (28.73 schools per 1,000 km). The difference in kindergarten numbers may be related to the number of eligible young children living in the area (i.e. there are more kindergarten-aged children in cities than in counties), but a closer investigation by county, city, and district is needed to evaluate accessibility in further detail.

Affordability: Increasing Financial Support to Relieve Parental Burden

In the past decade, the Taiwanese government has increased efforts to make ECE more affordable to families of young children. The tuition fees for private kindergartens skyrocketed in the 1990s (Ho 2006), creating a financial burden for parents who were unable to enrol their children in public kindergartens. To address this problem, the government began building additional public kindergartens (Ho 2006) and creating government-supported, privately-operated kindergartens in the early 2000s (Chen and Li *in press*; Lin 2007). The increase in kindergartens supported by the government – which offer lower tuitions relative to kindergartens that are completely privately run – meant that ECE became much more affordable for families.

To boost both the accessibility and affordability of ECE, the MOE (2008) increased financial support, first to 5-year-old children from economically disadvantaged families in 2004 and then to all families with 5-year-old children in 2007. A voucher programme was launched in 2007, providing 10,000 New Taiwan dollars (NTD; about 333 US dollars, or USD) per year for each student. Although this additional subsidy covered a small fraction (approximately 5–15 %) of the total kindergarten tuition cost, it nevertheless demonstrated a commitment from the Taiwanese government in making kindergarten education affordable, especially to low-income families (Chen and Li *in press*).

In 2008, the newly elected President Ying-Jeou Ma proclaimed that the government, in lieu of continuing the voucher programme, would commit to making ECE free for all 5-year-old children in Taiwan (MOE and MOI 2011). Eligible children (i.e. those who would be aged 5 by the time they enrolled in kindergarten) attending public kindergartens would have their tuitions fully covered, and those attending private kindergartens would have their tuitions partially subsidized (Chen and Li *in press*; MOE 2008). Financial support for private kindergartens was further increased in 2011 (MOE and MOI 2011). Finally, extra resources (e.g. subsidized travel costs, after-school programme fee support) were provided to children from ethnic minority backgrounds and those from rural areas (Chen and Li *in press*). In summary, the government has made an explicit effort over the past years to ensure that ECE is affordable to all qualified young children.

We also examine the affordability issue by looking at the average household income. Specifically, we use the Gini coefficient to compare the household income distribution in Taiwan with those from other Asia-Pacific regions. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Gini coefficient represents the income distribution of a nation's population by measuring the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption expenditure among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution (OECD 2015a, b). A Gini coefficient of 0 means that there is perfect equality of income distribution; on the other hand, a Gini coefficient of 1 means extreme inequality in the distribution of income in the population.

Table 11.5 Household income distribution among selected Asian countries

Countries	Year	Gini coefficient (per capita)
Taiwan	2012	0.290
South Korea	2012	0.307
Japan	2011	0.336
Singapore	2012	0.459

Sources: NST (<http://win.dgbas.gov.tw/fies/doc/result/101/a11/Year08.xls>) and OECD (<http://www.oecd.org/social/income-distribution-database.htm>)

Table 11.6 CPI from 2000 to 2014

Year	Index
2000	89.82
2010	98.60
2011	100.00
2012	101.93
2013	102.74
2014	103.36

Source: Taiwan Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics (<http://eng.stat.gov.tw>)

The National Statistics of Taiwan (2012) and OECD (2015a, b) showed that the latest Gini coefficient of Taiwan was 0.29 in 2012, indicating that the income distribution is more equal relative to comparable Asian countries, such as South Korea, Japan, and Singapore (see Table 11.5). From this comparison, we can infer that families in Taiwan have fairly similar financial capacities for consumption (Leung 2014). This relative equality in income distribution indicates that the financial needs of kindergarten-aged children can be addressed with broad, nationwide policies, as long as these policies are based on the average household income.

In addition to the economic well-being of individual households, the overall economic health of a region is critical in understanding affordability. To examine this issue, we turn to the consumer price index (CPI), which measures changes over time in the general level of prices of goods and services that a reference population must spend for consumption (OECD 2015a, b). The CPI for Taiwan from 2000 to 2014 (Taiwan Directorate General of Budget and Accounting and Statistics 2012) is shown in Table 11.6. The price index shows gradual inflation, with a rising rate of 15%, from 89.82 to 103.36, throughout the past 14 years. Therefore, given the gradual and steady rate of inflation, adjusting the governmental subsidies to maintain the affordability of Taiwanese kindergartens should be manageable in Taiwan.

Accountability: Making Quality Assurance Matter

Quality assurance is important to consider when ECE is delivered. Although previous research has indicated that participation in ECE services is preferable to no participation at all, children who are enrolled in schools that are regulated and monitored still outperform their peers in schools that are more informally run (Rao et al. 2012). As a result, it is important to consider the factors that contribute to a high-quality education: the number of students per class, the ratio of students to teachers, and the curriculum offered to the students.

With the increase in the number of available kindergartens and the decline in birth rate, the current number of students per class should be low relative to the years before 2000. However, although student enrolment should be regulated by the government, it can be difficult to monitor in actuality. Although many schools providing ECE services are either fully or partially supported by the government, the number of private schools has far exceeded the number of public schools in the recent years. As of 2013, there was more than double the number of private schools compared to public schools (see Table 11.1). Along with the dramatic increase in the number of kindergartens in 2012, the number of certified kindergarten teachers rose sharply, from 14,918 in 2011 to 45,004 in 2012 (see Table 11.3). The addition of these teachers correlates with an improvement in the student-teacher ratio, from a ratio of 12.1:1 in 2000 to 9.78:1 in 2014. With the shift in student-teacher ratio, quality education should have become more accessible to young children.

Compared with public kindergartens, private kindergartens – as profit-making organizations – are obligated to pay business taxes and higher utility fees (Ho 2006). As a result, private kindergartens often enrol more students than permitted by governmental regulations; some schools even fail to register with the government, operating underground to avoid legal paperwork and to keep their cost of operations at a minimum (Ho 2006). To improve the accountability of the private kindergartens, the MOE in 2004 started promoting the creation of government-utility, privately-operated kindergartens (Huang and Hsu 2004). These private kindergartens, built on publicly owned land, could then be more closely monitored by the local government in each city or county (Chen and Li *in press*). In 2011, the MOE proposed two more types of schools to provide additional ECE options to families in need (MOE 2012). National experimental kindergartens, the first type, are created as kindergartens affiliated with public primary schools, typically located on the primary school campus. Private non-profit kindergartens, the second type, involve close maintenance and support from the local education departments and professional ECE personnel teams. These types of kindergartens allow for more schools to be regulated by the government.

To address the quality of teaching and curriculum in ECE, the Taiwanese government now requires kindergartens to (a) be accredited, (b) be evaluated regularly, and (c) hire qualified ECE professionals. The accreditation process can include evaluations of the school administration, teaching and caring, teaching facilities, and public safety (Lin 2007). Kindergartens must also undergo regular evaluations every 3–5 years (Hsu 2003). In these evaluations, the quality of administration, course

content, educational materials and facilities, safety measures, and degree of integration with the community are all reviewed (Hsu 2003). Lastly, the requirements for becoming an ECE teacher have been tightened over the years (Chen and Li *in press*). Aspiring teachers must now finish a professional programme focusing on ECE, intern at a kindergarten for 6 months, and pass a qualification exam before they can become a full-time teacher in public kindergartens (Lin 2012). Finally, according to the Early Childhood Education and Care Act (ECECA), in-service kindergarten teachers are required to fulfil an 18-h training programme every year (Laws and Regulations Database of The Republic of China 2011).

The government has struggled with developing an appropriate curriculum for ECE. The Standards of Kindergarten Curriculum, established in 1987, no longer provides adequate guidance to kindergartens (Chen and Li *in press*; Lin 2002). Schools largely create their own curricula, drawing from traditional Chinese teaching methods (e.g. completing practice worksheets; Lin and Tsai 1996) and Western philosophies (Wei 1995). These school curricula are not well monitored by the government or ECE professionals, and teachers often struggle to balance between academically oriented and child-centred approaches in the classroom (Lu 1998). Currently, the MOE has provided support to kindergartens through its governmental website (<http://www.ece.moe.edu.tw/>).

Kindergarten principals and teachers are encouraged to download teaching and parenting resources, review regulations and assurance frameworks, and provide accommodation services of education and care to children. However, more research, training, and guidance are needed to better align an appropriate ECE curriculum with the needs of Taiwanese children.

Sustainability: Investing Extra Fiscal Input to Develop Quality Education

Increasing the accessibility, affordability, and accountability of ECE would mean very little if the results of these efforts are not sustainable over time. Traditionally, one of the heaviest fiscal burdens for county and municipal governments is educational expenditure, which includes early childhood and primary and secondary schools (Chen 2014). Arguably, then, fiscal input provided to kindergartens (public and private) should contribute to sustainability by providing additional resources and alleviating financial burdens for the schools. In exchange, schools should be motivated to keep their services accessible and affordable to students and to be accountable to governmental regulations (Leung 2014).

Thus, we turn to the key education finance reforms that have been introduced in recent years, investigating whether and how fiscal input from the federal government impacted the sustainability of education development. Historically, total expenditure for education, science, and culture was not to exceed 15% of the annual federal government budget, 25% of the annual county government budget, and 35% of the annual municipal budget (Chen 2014). In 2011, reforms on education

finance began with the passing of the Compilation and Administration of Education Expenditures Act (CAEEA), which raised the minimum level of federal educational expenditure for all sectors of education to 22.5 % of the average net annual revenue over the previous three budgeting years (Laws and Regulations Database of The Republic of China 2013). The CAEEA also provided more specific guidelines on the amount of expenditure to different sectors of education.

Examining the composition of educational expenditures by level of education from 2000 to 2013 (MOE 2013) suggests that the Taiwanese government has paid increasing attention to ECE. Even though ECE does not share a large proportion of the national educational expenditure, it is the only sector whose expenditure has been more than doubled, rising from 2.85 % to 6.9 % between the years 2000 and 2013 (see Table 11.7).

Similarly, in examining the educational expenditure per student at all school levels, we find that the magnitude of expenditure increase at the kindergarten level was the largest, increasing from 62,000 to 112,000 NTD (i.e. approximately 2,067–3,733 USD) from 2000 to 2013 (MOE 2013; see Table 11.8). From the fiscal years 2000 to 2013, the amount of educational expenditure increased steadily across all levels, allowing ECE schools to remain well supported for the foreseeable future (MOE 2013).

Social Justice: Balancing Resources for All Stakeholders

Finally, we review how the Taiwanese government has addressed issues of social justice through their policies on ECE. In the government's policies on increasing accessibility and affordability, attention has been consistently given to children from economically disadvantaged families, those living in rural areas, and those who are members of ethnic minority groups (Chen and Li *in press*; Lin 2007; MOE 2008; MOE and MOI 2011). Additional financial support (ranging from 400 USD to 1,000 USD) has been given to children from low socioeconomic backgrounds, even if they were enrolled in private kindergartens (Chen and Li *in press*; MOE 2011; MOI 2011).

Schools have also been encouraged to be attentive to social justice issues, ensuring equal opportunities for children of different gender, ethnicities, and cultures (MOE and MOI 2011). For instance, schools are encouraged to educate children belonging to ethnic minorities in their mother tongue (e.g. Taiwanese, Hakka, aborigine languages). In addition, children with learning exceptionalities should be supported by professional intervention teams. Other policies related to social justice include the following: (a) a counselling mechanism to guide and support teachers working in remote communities; (b) a database of children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families, to be used to evaluate policy effectiveness for vulnerable children over time; and (c) a priority to provide social welfare support to families with economic difficulties (MOE and MOI 2011). These policies indicate much willingness from the government to address inequities in the Taiwanese society.

Table 11.7 Composition of educational expenditures by level of education

	Kindergarten	Elementary	Junior high	High school	Vocational high school	Junior college	Higher education	Special education
2000–2001	2.85	27.56	17.05	10.42	8.01	1.95	31.61	0.57
2001–2002	3.15	28.09	17.09	10.55	6.18	1.87	32.45	0.62
2002–2003	3.14	27.24	16.90	10.18	5.64	1.24	35.01	0.64
2003–2004	3.20	26.82	16.87	10.36	5.40	1.30	35.37	0.67
2004–2005	3.15	27.06	16.77	10.47	5.27	0.88	35.72	0.69
2005–2006	2.84	27.06	16.58	10.34	5.22	0.84	36.47	0.65
2006–2007	2.78	27.10	16.40	10.39	5.09	0.67	36.96	0.61
2007–2008	2.89	26.60	15.59	10.70	5.20	0.79	37.59	0.64
2008–2009	2.96	26.89	15.14	10.50	5.42	0.73	37.71	0.66
2009–2010	3.19	26.61	14.73	10.70	5.43	0.74	37.95	0.64
2010–2011	3.42	26.67	14.67	10.56	5.44	0.77	37.78	0.70
2011–2012	5.07	41.08		10.32	5.04	0.90	36.92	0.65
2012–2013	6.90	40.66		9.98	4.84	0.83	36.17	0.63

Source: MOE (<http://stats.moe.gov.tw/files/ebook/indicators/indicators/103indicators.xls>)

Table 11.8 Educational expenditure per student at all levels of school

	Kindergarten	Elementary	Junior high	High school	Vocational high school	Junior college	Higher education	Average across all levels
2000–2001	62.0	75.8	117.1	92.0	109.9	91.5	169.9	108.4
2001–2002	66.6	75.8	115.2	88.6	96.2	116.8	152.3	113.3
2002–2003	69.9	76.2	115.2	86.8	101.6	113.9	158.9	117.0
2003–2004	73.9	77.9	119.0	90.6	104.8	140.6	161.0	120.4
2004–2005	76.4	82.7	122.8	92.2	106.2	131.8	164.5	125.4
2005–2006	75.3	87.7	126.0	92.4	105.6	121.8	172.0	130.7
2006–2007	83.4	91.4	127.4	94.4	103.5	104.7	175.3	133.5
2007–2008	94.7	95.2	125.2	101.2	107.3	135.6	182.6	138.7
2008–2009	101.2	101.7	123.0	101.3	109.8	116.7	184.0	147.3
2009–2010	112.6	107.4	122.5	103.2	110.3	108.1	188.5	154.7
2010–2011	121.9	114.9	129.2	102.6	112.5	105.4	190.6	158.7
2011–2012	115.0	133.9		107.7	114.2	123.3	199.6	169.2
2012–2013	111.9	148.0		109.5	117.7	116.4	206.8	168.1

Unit: NTD ('000)

Source: MOE (<http://stats.moe.gov.tw/files/ebook/indicators/103indicators.xls>)

However, more can always be done, especially from the perspective of other ECE stakeholders. There was a large-scale protest (including over 10,000 teachers, parents, and children) in March 2015 as the ECECA was due for a review by the Legislative Yuan. Specifically, concerns were raised over the plans to build approximately 100 government-utility, privately-operated kindergartens (i.e. private kindergartens that would be built on publically owned land) in the coming 5 years.

Since the government did not explicitly prohibit public kindergartens from being transformed into such schools, teachers and parents were concerned that a number of public kindergartens, already built on government-owned land, would make the transition, thus allowing these schools to operate with less governmental supervision. Although these schools would still be monitored by the government, many stakeholders worry that these semipublic kindergartens may eventually compromise educational quality for profit, making ECE less accessible and affordable to students (Lii 2015a, b).

Additionally, the integration of kindergartens and day-care centres has created new challenges for ECE stakeholders. Although this integration has allowed for more accountability from kindergartens and former day-care centres, it has also created a rift in the ECE field from the perspective of the teachers. Before, childcare workers were responsible for children in the day-care centres, even though the majority of these workers were not formally trained in ECE. Once day-care centres became kindergartens, however, these childcare workers, now officially unqualified to manage a classroom on their own, could only assist the trained teachers. This perceived demotion rankled many childcare workers, especially those who had accumulated numerous years of experience, and many educators argued that the integration of the ECE system resulted in the inequitable treatment of these workers (Lii 2015a, b). Without resolving the concerns over semipublic kindergartens and childcare workers, these issues may critically affect the quality of Taiwanese kindergarten education for all children, but particularly those from disadvantaged families who may rely on their schools to supplement their early childhood experiences (“Millions of people go on the streets to protect early childhood education”, “Revising laws with conscience”, “Protest from all citizens to protect early childhood education”, 2015).

Conclusion

To summarize, ECE in Taiwan has undergone waves of development since the first kindergarten was established in the early twentieth century, but efforts to reform ECE have been particularly dramatic and far reaching since 2000. In our chapter, we examined the governmental policies and laws, various governmental statistics, and local media coverage of ECE through the 3A2S framework. Through our investigation, we believe that the reforms enacted by the Taiwanese government – on the federal as well as at the county level – have largely improved ECE in Taiwan.

To make kindergartens more accessible and affordable, the government enacted one of the most influential policies in the past decade: launching free education for children who are 5 years of age. In addition, the government has added public kindergartens to the ECE system and provided land for private organizations to build kindergartens that would be more affordable to families of young children. To address accountability issues, the government has sought to integrate the day-care and the kindergarten systems, to ensure that ECE teachers are properly certified, and to encourage kindergartens to use curriculum that is appropriate for young children. The recent increase in governmental funding for Taiwan ECE is an indication of the government's commitment to make the ECE reforms sustainable in the long run.

Finally, ECE policies have increasingly aimed to aid the needs of children from disadvantaged families – families of low socioeconomic background, from rural areas, and of ethnic minority or aborigine descent – so that from the very beginning of children's lives, issues of social justice can be targeted.

Recent media coverage on the ECE sector clearly indicates that there is more to study and accomplish. Research on the distribution of kindergartens at the district or even neighbourhood level, for instance, is needed to understand more deeply the accessibility of kindergartens for children across Taiwan. Interviews with the families of different backgrounds should be conducted to see whether the recent policies have been able to alleviate the financial burdens of sending their children to school.

Similarly, interviews, focus groups, and surveys can be conducted with teachers and principals – both in public and in private kindergartens – to examine how the policies have affected educators at the ground level. Curriculums, both international and local, should be studied carefully to find a balance that can truly prepare children for their lives ahead. By understanding ECE issues from the perspectives of different stakeholders, we can gain insights into how the government can further enhance teaching and learning for young Taiwanese children.

In conclusion, the policies from the past decade have yielded an ECE system that better serves the children of Taiwan. The Taiwanese government has demonstrated a clear recognition of the importance of ECE and has shown its determination to improve the quality of ECE in the coming years. We anticipate further reforms down the road and also hope that other scholars will continue to monitor, examine, and evaluate the effectiveness of the recent ECE policies, ensuring that the children of Taiwan are well prepared for the future.

Appendix

List of Acronyms

3A2S	Accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, social justice
CAEEA	Compilation and Administration of Education Expenditures Act
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
ECE	Early Childhood Education

ECECA	Early Childhood Education and Care Act
KMT	Kuomintang
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOI	Ministry of the Interior
NST	National Statistics of Taiwan
NTD	New Taiwan Dollar
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SKC	Standards of Kindergarten Curriculum
USD	United States Dollar

References

- American Institute in Taiwan. (2012, February 8). Taiwan economic and political background note. Retrieved from www.ait.org.tw
- Chen, L. J. (2014). A decade after education finance reform in Taiwan: In retrospect and prospect. Paper presented at *39th annual conference of the association for education finance and policy*, San Antonio.
- Chen, E. E., & Li, H. (in press). Early childhood education in Taiwan. In N. Rao, J. Zhou, & J. Sun (Eds.), *Early childhood development in Chinese societies*. New York: Springer.
- Chiu, P. C. P., & Wu, Y. S. (2003). *On the voucher policy of early childhood education in Taiwan*. Paper presented at *幼兒教育與副共政策：從比較角度看 台灣個案論文集*, 國立中正大學 副共政策及管理研究中心主辦 [*Forum on early childhood education and public policy: Examining the case of Taiwan from a comparative perspective, organized by the National Chung Cheng University Research Center for public policy and management*], Chiayi, Taiwan, R.O.C.
- Ho, M. S. (2006). The politics of preschool education vouchers in Taiwan. *Comparative Education Review*, 50(1), 66–89.
- Hsu, Y. L. (2003). 幼稚園評鑑方案的設計與實施建議 [Recommendations for the design and implementation of kindergarten evaluation]. *國教世紀 [National Education Century]*, 206, 73–78.
- Huang, Y. J., & Hsu, M. R. (2004, October 17). Early childhood education law amended to allow for government-utility, privately-operated kindergartens. *Enoch Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.epochtimes.com>
- Info Taiwan. (2015). Who we are: About Taiwan. Retrieved from <http://www.taiwan.gov.tw/>
- Laws & Regulations Database of The Republic of China. (2011). 幼兒教育及照顧法 [*Early Childhood Education and Care Act*]. Retrieved from <http://law.moj.gov.tw/>
- Laws & Regulations Database of The Republic of China. (2012a). 托兒所及幼稚園改制幼兒園辦法 [*Regulations regarding the restructuring of preschools and kindergartens*]. Retrieved from <http://law.moj.gov.tw/>
- Laws & Regulations Database of The Republic of China. (2012b). 幼兒園評鑑辦法 [*Regulations regarding the evaluation of preschools*]. Retrieved from <http://law.moj.gov.tw/>
- Laws & Regulations Database of The Republic of China. (2013). 教育經費編列與管理法 [*The Compilation and Administration of Education Expenditures Act*]. Retrieved from <http://law.moj.gov.tw/LawClass/LawAll.aspx?PCode=T0020018>
- Leung, S. K. Y. (2014). Evaluating the free early childhood education policies in Taiwan with the 3A2S framework. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 3(2), 268–289.
- Li, H., & Wang, X. C. (in press). International perspectives on early childhood education in Chinese societies. In N. Rao, J. Zhou, & J. Sun (Eds.), *Early childhood development in Chinese societies*. New York: Springer.

- Li, H., Wong, M. S., & Wang, X. C. (2010). Affordability, accessibility, and accountability: Perceived impacts of the pre-primary education vouchers in Hong Kong. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 25(1), 125–138.
- Lii, W. (2015a, January 15). Childcare activists target ‘public-private’ plan. *Taiwan News*. Retrieved from <http://www.taiwannews.com.tw>
- Lii, W. (2015b, January 22). Preschool teachers protest outside education ministry. *Taiwan News*. Retrieved from <http://www.taiwannews.com.tw>
- Lin, Y. W. (2002). Early childhood services in Taiwan. In L. K. S. Chan & E. J. Mellor (Eds.), *International development on early childhood services* (pp. 195–210). New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Co.
- Lin, Y. W. (2007). *Current critical issues of early childhood education in Taiwan – reflections on the social phenomenon and governmental policies*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago.
- Lin, Y.W. (2012). The paths to high quality early childhood teacher education and professional development – Taiwan experience. Paper presented at the *international seminar and workshop on “Early childhood education for a better nation”*, Semarang.
- Lin, H. F., & Ching, M. J. (2012). Managing the Taiwan kindergarten evaluation system. *International Journal of Research Studies in Management*, 1, 77–84.
- Lin, Y. W., & Tsai, M. L. (1996). Culture and the kindergarten: Curriculum in Taiwan. *Early Child Development and Care*, 123(1), 157–165.
- Lin, T. Y., & Yang, S. C. (2007). The trace of early childhood education. 社會變遷 下的幼兒教育與照顧學術研討會論文集 [Academic papers on the effects of social change on early childhood education and care] (pp. 5–14).
- Lu, M. K. (1998). *The curriculum and learning evaluation of open style kindergarten education*. Taipei: National Science Council. (In Mandarin).
- Millions of people go on the streets to protect early childhood education. (2015, March 8). *Liberty Times Net*. Retrieved from <http://www.ltn.com.tw/>
- National Statistics of Taiwan. (2012). *Income distribution in selected countries*. Retrieved from <http://win.dgbas.gov.tw/files/doc/result/101/a11/Year08.xls>
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2015a). *Glossary of statistical terms*. Retrieved from <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=4842>
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2015b). *OECD Income Distribution Database (IDD): Gini, poverty, income, methods and concepts*. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/social/income-distribution-database.htm>
- Protest from all citizens to protect early childhood education. (2015, March 8). *China Daily News*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdns.com.tw/>
- Rao, N., Sun, J., Pearson, V., Pearson, E., Liu, H., Constat, M. A., & Engle, P. L. (2012). Is something better than nothing? An evaluation of early childhood programs in Cambodia. *Child Development*, 83, 864–876. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01746.x.
- Revising laws with conscience. (2015, March 8). *United Daily News*. Retrieved from <http://udn.com/news/index>
- Taiwan Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics. (2012). *Splicing table of consumer price indices*. Retrieved from <http://eng.stat.gov.tw/public/data/dgbas03/bs3/english/cpiidx.xls>
- Taiwan Ministry of Education. (2008). 扶持5歲幼兒教育計畫 [Plan to support the education of 5-year-old children]. Retrieved from http://www.cbi.gov.tw/CBI_2/upload/bd07bd4c-813f-4345-a1c9-d2f0350e85dc.pdf
- Taiwan Ministry of Education. (2012). Summary of kindergartens – By public or private (SY 2011–2012). Retrieved from www.edu.tw/files/site_content/b0013/k.xls
- Taiwan Ministry of Education. (2013). 教育統計指標：教育經費：各級學校經費結構 (101 學年度) [Composition of educational expenditures by level of education (School year 2012–2013)]. Retrieved from <http://stats.moe.gov.tw/files/ebook/indicators/101indicators.xls>

- Taiwan Ministry of Education. (2015a). 教育統計指標:教育發展:學前教育-幼兒園 (103學年度) [*Number of preschools (School year 2014–2015)*]. Retrieved from <http://stats.moe.gov.tw/files/ebook/indicators/103indicators.xls>
- Taiwan Ministry of Education. (2015b). 全國教保資訊網 [*Early childhood educare*]. Retrieved from <http://www.ece.moe.edu.tw/>
- Taiwan Ministry of Education & Ministry of the Interior. (2011). 5歲幼兒免學費教育計畫 [*Plan to provide free education to 5-year-old children*]. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.tw/files/list/B0039/5歲幼兒免學費教育計畫【100學年修正計畫發布版100824】.pdf>.
- Wei, M. H. (1995). *Current trends of philosophies in early childhood education*. Taipei: Hsin-Lee. (In Mandarin).

Chapter 12

Early Childhood Education in Vietnam: History and Evaluation of Its Policies

Wendy Boyd and Thao Dang Phuong

Abstract This chapter analyses Vietnam's policies, laws and documentation on early childhood care and education (ECCE) through the 3A2S framework (Li et al, *Int J Chin Educ* 3(16):1–170, 2014) and concludes with an evaluation of the progress made in the provision of quality early childhood education throughout the twenty-first century. Early childhood care and education has a long history in Vietnam. As early as the 1900s, ECCE was provided to support women's work, as Vietnam was an agrarian society. Following independence of France in 1954, Vietnam was involved in war and associated hardship until the 1970s so it was not until the 1980s that large-scale reforms in education became a significant focus of the government. Early childhood care and education was made an official department in 1991. Throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, universal access to ECCE has been a priority with remarkable achievements gained. However, access to ECCE in mountainous areas, amongst ethnic minority groups and for many disadvantaged people, needs improvement. Vietnam has made significant progress in meeting accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability and social justice goals in ECCE, ongoing investment, both financial and in terms of human resources, is required to continue strengthening ECCE more uniformly across the country.

W. Boyd (✉)

School of Education, Southern Cross University, Lismore NSW, Australia
e-mail: Wendy.Boyd@scu.edu.au

T. Dang Phuong

Early Childhood Education Department, Lam Dong Education and Training Agency,
Dalat, Vietnam

Introduction

Vietnam is bounded by the People's Republic of China to the north, Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Kingdom of Cambodia in the west and the Pacific Ocean to the east and south. The country has a population of 93 million (Index Mundi 2015) with 54 ethnic groups comprising 86% Vietnamese and the rest of ethnic minority background (MoET 2015). Vietnam is divided into 63 provinces under the central government: 643 districts, towns and provincial cities and 11,145 communes, wards and towns under district administration (General Statistics Office 2012 as cited in MoET 2015).

Around 17% (15.6 million) of Vietnam's total population remain below the national poverty line (World Bank 2015). In 2015, approximately one quarter of the population was under 15 years of age (Country Meters 2015). For children to make the best start in life, they need to live in a safe and hygienic environment. While Vietnam's quality of life has improved with access to clean drinking water and sanitation, there are still problems associated with poor living standards. Of the children under 5 years of age, 12% are underweight, and there are still major risks of catching infectious diseases (Index Mundi 2015). As with many countries that began as predominantly agricultural societies, families in Vietnam have always shared responsibility for farm work (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization- United Nations Children's Fund [UNESCO-UNICEF] 2012). Women's long history of involvement in work in both urban and rural areas indicates the need for childcare support of the 11 million Vietnamese children aged less than 6 years (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] 2006a).

Vietnam's progress towards providing universal access to ECCE has been a focus of the government for the last 15 years. In this chapter, relevant policies, laws and statistical information are used to analyse ECCE in Vietnam using the 3A2S framework. This framework includes:

- Accessibility: Every child of preschool age being able to access ECCE in their neighbourhood.
- Affordability: Every family can easily afford the fees of the chosen kindergarten, and some exemptions could be offered to the needy families.
- Accountability: For every kindergarten, be it public or private, the extra fiscal input provided by the policy should be accountable to the government for improving education quality.
- Sustainability: The strong financial support to free education should be affordable to the government, and accordingly the policy could be sustainable.
- Social justice: All young children should have equal access to and fair treatment of ECCE, without any discrimination against their gender, race, religion, age, belief, disability, geographical location, social class and socioeconomic circumstances (Li et al. 2014, p. 164).

Analysing Vietnam's policies, laws and documentation through the 3A2S framework enables us to conduct an evaluation of the progress made in the provision of quality early childhood education throughout the twenty-first century in Vietnam.

But first, it is important to provide the history of early childhood care and education to contextualise the current situation in Vietnam.

Background of Early Childhood Policies

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is a significant part of the Vietnam's national educational system, according to Education Law 2005. Policies for ECCE have been a significant focus by the government especially over the past 15 years. In 2000, Vietnam made a commitment to the International World Education Forum held in Dakar to improve education which resulted in the policy of the National Education for All (EFA) Action Plan (2003–2015). The Education For All Action Plan (EFA) prioritised ECCE and focused on the following six goals:

- Expanding and improving ECCE especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged children
- Ensuring all children, especially girls, and those from ethnic minority groups, have access to complete and free primary education of good quality
- Providing equitable access to education for young people and adults
- Improving adult literacy by 50%
- Eliminating gender disparities
- Improving all aspects of the quality of education (Ministry of Education and Training [MoET] 2015).

Attendance in an early childhood care and education programmes in Vietnam is not compulsory, nor a prerequisite for entry into primary school. However its objective, as indicated in Education Law 2005, is to promote universal access to an early childhood setting for young children; provide high-quality education to support the child's physical, social-emotional, intellectual and aesthetic development; and prepare the child for school at grade one (MoET 2015). Early childhood care and education provides nurturing, caring and learning services for children from 12 months old to 6 years old. ECCE services include nurseries (for infants from 12 months to 3 years of age), kindergartens (for children from 3 to 5 years of age) and young 'sprout' schools, combining nurseries and kindergartens, for children from 12 months old to 6 years. Services usually provide full- or half-day services, with established routines and learning experiences to support children's overall development and prepare them for primary school (MoET 2015).

History of Early Childhood Education

Early childhood care and education in Vietnam has a long history. From the end of the nineteenth century until halfway through the twentieth century, Vietnam was a French Colony and French was the main language. In 1924 President Ho Chi Minh

identified the need to establish a kindergarten and childcare system (nursery) emphasising the necessity to support women in both their need to care for their children and to engage in working. In 1945, the newly established Democratic Republic of Vietnam started to fulfil this vision and began to expand state-run kindergartens as well as nurseries (UNESCO-UNICEF 2012). During the years of resistance (1946–1954), kindergartens and nurseries operated in demilitarised areas to protect children from war and moreover to support Vietnamese women to contribute to the resistance war, to contribute to the production in the country. Once peace was reached and Vietnam was completely independent from France (1954), the government prepared for education reform to rebuild the economy and reunite Vietnam (Kelly 2000). The focus of this reform was to train young people to become “future citizens, loyal to the people’s democracy regime, and competent to serve people and the resistance war” (World Bank 2010, p. 4). During this time, early childhood care and education in Vietnam steadily developed with more than 550,000 infants and 1.2 million children cared for in nearly 33,000 nurseries and 32,600 state-run kindergarten classes.

During 1960s–1970s, Vietnam suffered serious economic hardship owing to the American War. However, from 1975 onwards, the school systems extended across the country but developed slowly due to the difficult time after the war and the need to rebuild the infrastructure. In 1982, the government issued a policy supporting the establishment of rural kindergartens as community-run schools. Nurseries for under 3-year-olds were controlled by the Committee for the Protection of Mothers and Children which had been established in 1971. In 1987, the Committee for the Protection of Mothers and Children was merged with the Ministry of Education, which is now the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Department established in 1991. The ECCE Department is responsible for care and education programmes, with provincial ECCE Departments for education and training. From then on, Early Childhood Care and Education (comprising kindergarten and nurseries) was identified in the five-part national education framework (UNESCO-UNICEF 2012). As a result, there has been a steady increase in kindergarten enrolments as public awareness about the importance of ECCE has been raised.

From 1987 to 1998, significant changes in the Vietnamese economy occurred as in 1986 the government made a decision to move Vietnam from a centralised to socialist-oriented marketing system (UNESCO-UNICEF 2013). Agriculture had been centralised but this was changed to household farming which shifted the economic activities onto families. Childcare participation rates decreased from 27% to 13% from 1987 to 1992 as children were cared for at home as parents were unemployed during the early stages of reform. To manage this crisis, initiatives were adopted to include maintaining only state-run kindergartens, permitting private kindergartens to be established and promoting the enrolment of 5-year-olds in full-day kindergarten programmes (UNESCO 2004). Owing to such sound direction after 10 years of this reform, Vietnam ECCE experienced positive development with 1.7 million children enrolled in 1986 increasing to 2.8 million in 1996. The ECCE

network has continued to expand and meet children's learning needs as well as society's demand for high-quality ECCE for young children.

In 1998, Vietnam passed its first education law, in line with the objectives of the "Doi Moi" reform to provide a legal framework for the development of education (IREC in Lattman 2014). It also allowed for more privatisation of institutions: "semi-state" and "people-funded" institutions rose in popularity, and non-public education was especially popular at the kindergarten level (Kelly 2000). The rapid expansion of non-public provision for childcare was a significant development, as it provided access to childcare facilities for those who could afford it, while the state used funds that had been saved for disadvantaged communities (UNESCO-UNICEF 2012).

After 5 years of implementation, the 1998 Law was outdated as the law needed to be modified to increase access to ECCE. The new law on education was issued on June 27, 2005 to replace the 1998 Law (the 2005 Law). The new education law, the 2005 Law, was issued in 2005 with one particular article from this law, Article 10, focusing on targeting access to education for all with priority to be given to ethnic minorities, those in poverty, disabled and socially disadvantaged. The Education Law identified the official language as Vietnamese, and that ethnic minorities were to be taught in their own language, where possible, to preserve their cultural identity and support their education (UNESCO 2011). In November 25, 2009, the 2005 Law was amended so that universal access to education applied for all 5-year-old children.

Based on financial resources, ECCE services in Vietnam are now divided into two main types: (1) state-run (public) kindergartens and (2) non-state (non-public) kindergartens. Public kindergartens are established and fully funded by the state. In Vietnam, this accounts for the largest percentage of children's ECCE participation rates, specifically for the 5-year-old age groups (see Tables 12.1a and 12.1b). The government prioritised ECCE to expand access to ECCE in poor villages and remote, mountainous areas, under Decision 161 of the Prime Minister, believing that the gap between disadvantaged families and more affluent families could be narrowed. Those who could not afford to pay for childcare could be served by the state-run facilities, while those who could afford child care fees had the option to choose other services (non-public sector). As a result Vietnam has state-run (public) kindergartens which are divided into two types:

- Fully state-run kindergartens (public) established in socio-economically disadvantaged and geographically isolated areas. The state finances all the material resources (construction of building, purchase learning materials and equipment) as well as human resources (teacher's salaries, investment in teacher's training). These mainly cater to children of poor and ethnic minority families.
- Semi-state kindergartens are urban kindergartens which originated as state-run. Since Decision 161 of the Prime Minister was issued, the government wanted to promote society's responsibility to young children while effectively utilising the limited public funds for more disadvantaged communities. Therefore, they transformed state-run kindergartens in advantaged areas to semi-state kindergartens.

Table 12.1a Pre-primary education attendance by type and associated teacher numbers in Vietnam 2002–2003 until 2006–2007 (MoET 2015)

Years	2002–2003	2003–2004	2004–2005	2005–2006	2006–2007
	2,547,430	2,588,837	2,754,094	3,024,662	3,147,252
CHILDREN in Pre-primary education					
	403,549	413,784	421,436	513,423	530,085
Nursery					
Females			197,275	212,268	227,349
	192,840	196,581			
Ethnic Minority Group			33,151	38,304	44,080
	26,805	27,775			
Public			105,707	123,021	132,677
	97,309	97,009			
Non-public			315,729	390,402	397,408
	306,240	316,775			
Kindergarten		2,175,053	2,332,658	2,511,239	2,617,167
	2,143,881				
Female		1,054,398	1,092,598	1,092,780	1,149,677
	1,023,447				
Ethnic Minority Group			337,640	357,141	383,636
	301,373	305,500			
Public			1,044,403	1,138,001	1,212,083
	866,932	906,290			
Non-public		1,268,763	1,288,255	1,373,238	1,405,084
	1,276,949				
TEACHER numbers		150,335	155,699	160,172	163,809
	145,934				
		43,669	42,664	42,946	42,615
	42,696				
Nursery					
Public			12,311	12,633	13,098
	11,777	11,908			
Non-public			30,353	30,313	29,517
	30,919	31,761			
Children/teacher ratio					
No information available					
Kindergarten		106,666	113,035	117,226	121,194
	103,238				
Public			49,245	52,733	57,167
	40,836	44,798			
Non-public			63,790	64,493	64,027
	62,402	61,868			
Children/teacher ratio					
No information available					

Table 12.1b Pre-primary education attendance by type and associated teacher numbers in Vietnam 2007–2008 until 2012–2013 (MoET 2015)

Years	2008–2009	2009–2010	2010–2011	2011–2012	2012–2013
CHILDREN in Pre-primary education	3,305,391	3,409,823	3,599,663	3,873,445	4,148,356
Nursery	494,766	508,190	528,869	553,117	597,274
Females	234,190	241,694	244,705	255,724	263,132
Ethnic Minority Group	50,236	53,013	64,551	72,637	82,343
Public	156,844	183,316	273,713	347,320	413,901
Non-public	337,922	324,874	255,156	205,797	183,373
Kindergarten	2,810,625	2,901,633	3,070,794	3,320,328	3,551,082
Female	1,341,342	1,374,341	1,420,183	1,549,499	1,627,390
Ethnic Minority Group	417,608	452,539	489,968	545,037	594,603
Public	1,457,940	1,609,634	2,062,500	2,628,513	3,047,328
Non-public	1,352,685	1,291,999	1,008,294	691,815	503,754
TEACHER numbers	183,443	195,852	211,225	229,724	244,478
Nursery	45,385	49,256	52,244	55,715	56,302
Public	15,502	20,353	26,778	36,027	42,336
Non-public	29,883	28,903	25,466	19,688	13,966
Children/teacher ratio	11	10	10	10	11
Kindergarten	138,058	146,596	158,981	174,009	188,176
Public	71,818	82,870	106,626	137,182	162,242
Non-public	66,240	63,726	52,355	36,827	25,934
Children/teacher ratio	20	20	19	19	19

It meant that the state established and financed the material resources, while parents provided remaining resources to maintain the activities of kindergartens (UNESCO 2006b).

Non-state (non-public) kindergartens are provided by entrepreneurial individuals or organisations from the private sectors. These centres are established, built and covered financially for operating costs with non-state budget funding. They cater to children of affluent families, rely on the fees paid by parents to operate and are often established in urban areas (UNESCO 2006b). They account for only 8% of service provision, which is understandable given the economic situation of Vietnam (see Tables 12.1a and 12.1b). Non-public kindergarten owners are required by the MoET to be licensed and comply with the prescribed guidelines, and compliance is monitored by local authorities (UNESCO-UNICEF 2012).

Accessibility

During the twenty-first century, Vietnam intensified universal access to early childhood care and education (ECCE), with a focus on renovation of types and organisation of early childhood education services and establishments. It was in 2005 when the Education Law was enacted that early childhood care and education (ECCE) was recognised as part of the national education system. ECCE now sits under the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), and this Ministry is responsible for standards, programmes and guidelines (UNESCO- UNICEF 2012). Alongside the Education Development Strategic Plan, Vietnam developed a national priority project (2003–2015) to adequately resource kindergartens, especially in remote and ethnic minority areas for access to early childhood education and associated development (UNESCO-UNICEF 2012). There is now a focus on building a learning society, improving the quality of education and aiming to create equal opportunities for learning and targeting ethnic minorities, the poor and children from disadvantaged families.

The primary goals for the twenty-first century include ensuring access to early childhood education for children in all population areas and providing services that are responsive to the needs of families and society. Access to kindergarten and nurseries has continued to increase as a direct result of state policies, and in 2015, over 4.8 million children, aged 4 and 5 years, are enrolled in kindergartens, a figure that represents just over half of the total population of 3- to 6-year-olds. Current forms of provision for early childcare and education include nurseries (for infants to 3 years), home-based childcare (for groups of 5–15 infants up to 2 years), kindergartens (for 3–6-year-olds) and childcare centres, combining nurseries and kindergartens, for children from 12 months to 6 years (MoET 2015). There is a deliberate government effort to remove the distinction between nurseries and kindergartens, to ensure that these services are all part of one developmental continuum.

State-run kindergartens account for the largest percentage of children's participation rates, especially for the 4- and 5-year-old age group. There is a deeply ingrained appreciation of the value of schooling amongst the Vietnamese people, including those in poverty, so attending an ECCE organisation is no longer seen as just supporting women to work, but has a more child focus related to education and lifelong learning (MoET 2001). The government's current policies and intensive efforts, coupled with provision of universal access to education, as well as positioning kindergartens as a school preparation, have enabled kindergarten to be culturally acceptable for parents (UNESCO-UNICEF 2012). Early childhood care and education is now viewed as the first important step towards a complete, a full education.

Vietnam has made significant progress in achieving universal access to early childhood care and education (ECCE) for 5-year-olds. From 2001 to 2013, preschool enrolment rates increased from 32% to 42% across children ages 6 weeks to 5 years old (MoET 2015). Specifically access for the birth to 2 years age group increased from 11% to 14%, with the gain greatest for 3–5 years rising from 49% to 81%, while for 5-year-old children the national enrolment rates grew from 72% to 98%

over this period. Targets for access have been achieved for 5-year-old children but not for birth to 2 years (see Fig. 12.1).

Population in Vietnam is not distributed evenly. In 2006, 15 provinces in the north and north-central delta areas had 42 % of the nation's children aged from birth to 5 years enrolled in ECCE, while the remaining 48 provinces accounted for the remaining 58 % of preschool-aged children. Access has improved for ethnic minority groups, for girls and for children from poor and/or marginalised families owing to the EFA's focus (MoET 2015). For ethnic minorities, access has increased from 12 % (approximately 260,000 children) to 16 % (approximately 680,000 children) of all children enrolled in preschool education across 2001–2013 (see Tables 12.1a and 12.1b). Figure 12.2 highlights the gains achieved in access for preschool-aged children across eight regions, including the four most disadvantaged of the Mekong River Delta, South East, Central Highlands and South Central.

While there has been investment in the provision of nurseries, 84 % of children under age 3 years are cared for in the extended family such as grandparents. According to the official Early Childhood Education Department School Year Report 2014/2015 (MoET 2015), about 909,500 infants and toddlers (under 3 years) are cared for during the day in state-run childcare centres, community day-care centres or by home-based service providers. Within the MoET there is ineffective

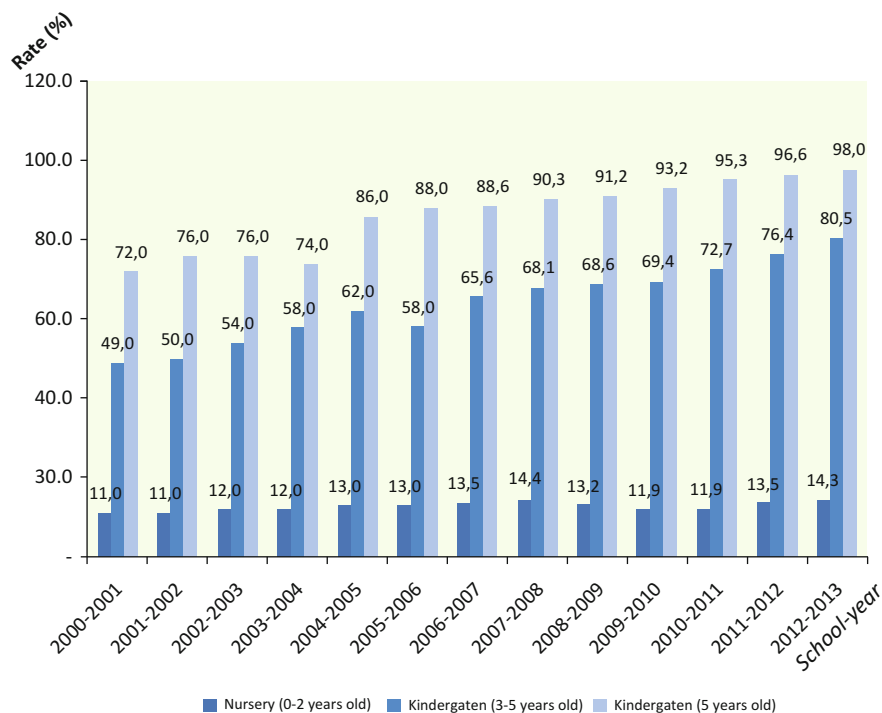


Fig. 12.1 Annual enrolment rate by age group (percent) (Source: MOET 2015, p.14)

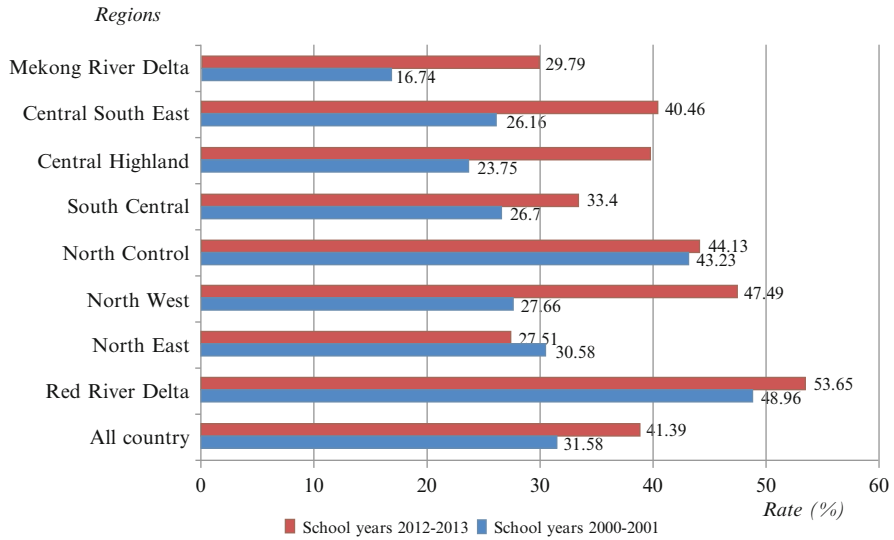


Fig. 12.2 Ratio of new entrants in preschool by region 2001–2013 (Source: MoET 2015, p. 15)

cohesion between the programmes being delivered for children under 2 years of age and programmes for the 3–5-year-olds. There has not yet been a systematic focus on quality programmes for children under 2 years of age (MoET 2015).

Children beyond 3.5 years are cared for outside the home. It is reported that only 12% of 3–6-year-olds are cared for at home. As the primary focus of the government's education policy has been to provide universal access for all children to ECCE in the year prior to primary school, Vietnam has seen access increase from 62% to 92% over the decade from 2003 to 2013. This achievement has come about as a result of the government's ongoing efforts: one being developing and implementing a parent education programme on the value of preschool education and second being active community involvement (MoET 2015). Additionally with greater provision of public kindergartens, the ratio of children in non-public early childhood organisations has dropped markedly from 62% (1.58 million children) in 2003 to 16% (503,000 children) in 2013 (see Tables 12.1a and 12.1b). This has been most marked for the age group 3–5 years changing from 34% in 2003 enrolled in public kindergartens to 73% in 2013 (See Tables 12.1a and 12.1b).

As the number of children attending kindergarten and nurseries has increased, so too have the number of teachers. Teachers are required to meet national standards, and their numbers have increased from 146,000 to 244,000 from 2003 to 2013, with the percentage of teachers meeting national standards increasing significantly from 2006 to 2013 (see Fig. 12.3). Over two-thirds of ECCE teachers and management staff nationwide work in the public ECCE establishments. There has been a focus by the ECCE sector to increase the number of ethnic minority teachers by organising various forms of short-term teacher training; however many teachers learn on

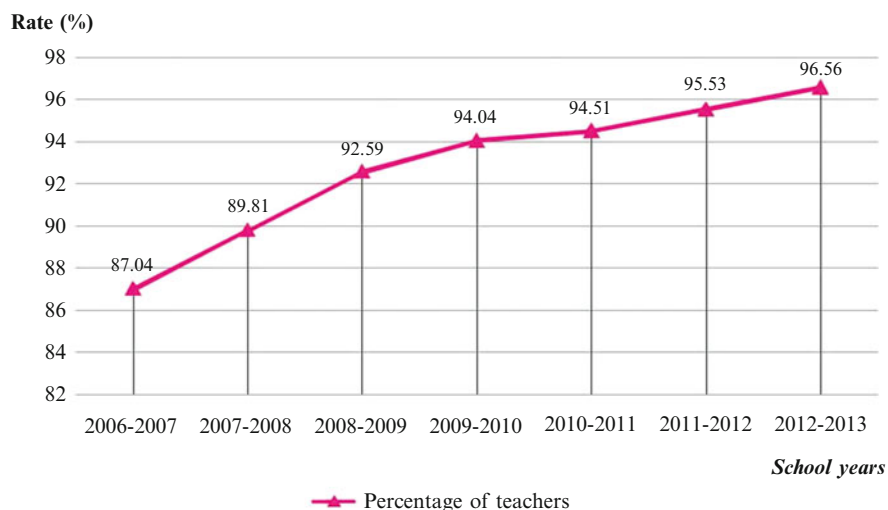


Fig. 12.3 Percentage of ECCE Teachers Meeting National Standards (MoET 2015, p. 17)

the job, and recruitment of teachers in mountainous regions is often difficult (MoET 2015).

With increased access to ECCE settings, the educational policy reform directly influences teachers' responsibilities, commitments and abilities to maintain competent delivery of education to children (MoET 2006). In 2006, 87% of teachers were trained, and by 2013, 97% met national standards (MoET 2015). Training of early childhood teachers who meet national standards has risen significantly since 2006. Presently 97.5% of ECCE teachers and management staff have met the professional standards (MoET 2015). Fifty-three percent were graduates from formal early childhood teacher training programmes, while the remaining teachers and management staff were not qualified and were mainly in rural areas and literally learning on the job. There are four national ECCE Teacher Training Colleges in three of the major cities, namely, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Nha Trang, that have Early Childhood Care and Education faculties where teachers enrol in the 2–3-year programmes. In addition, there are intermediate kindergarten teacher training schools in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City that offer short courses and 2–3 year programmes.

While the increase in trained ECCE teachers is good news for the delivery of quality early childhood programmes, the rate of expansion of the ECCE programmes has far outpaced the supply of qualified teachers, and there is concern about the quality of the teacher training (MoET 2015). Many teachers are unable to effectively monitor children's learning and development as required by the early childhood curriculum, and training institutions have limited capacity to deliver good quality training, owing to the expertise of the lecturers (MoET 2015).

Affordability

Vietnam is very strong economically and with 28 years of reform (1986–2014), it is no longer regarded as an underdeveloped country. Vietnam has experienced significant growth in recent years: currently the economic annual growth rate is 7.2% and was 5.5% in the periods 2000–2010 and 2011–2013, respectively (MoET 2015). In Vietnam, the gross domestic product (GDP) growth is forecast at 6% for 2015, rising gradually to 6.5% in 2017, owing to continued strong performance in manufacturing, exports and foreign investment. The Consumer Price Index for the period 2010–2014 was 4.1% and predicted to drop in the future (World Bank 2015). The Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of incomes amongst individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. Thus, a Gini index of zero represents perfect equality, while an index of 100 implies perfect inequality. The Gini index for Vietnam was 37.6 in 2002 and dropped to 35.6 in 2012 (World Bank 2015) indicating that wealth is becoming more evenly spread.

There has been a marked increase in funding education as percentage of gross domestic product which has resulted in increased enrolments and educational completion at preschool and primary and secondary schools (UNICEF-UNESCO 2013). In 2015, 20% of the state budget was spent on education, having increased from 7% in 2000 (MoET 2015). Donor and private funding sources are still required to support disadvantaged groups and improve quality education. Throughout the period 2003–2015, there has been significant support from donors around the world including Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, the European Union, Australia and New Zealand (Harris 2012).

In 1999, the budget for ECCE was only 5.4% of the national budget for education. From 2002, the government regulated that the budget for ECCE must be at least 10% of the national budget for education. The government sought to reduce the cost of ECCE to support children's access to their local kindergarten and targeted access for marginalised groups of children, especially ethnic minorities, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, children in poverty and children with a disability. One initiative to make kindergarten affordable has been to reduce the number of children enrolled in non-public (private) kindergartens and promote public kindergartens. Private kindergartens need to run at a profit, which means they are likely to be more expensive than public kindergartens, and often cost-cutting mechanisms are introduced to satisfy the primary motive of profit. Success in achieving this goal has been high over the period from 2001 to 2013 with provision of non-public kindergarten reducing from 49% to 17%. These enrolment rates represent the national average, which vary across regions (MoET 2015).

Financial support has been given to support all children's education and especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds and make school affordable for families. Overall children are provided with food, textbooks and resources, but it is not evenly spread across the country as some areas lack classrooms and suitable furniture and resources (MoET 2015). Within the primary and secondary school systems,

boarding houses have been established so that children can attend schools that are not in their neighbourhood. The Education Law 2005 targeted ‘out-of-school’ children, meaning those children who do not attend school. In 2009 12% (175,848) of children in Vietnam, aged 5 years old, were not in kindergarten, and identified as out-of-school children. Out-of-school children were highest amongst ethnic minority groups (around 23% of some ethnic minority groups), more likely to be girls than boys and increased as children got older (UNESCO-UNICEF 2013). Children with a disability were unlikely to attend school, and many children in this group had to work for their families rather than go to school. Included in the ‘out-of-school children’ are children affected by HIV/AIDS, orphans, street children, trafficked children and migrant children. Some groundwork has been made in increasing children to be in school as a result of the education programmes for families. These programmes encourage families to understand the value of education (MoET 2015). Overall enrolment and completion rates have risen dramatically in Vietnam as funding levels for education have increased in terms of gross domestic product (GDP), although there is considerable ground still to cover (UNESCO- UNICEF 2013).

Accountability

While provision of universal access to kindergarten is important, it is insufficient by itself to ensure children experience good quality programmes. It is well known that early childhood experiences influence children’s learning and development (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000), and public policies that support families’ choices are optimal for both the family and society. Access to affordable good quality early childhood education supports children’s learning and development. It is not enough to provide access to kindergarten that is affordable. What if the quality of the programme is poor? Research from the USA and Australia consistently demonstrates that investment in quality early childhood programmes improves both short-term outcomes such as school-related achievement and general development as found in an Australian study (Thorpe et al. 2004) and also pays dividends over the life span especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as studies from the USA including the Perry Preschool Study (Schweinhart 2003), the North Carolina Abecedarian Childhood Early Intervention (Bennett 2008) and the National Institute of Child, Health and Development (2005).

But how do we know if an early childhood education programme is of good quality and that the learning opportunities support children’s learning and development? The delivery of an ECCE programme must be quality assured, monitored and evaluated in a cycle of ongoing continuous improvement that supports children’s learning, and development is enhanced. The delivery of the quality programme is reliant upon many aspects in the human and physical environment that can be identified as structural and process components of quality (Bennett 2008). Adequate structural measures of quality include good staff-to-child ratios, appropriate group sizes and adequate space and resources for the number of children in the setting, with suitably

Table 12.2 Recommended group sizes by age of group (MoET 2015)

Recommended group sizes by age group	
No. of children in a group (maximum)	Age group
5	3 to 6 months
18	7 to 12 months
20	13 to 18 months
22	18 to 24 months
25	24 to 36 months
25	3 to 4 years
30	4 to 5 years

qualified teachers in a setting that is safe and hygienic. The process components of quality refer to the children's interactions with peers, teachers and available resources.

These processes include the social, emotional, physical and instructional aspects of children's activities that are seen as elements of children's learning and development.

Starting first with the structural elements of quality in Vietnam, there needs to be sufficient teachers for the number of children, and teacher-to-child ratios need to be such that children benefit from being in the ECCE programme. Vietnam is making progress towards this provision of quality ECCE by reducing the staff-to-child ratios, from 22 to 18 children per staff member over the period 2000–2013 (see Tables 12.1a and 12.1b). It is important to remember that this is a national average, with higher and lower ratios evident in different parts of the country. It is reported that in some mountainous regions, there are no trained teachers, and as a result, the quality of the programme is poor and parents are not inclined to send their children to preschool as they cannot see the benefit (UNESCO-UNICEF 2013).

Group sizes also influence the quality of the ECCE programme as in Vietnamese, childcare centres are prescribed and mainly based on the MoET guidelines for childcare centres (2015) (see Table 12.2). However, they vary depending on the type, age of children and location of the centres. In rural areas, due to the demand for childcare not being as high, group sizes tend to be smaller than the maximum number prescribed, while in the urban areas, under the pressure of the needs of working parents, group sizes are estimated to be one and a half to two times more than the recommended levels. Moreover, it is estimated that the number of adults responsible for the children also vary. Generally, for kindergartens, there will be two teachers working with a full-time class of 3–5-year-olds. Class sizes for this age group range from 20 to 40 children per group. However, in some rural schools, because of a shortage of qualified teachers, there is often one teacher and a teacher assistant for the same group sizes. For nurseries, group sizes are smaller, often ranging from 15 to 25, with adult ratios of 1 teacher to 7 or 8 children. At least two adults are usually responsible for classes of younger children under 3 years.

The qualifications and skills of teachers are linked to the quality of the ECCE programme. In a national survey in 2005 reported by UNESCO (2006a), it was found that ECCE teachers, who worked in rural areas and had direct involvement in

an ECCE programme, had no supervision from a government body, did not receive adequate professional development, were reported to be demoralised and felt overloaded when they first implemented the reforms required of them in ECCE (MoET 2006). This survey identified the need to build capacity for effective teaching and management at the local level (UNESCO 2006a), so that all teachers felt competent in their early childhood practice (Dang and Boyd 2014). It is essential that not only a shift in teachers' knowledge and practice is required to bring about changes in ECCE practice but also a change in the teachers' beliefs about how to teach (Hargreaves et al. 2001). Thus the educational reform with associated changes in early childhood curriculum has presented challenges for the teachers in ECCE.

While teacher qualifications are improving in Vietnam, there are ongoing concerns regarding pedagogical approaches to ECCE. Changes to educational approaches have been slow (Hayden and Thi Ngoc Lan 2013), and educational reform is considered a critical strategy for national development. Teachers need to have training that leads to an understanding of children's learning and development and how to teach in ECCE programmes. In Vietnam, traditional didactic methods of instruction have been more popular over play-based pedagogical approaches to children's learning (Dang and Boyd 2014; UNESCO-UNICEF 2012). Most of the teachers in Vietnam use the old and traditional teaching method, involving the teacher as the primary speaker, and the students as the primary listener. The implementation of the new curriculum began in 2003, initially amongst 5-year-olds in kindergartens. The implementation of the 'Innovative ECCE curriculum for preschool children' between 2006 and 2008 has a curriculum involving a thematic approach to organising content so that children are able to explore their everyday world more meaningfully and in greater depth. The curriculum includes activities and materials to teach concepts addressing themes, and according to MoET (2015),

Children were given the opportunity to develop their active thinking and language through learning and entertaining activities. The programme also gave teachers new skills and teaching methods, which have resulted in good outcomes (p. 51).

Early childhood care and education environments now feature learning corners with learning materials that address a particular content area, such as language, arts, mathematics and science, with child-sized furniture being child-sized and the space being conducive to flexible group sizes.

It is essential that children are offered ECCE that is in a safe and hygienic environment and maintains health standards such as adequate sanitation and drinking water. If a preschool provides shelter but has inadequate hygiene and is of lesser quality than in the home, then the child is better off staying at home. Myers (2006) makes the point that the goal for Vietnam "should be not just Education for All but *Quality* Education for All" (p. 7). Early childhood education should reflect the society in which the programme operates and brings a contextual approach to learning and teaching. It should also reflect how children should be socialised in that society (Meyer 2006). Therefore the ECCE programmes offered across Vietnam are likely to vary dependent on context.

Sustainability

In Vietnam, a country remarkable for its sustained commitment to the importance of education, significant progress is being made in terms of improving educational quality (Dang and Boyd 2014). Targets of the National Education Plan have been to increase school participation and completion rates, so that 95 % of children will have completed their schooling in 2020. Early childhood care and education is recognised as providing learning benefits to all children and especially those from ethnic communities, disabled children and those from poor families (MoET 2015). Evidence that this initiative is working has been found in that children having at least 1 year of participation in an ECCE programme have improved language and literacy skills and better understanding of a number concepts compared to children who did not access ECCE (MoET 2014).

However this improvement is not consistent across Vietnam as it is a diverse country geographically and has 54 ethnic minority groups, with many people living in remote mountainous regions. The release of the 10-year educational reform report (MoET 2014) highlighted that some government targets had not been met, showing, for example, inadequate supply of ECCE places, especially for children under 3 years, differences in availability of ECCE between urban and rural areas, inadequate trained staff in preschools especially in ethnic minority communities and rural areas and a shortage of learning resources. More recent data shows that there has been a 14.7 % decrease in spending in ECCE from 2011 to 2012 (MoET 2015). This raises concerns about the financial sustainability of ECCE given continual challenges in universal access and the delivery of quality programmes.

There have been calls for stronger reform in the ECCE sector for greater access and availability of places in ECCE settings. The key targets in the National Action Plan Education for All (2003–2015) were reported to be behind schedule as reported by Harris (2012) so a new Education Development Strategic Plan 2011–2020 was drafted to meet targets by 2020. Ongoing focus on delivering the targets for EFA indicates that Vietnam is keen to continue the provision of quality education. In 2015, 20 % of the state budget was spent on education, having increased from 7 % in 2000 (MoET 2015).

Funding continues to come in from donor countries from around the world including Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, the European Union, Australia and New Zealand (Harris 2012).

Of ongoing concern is the gap between access to ECCE in different parts of the country, the unevenness of expansion and the quality of ECCE programmes especially those established by non-public institutions (UNESCO-UNICEF 2012). Therefore, there is a priority for ECCE programming to increase access for children in poor villages and remote, mountainous areas. To make ECCE sustainable there have been targeted initiatives to move resources from more affluent urban areas to these communities. The government has identified the following priorities:

1. Develop policies and regulations to manage various forms of ECCE service delivery by non-state sectors.

2. Develop mechanisms for financing targeted ECCE programmes in poor and remote areas.
3. Allocate resources for infrastructure within the annual government budget.
4. Address the working conditions, employment status and professional development of teachers;
5. Strengthen the capacity of the local officials responsible for management and supervision of ECCE programmes.
6. Improve coordination amongst the various sectors involved in ECCE from the central to the local levels that work directly with communities and ECCE service providers (UNESCO-UNICEF 2012).

Social Justice

Vietnam has made extraordinary gains in addressing inequity in education over the past 15 years. Internationally Vietnam was ranked 12th in science and math rankings for 15-year-old students, in 70 countries throughout the world, ahead of the USA which was ranked 28th by Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (MoET 2015; OECD 2015). That said, inequities in education attainment remain and are extreme. There are still 37% of Vietnamese 15-year-olds out of school, and the child labour rate in 2014 was 16%, or 2.5 million children, aged 5–14 years (Index Mundi 2015). The government's policy has a priority to get all young people into education, and almost 17% of Vietnam's poorest 15-year-old students are amongst the 25% top-performing students across all countries and economies that participate in the PISA tests (MoET 2015; OECD 2015).

Data presented by UNICEF-UNESCO (2012) analysed student attendance at kindergarten, primary and secondary schools according to gender, age, ethnicity, urban/rural residence, disability and migration. UNICEF-UNESCO found that there continued to be inequity for some minority ethnic groups – girls were less likely to attend school than boys, and migrant groups were less likely to attend schools than non-migrant; 90% of children with a disability were unlikely to attend an educational institution as were children living in poverty, had HIV/AIDS or were orphans, street children or trafficked children. If they were attending school there was a high risk of them dropping out. The UNICEF-UNESCO's (2012) report identified that attendance in preschools, primary and secondary schools could be improved by involving parents and community groups in schools. This approach had been activated by principals, where they brought about change in attendance. There were also societal attitudes to overcome regarding social justice and equity. UNICEF-UNESCO (2012) identified that the minority ethnic groups, and children with a disability, are often portrayed negatively in teaching materials and in the media. This was identified as a domestic cultural barrier that needs to be broken down.

There are still inequities across Vietnam and especially in the rural areas. Many rural areas in Vietnam have a high rate of student attrition owing to poor quality classrooms with second-rate equipment, sub-standard learning resources and

teachers who are both unqualified and unable to speak the mother tongue of the local ethnic group (MoET 2015). Teachers usually teach in the national language, Vietnamese, and when parents see children not understanding basic instructions from the teacher and books they cannot understand, then children were withdrawn (Dang and Boyd 2014; UNICEF 2010). A noteworthy initiative for improving quality and social justice has been to include mother tongue-based multilingual ECCE programmes (UNESCO-UNICEF 2012). The teachers now use both mother tongue and the national language in communicating with children only, although the village leaders and teachers emphasise the need for children to learn the national language in preparation for their entry into primary school. Education can contribute to cultural preservation, and where the quality of education is poor then it may contribute to cultural loss (MoET 2015).

The gap between affluent families and the poor populations is clear and may lead to an ongoing lack of equality owing to different opportunities for accessing ECCE, and the quality of the ECCE programmes being delivered, with consideration being given especially to the ethnic remote areas (MoET 2015). While ECCE is not compulsory nor a prerequisite for entry into primary school, the government has attempted to create an awareness amongst parents to mobilise children's participation in ECCE through education programmes and the use of various media for raising awareness.

Conclusions

Vietnam has been very strong economically over the last 28 years of reform (1986–2014) and experienced significant growth in more recent years. With the economic annual growth rate at 7.2% (MoET 2015), ongoing investment in education will place Vietnam in a good position to continue to achieve well in world rankings on the PISA tests (MoET 2015; OECD 2015). Education policies and laws have focused on ensuring access for all children and targeting children from disadvantaged backgrounds, ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups. Vietnam has also aimed to ensure access is affordable and accountable by improving the quality of the ECCE programme through curriculum renovation, training up the early childhood workforce and reducing group sizes. There are now professional standards for ECCE operation, for teachers, and a national curriculum.

While strong achievements have been made in meeting universal access targets in ECCE, the diverse geographic and ethnic nature of Vietnam continues to pose challenges in ensuring universal access to quality ECCE is achieved for all. The 2Ss of this analytical framework, social justice and sustainability, pose considerable challenges for Vietnam.

Universal access to quality ECCE programmes can only be achieved with well-qualified early childhood workforce. The ECCE workforce are responsible for ensuring that programmes provide stimulating learning experiences for children's learning and development, and the programme is monitored and evaluated with

reference to the early childhood curriculum. This chapter has revealed that teachers are trained to meet national standards; however the quality of the training has come under question (MoET 2015) and requires further review, evaluation and renovation to ensure that the ECCE workforce is knowledgeable and has the expertise to provide quality ECCE programmes. This needs to occur across Vietnam's diverse rural and mountainous areas and amongst disadvantaged groups including ethnic minorities and children affected by HIV/AIDS or with a disability, orphans, street children, trafficked children and migrant children.

While the economic growth rate of Vietnam is around 7%, Vietnam continues to have challenges in the area of health for children and their families. There are around 17% of the total population living below the National poverty line (World Bank 2015), and for children to make the best start in life, they need to live in a safe and hygienic environment. Vietnam's quality of life is improving in terms of drinking water and sanitation, but there are still significant problems associated with poor living standards. Of all the children under 5 years of age, 12% are underweight, and there are still major risks of catching infectious diseases (Index Mundi 2015). Ongoing investment is required to improve the population's standard of living alongside investment in universal access to good quality early childhood care and education programmes to assist the building of a knowledge-based economy and alleviate inequities experienced in the country. To achieve and sustain these targets requires ongoing investment by the government, and international data indicates that Vietnam is on track to continue to develop and expand a good quality early childhood care and education programme.

Appendix

List of Acronyms

ECCE	Early childhood care and education
EFA	Education for all
IRD	Inland Revenue Department
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO-UNICEF	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization-United Nations Children's Fund

References

- Bennett, J. (2008). *Early childhood services in the OECD countries: Review of the literature and current policy in the early childhood field*. Florence: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).
- Country Meters. (2015). *Population Vietnam*. Retrieved from <http://countrymeters.info/en/Vietnam>
- Dang, P. T., & Boyd, W. A. (2014). Renovating early childhood education pedagogy: A case study in Vietnam. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 22(2), 184–196.
- Hargreaves, A., Earl, L., Moore, S., & Manning, S. (2001). *Learning to change: Teaching beyond subjects and standards*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Harris, R. (2012). *Vietnam EFA action plan 2003–2015*. Retrieved from planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/.../Viet_Nam_EFA_Action_2012.pdf
- Hayden, M., & Thi Ngoc Lan, L. (2013). Vietnam: The education system – a need to improve quality. In L. P. Symaco (Ed.), *Education in south-east Asia* (pp. 323–344). London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Index Mundi. (2015). *Vietnam demographics profile 2014*. Retrieved from http://www.index-mundi.com/vietnam/demographics_profile.html
- Kelly, K. (2000). *The higher education system in Vietnam*. Retrieved from <http://www.wes.org/ewenr/00may/feature.htm>
- Lattman, K. (2014). *Education in Vietnam*. Retrieved from <http://sites.miiis.edu/educationinvietnam/>
- Li, H., Wang, D., & Fong, R. W. (2014). Sound bites won't work: Case studies of 15-year free education in greater China. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 3, 161–170.
- Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). (2001). *A study of knowledge, attitudes and practices in relation to ECEC*. Hanoi: Ministry of Education and Training.
- Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). (2006). *Education development strategic plan for 2001–2010*. Hanoi: Ministry of Education and Training.
- Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). (2014). *An annual report on education*. Viet Nam: Ministry of Education and Training.
- Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). (2015). *National education for all 2015 review: Viet Nam*. Retrieved from unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002327/232770e.pdf
- Myers, R. (2006). *Background paper for EFA global monitoring*. Retrieved from www.unesco.org
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network. (2005). *Child care and child development: Results from the NICHD study of early child care and youth development*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). (2015). *Vietnam*. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/countries/vietnam/>
- Schweinhardt, L. J. (2003). *Benefits, costs, and explanation of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program*. Retrieved from www.hsscope.org/Research/PerryProject/Perry-SRCD-2003.pdf
- Shonkoff, J. P., & Phillips, D. A. (2000). *From neurons to neighbourhoods*. Washington: National Academy Press.
- Thorpe, K., Tayler, C., Bridgstock, R., Grieshaber, S., Skoien, S., Danby, S., Petriwskyj, A. (2004). *Preparing for school: Report of the Queensland preparing for school trials 2003/04 (Part 2)*. Retrieved from <http://education.qld.gov.au/>
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2010). *An analysis of the situation of children in Viet Nam 2010*. Retrieved from www.unicef.org/sitan/files/SitAnViet_Nam_2010_Eng.pdf
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2004). *Early childhood care and education in South East Asia: Working for access, quality and inclusion in The Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam*. Retrieved from unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001378/137867e.pdf

- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2006a). *Education for all global monitoring report 2007. Strong foundations: Early childhood care and education*. Paris: UNESCO.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2006b). *Viet Nam Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes*. Retrieved from unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001472/147254e.pdf
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2011). *World data on education: Vietnam*. Retrieved from <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/services/online-materials/world-data-on-education/seventh-edition-2010-11.html>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization- United Nations Children's Fund (UNESCO-UNICEF). (2012). *EFA Goal 1: Early childhood care and education*. Retrieved from www.unicef.org/rosa/217145e.pdf
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization-United Nations Children's Fund (UNESCO-UNICEF). (2013). *Global initiative on out-of-school children*. Retrieved from www.unicef.org/vietnam/vi/TENNT_eng_11_8_2114.pdf
- World Bank. (2010). *Education in Vietnam: Development history, challenges and solutions*. Retrieved from http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1121703274255/1439264-1153425508901/Education_Vietnam_Development.pdf
- World Bank. (2015). *Vietnam*. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/country/vietnam>

Chapter 13

Different Problems, Same Themes: A Summary of This Book

Hui Li, Eunhye Park, and Jennifer J. Chen

Abstract This book is a showcase of diverse early childhood education systems as well as their contextually unique advances and problems in Asia Pacific. All country case studies applied the same 3A2S (accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice) framework (Li et al. 2014) to analyse their own key ECE policies. Across these countries, although problems of ECE policies vary, these policies share the same themes, which can be summarized in three key ideas: ‘fragmented, underfinanced and bureaucratically neglected’ (Li et al. 2014) as analysed in this concluding chapter. The future development of ECE policies across the Asia Pacific region is discussed.

This book is a showcase of diverse early childhood education (ECE) systems as well as their contextually unique advances and problems in Asia Pacific. Although varying across countries, these problems share the same themes, which can be summarized in three key ideas: ‘fragmented, underfinanced and bureaucratically neglected’ (Li et al. 2014). The issue of fragmentation refers to the phenomenon that fragmented policies and programs were solely created in response to the crises and changing goals in the past decades with limited foresight. In particular, childcare service and ECE are provided by childcare center and kindergarten, separately and respectively. Although harmonization (combination) has taken place in some countries (i.e., Australia and China) to integrate the two kinds of services into a 3-year educare paradigm, the childcare-kindergarten dichotomy is still observe and influential in many Asian Pacific countries. In addition, the issue of underfinancing is a universal phenomenon in the region, as in many countries, the ECE system has always or just been transformed into a privatized market (from public enterprises).

H. Li (✉)

The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong
e-mail: hui.li@hku.hk

E. Park

Ewha Womans University, Seoul, Republic of Korea

J.J. Chen

Kean University, Union, NJ, USA

Although Hong Kong has successfully managed to achieve a balance among the accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice (3A2S) dimensions through a regulated market, many other societies are still struggling with the government's financial problems and are seeking solutions to address this issue. Furthermore, bureaucratically, ECE is neglected in many countries even though everyone emphasizes the importance of ECE. How to move from a "sound bite" to a workable and well-justified 'sound solution' is still a challenge to many ECE policymakers in the region, indeed. This section will discuss the three common themes confronting Asian Pacific ECE policymakers.

The Public-Private Divide

In many Asian Pacific countries/regions, governmental funding strategies differ between public and private kindergartens (Li et al. 2014). In China, for instance, the government makes more commitment to financing public kindergartens that are limited in quantity and quality. Private kindergartens are either being left behind or are only partially subsidized by the government, which have widened the quality gap between public and private kindergartens (Li and Wang 2014). On average, public kindergartens are much better (in quality) yet cost much less (in tuition fees) than the private ones in mainland China. This public-private divide, however, is thoroughly reversed in Macau and Singapore. All the six public kindergartens in Macau (Lau, this book) and the ten in Singapore (Jing, this book) are totally free to children, but are not welcomed by the Chinese parents who tend to believe that 'good things never come free.' These two types of public-private divide conflict with each other, but their consequences might be the same—perpetuating educational inequalities and social justice problems in these societies. A 'sound solution' to thoroughly solve the issue of public-private divide is by scientifically and appropriately reaching solutions of more ECE investment, evidenced-based mechanisms, targeted beneficiaries, and effective strategies to address educational inequality and thus achieve social justice.

Free ECE for All

In some Asian Pacific countries and regions, the most stimulating 'sound bite' has turned out to be 'free ECE for all'. In Korea, for example, 'free' is considered as equivalent to 'compulsory education' or 'being part of an education system'; thus everyone is eligible to get access to a certain level of quality education. Therefore, Korea's free ECE policy has extended to all 3–5-year-olds without setting the content and range of service. Accordingly, Korean parents are also expecting 12-h free educare service per day. However, this arrangement is an unprecedented financial challenge to the government and is casting doubt on the sustainability of this free ECE policy. The free ECE policy in Australia, however, is relatively more realistic and workable. For instance, in Victoria, the new initiative—*Early Start Kindergarten*—only supports 3-year-olds to attend preschool free if they are of

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families or if the family has had contact with Child Protection Services. In addition, these children are also eligible for a free or low cost preschool place for 4-year olds.

Some Chinese societies, like Hong Kong, Macau, and mainland China, have gone through all of the aforementioned challenges and have just launched free ECE policies in their own ways. The chapters in this book have jointly and repeatedly concluded that the so-called free ECE is neither ‘all kids free’ nor ‘all fees free’. This conclusion implies that the often heard ‘sound bites’, such as ‘we will invest in ECE’ and ‘ECE should be free to all’, have oversimplified the wide discrepancies in how ECE has been conceptualized, promoted, financed, and implemented in different societies (Li et al. 2014). The political rhetoric regarding ECE touches upon the field’s growing emphasis on educational quality, equal access, and the need to ensure accountability on behalf of all young children. There is no easy recipe for the achievement of desirable quality, and a sound bite like ‘free ECE’ might not be adequate enough to solve all the problems in the ECE sector in Asia Pacific. A sound solution, however, must incorporate the components of 3A2S in developing free ECE.

It seems that the theme of free ECE is very controversial and debatable, as many relevant questions have not been resolved: Is free ECE for all desirable? Should the government provide full subsidy to private kindergartens? In particular, should taxpayers still pay for ECE for children whose families can afford the cost of high-quality private programs? Can free ECE better contribute to the purposes of education? If so, what are the purposes of ECE? All of these questions have not been thoroughly addressed and would thus merit future inquiries and debates.

Developing ECE: A ‘Sound Bite’ or a ‘Political Spectacle’

ECE is having its moment, as a favored cause for politicians and interest groups who might be advocating ECE for some political reasons. Li et al. (2014) built on Edelman’s (1988) theory of political spectacle to analyze the free ECE campaign in the Greater China. They proposed that all of those sound bites in the ECE sector may well be just a “political spectacle,” which refers to the political constructions of reality (visible part) produced intentionally to shape public policy. The real happening on backstage is invisible to the public and is often concealed by political actors. Politicians often present a political spectacle as benefiting public good and use emotional appeal through language and symbols perpetrated by the media to build audience receptivity to their policy agendas (Li et al. 2014). In this way, a sound bite could be deeply rooted in the minds of people, and thus a man-made illusion may eventually become part of a certain political ‘reality’. Unfortunately, this kind of political spectacle cannot solve the real challenges and problems in reality. The ‘free ECE for all’ policy in Hong Kong, for instance, might just be a ‘sound bite’ and even a ‘political spectacle’, as the policy itself is not realistically workable (Li et al. 2014).

Our analyses lead us to believe that educational policymaking should be a rational process that begins with an identified problem and ends with a sound solution

for resolving such a problem. Importantly, the sound solution should be effective, reliable, sustainable, or at least workable. Although policy formation is inevitably political, policymakers should have the best interests of the public in mind. In addition, evaluation of educational policy implementation could produce valuable insights to enhance school-based practices. The best policies should be the result of sensible responses to public needs arising from debates and democratic participation, rather than the outcome of political spectacle campaigns (Li et al. 2014). Building on this premise, in this book, we invite Asian Pacific scholars in the field of ECE in general to evaluate their ECE policies in terms of 3A2S. Some countries have achieved sound solutions to solving their problems with a balance within the '3A2S' framework. Some countries, however, are still toying with their sound bites and suffering from the lacking of quality monitoring and assurance mechanisms (accountability) and the lacking of healthy finance to sustain their free ECE policy (sustainability).

In summary, we have witnessed expanded governmental investment in ECE in the Asian Pacific region during the past decade. While the policies are still in their initial stage, it is critical to examine whether they are genuinely dedicated to the improvement of educational quality and equality or just another round of political campaigns to restore the government's image as an enthusiastic education supporter. Research in this book has just begun to offer empirical evidence to address the aforementioned questions and shed new light on the relationship between politics and policymaking in the field of ECE. More empirical studies are needed to examine the various ECE systems in this rapidly developing region. We hope that this book can "cast away a brick to attract a jade stone" and serve as a modest spur to engage scholars from around the world in reflective and analytic dialogue about ECE policies in different parts of this region.

The 3A2S Framework and Its Future Development

The 3A2S framework (Li et al. 2014) adopted by this book is very effective in analysing all the progresses and issues in ECE in Asia Pacific. Accessibility means every preschool-age child could easily attend a nearby kindergarten; affordability means that families including needy ones with exemptions can afford tuition and fees of their chosen kindergarten; and accountability refers to kindergartens or childcare centres that are held accountable for providing quality education. Sustainability means that an ECE system needs to be sustainable financially, while social justice refers to the idea that all young children should have an equal access to and a fair treatment of ECE, without any discrimination against their gender, race, religion, age, belief, disability, geographical location, social class, and socioeconomic circumstances. As a common language to compare the ECE policies across countries/areas in the region, this framework includes some internal relationships and complex constraints in 3A2S dimensions. The most critical part is to achieve a balance within the constraints of financial, human, and social resources.

There are more critical issues to consider further. In addition to financial sustainability, environmental sustainability has become a central issue in Australia and Japan, where the environmental impact of such factors as ECE infrastructure, travel

to and from services, and duplication of resources were also considered. Some countries and areas such as Hong Kong and Macau are very concerned about quality monitoring and assurance in ECE development, which constitutes the core of accountability and should be further elaborated in this 3A2S framework. An ongoing monitoring system ensures that all systems are working well and helps identify areas where improvement is needed.

However, there are few countries with systems of monitoring and evaluation of ECE services or a system of ECCE management and improvement plan. There is a severe lack of resources for ongoing monitoring—limited funding, few monitoring tools, limited trained personnel to implement monitoring, and poor data management infrastructure.

For those countries that do monitor, most countries have no accountability systems in place for improvement. For instance, it should not just be the government's role to make ECE accountable and sustainable, educators, parents, and society should also share this responsibility. Only in this way, ECE in the region could be accessible, affordable, accountable, and sustainable and with social justice.

References

- Edelman, M. (1988). *Constructing the political spectacle*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Li, H., & Wang, D. (2014). Understanding the 15-year free education policies in China: An online study of four cases. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 3(2), 250–267.
- Li, H., Wang, D., & Fong, R. W. (2014). Editor's note – sound bites won't work: Case studies of 15-year free education in greater China. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 3(2), 161–170.

ERRATUM

Early Childhood Education Policies in Asia Pacific

Advances in Theory and Practice

Hui Li, Eunhye Park, and Jennifer J. Chen

© Springer Science+Business Media Singapore 2017
H. Li et al. (eds.), *Early Childhood Education Policies in Asia Pacific*,
Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues, Concerns and Prospects 35,
DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-1528-1

DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-1528-1_14

The following information has been incorrectly published in Chapters 1, 8 and 9 of the previous publication of the book. The changes are rectified now and please find the details below:

In Chapter 1 entitled “Early Childhood Education Policies in Australia”, the e-mail address of the author Anna Kilderry is not included in the chapter opening page. The e-mail address is anna.kilderry@deakin.edu.au

In page 3 the citation (ABS 2011) in the sentence “Most immigrants arrived from the UK...” is incorrect. The correct citation should read as ‘(ABS 2011b)’

In page 6, the sentence “Indeed, the Productivity Commission (PC)...” is incorrect. The correct sentence is “Indeed, the Productivity Commission’s (PC) recent report (2014c) states:”

In page 20, the sentence “For example, the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA 2008) ...” is incorrect. The correct sentence is “For example, the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young*

The online version of the updated original book can be found at
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-1528-1>

Australians (MCEETYA 2008) included education ministers at the national as well as state and territory levels of government who agreed on two main goals to strive toward:”

The formatting of the below text is changed to roman in Page 21 as follows:

“Issues of access to ECE services have been a significant barrier for some families to enroll their children in preschool. Australian governments have provided part-time low-cost or free education to children in the year before school but have not extended universal access to education for all 3- to 4-year-old children (OECD 2001; Press and Hayes 2000). In 2000, Press and Hayes stated that”

In Chapter 8 entitled “A Story of Changing State Priorities: Early Childhood Care and Education Policies in Aotearoa New Zealand”, the citation “(Department of Education, Education to be more, Report of early childhood care and education working group. Government Printer, Wellington, 1988” in the sentence “The influential *Before Five...*” is incorrect in page 163. The correct citation is “Department of Education 1988b”.

In page 163, the citation “(Ministry of Education, Te Whāriki: He whāriki matauranga mo ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: early childhood curriculum. Learning Media, Wellington, 1996)” in the sentence “In 1996, the internationally acclaimed...” is incorrect. The correct citation is “Ministry of Education 1996”.

In page 163, point 3 has been updated as follows:

(3) that children living in poverty are less likely to attend licensed ECCE services and

In Page 164, the following acronyms have been updated as

ECE – early childhood education

ECCE – early childhood care and education

ECES – early childhood education services

MoE – Ministry of Education

NAEYC – National Association for the Education of Young Children

NGOs – Non-government organisations

NZD – New Zealand dollar

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

UNCRC – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund

In page 166, the sentence “After 1986–1987, the focus...” is incorrect. The correct sentence is “After 1986–1987, the focus of advocacy for ECES was shifted to equitable resources for childcare.”

In page 168, the citation in sentence “Statements foreshadowing the...” is missing. It has now been included to read as “Statements foreshadowing the development of a national ECCE curriculum were included in *Education to Be More* (Department of Education 1988a).”

In Chapter 9 entitled “Understanding the Early Childhood Education Policies in Pacific Islands”, the following references has been included in the reference list on page 219.

1. UNICEF Pacific and PRC4ECCE. (2014). *Pacific guidelines for the development of National Quality Frameworks for Early Childhood Care and education (ECCE): Programming for ages 3–5*. [http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/Pacific_Guidelines_for_the_Development_of_National_Quality_Frameworks_for_ECCE\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/Pacific_Guidelines_for_the_Development_of_National_Quality_Frameworks_for_ECCE(1).pdf)
2. UNICEF Pacific & PRC4ECCE. (2015). Implementation of the Pacific Regional ECCE Guidelines: Status report -presented to the Pacific Heads of Education Systems meeting, October 2015.