

The state of Early Childhood Development and Education in Uganda



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Key issues

- Early Childhood Development (ECD) concerns holistic care of a child nutrition, interaction, safe environment, stimulation and responsiveness.
- ECD is critical in the wellbeing of a child. There is a positive link between early childhood learning and future holistic development of a child
- Early childhood care happens before 3 years and Pre- school starts at 3years up to 5years
- ECD a period of conception (0-8 years). Any childhood development is an integrated package and not just school
- The quality of education and care young children receive determine the quality of development that children have afterwards
- ECD involved ensuring children are ready for school when time comes, ensuring that schools are ready for children and the importance of pre-natal care among women
- Development in early childhood is a multi-dimensional and sequential process, with progress in one domain acting as a catalyst for development in other domains

Introduction

- The importance of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as a prerequisite for national development has been emphasized in recent years by developing countries and by donor agencies.
- The first EFA goal required nations to work towards the expansion and improvement of comprehensive ECCE by the year 2015. The responsibility of poor countries was to make necessary budget allocations and policy commitments; rich countries were to provide both intellectual and financial support. Whilst some progress has been made, many developing countries especially in Sub-Saharan Africa are still at risk of not achieving EFA by 2015.
- Uganda is one country where there were difficulties in attaining EFA and ECCE in particular. This situation still exists and has been exacerbated by the prevailing economic, social, geographical, and cultural differences, as well as general beliefs about ECCE.
- The aim of early childhood development (ECD) (also known as pre-primary education) in Uganda is to develop children's capabilities, healthy physical growth and good social habits
- In Uganda, there are a variety of terms that are used to describe ECCE programs for children prior to entering primary school. These include Crèche, nursery school, kindergarten and pre-primary
- ECCE is under the Department of Preprimary and Primary Education within MOE&S. The department holds the sole responsibility of strengthening management and service delivery in the ECCE sector by controlling, licensing, registering, inspecting and supervising the ECCE sector.

Historical development of ECE in Uganda

- Traditional or indigenous education (also referred to as pre-colonial, informal, tribal, or community based education) was the type of education that existed prior to 1830.
- Nursery education (ECD programmes) was brought in by the British colonial administrators and Indians in the 1930s. “to prepare children for formal education”. Nursery schools were private and established exclusively for the use of private communities. The main objective of European nursery schools was to prepare European children for school when they went back to Europe.
- The curriculum methods and scholastic materials for learners were foreign, with very little reference to the Ugandan situation. Later, some indigenous Ugandans became interested in nursery school education, they opened up their own nursery schools to cater for indigenous children in urban centres. These schools were of poor quality compared to those of the Europeans.
- After much lobbying by private persons and nursery school proprietors for government assistance in terms of training, the government identified a number of Grade II teachers and sponsored them to go for training in infant methods in the United Kingdom in 1960

Historical development cont'd

- Since the government did not have nursery schools, it deployed the nursery school teachers trained in infant methods in the lower primary classes of government primary schools. These were called infant teachers.
- From 1962, Grade II colleges began to offer specialized courses in infant methods. Some Grade III colleges also later, after learning from infant methods specialization, started to specialize in P.E, music, infant methods, and art and crafts
- 1973, government enacted a statute which conferred upon NCDC the mandate for developing a curriculum and support materials for all levels of education including pre-school

Changing context of ECCE

- Like in the developed world, current social and economic trends are disrupting many existing child care arrangements in Uganda. urbanization, work-driven migration and the increasing participation of women in the labour market are transforming family structures.
- The prevalence of nuclear families, in which fewer adults are available to take care of young children, is increasing, while extended families are declining. Armed conflict, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and environmental degradation have resulted in large numbers of orphans and, more generally, of families confronted with major difficulties in the upbringing of young children
- Family and community structures are evolving and Uganda is going through rapid social and economic changes, early childhood programmes complement the roles of parents and other carers in raising children during the early years.
- Smaller households, more working women, maternity benefits, new gender roles — in which the provision of care and education for young children has historically evolved.

Changing context con't

- After much lobbying by private persons and nursery school proprietors for government assistance in terms of training, the government identified a number of Grade II teachers and sponsored them to go for training in infant methods in the United Kingdom in 1960
- Although ECD covers children in the age range of 0–8 years, ECD centres (schools for young children) take up children from 0 to 5 years
- Emphasis in ECD centres is on moral development, imagination, self-reliance, thinking power, appreciation of cultural backgrounds, customs, language and communication skills in the mother tongue. (although parents prefer children to be first taught reading, writing and arithmetics)
- Today in Uganda there are a range of caregiver, teacher and parenting programmes that are managed by individuals who have little 'Western' ECD formal training, but base their activities on indigenous knowledge.

Why the case for ECCE in Uganda

- A good early childhood education will help the child's brain grows optimally and also on the other hand a bad early childhood education will influence the child's brain development in the other way.
- Young children have rights, and early childhood programmes are one instrument to guarantee that these rights are respected
- Research on human development emphasizes that young children have specific needs and that the extent to which these are satisfied affects the outcomes of their development into youth and adults.
- Participation in ECCE programmes is beneficial because it leads to improved outcomes, including better nutrition, health and education, in both the short and the long run outcomes of their development into youth and adults.
- From an economic point of view, investment in ECCE programmes offers a high pay-off in human capital and there is a strong case for public intervention.
- Early childhood programmes not only benefit children and families, they reduce social inequality, and benefit communities and societies at large.
- Positive interactions with caregivers and early learning opportunities can improve children's health, educational, and even economic trajectories

ECCE participation and primary school attendance and performance

- The positive impact of ECCE programme participation on education at the primary level and beyond
- Such programmes can enhance physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, language development and basic cognitive skills
- ECCE programmes can improve school readiness; make enrolment in the first grade of primary school more likely; reduce delayed enrolment, dropout and grade repetition; and increase completion and achievement.
- In Uganda, Children who had attended pre-school had better language skills than nonparticipants and achieved better results in school until grade 4 (Mwaura, 2005, 2006).
- Controlling for GDP, the higher an African country's pre-primary enrolment ratio, the higher its primary school completion rate and the lower its primary school repetition rate

Access to Pre school in Uganda

- The Education Sector Policy recognizes pre-primary as the first level of education in Uganda under four programmes; day care centres, home based centres, community centres and nursery schools
- The Education Act (2008) however pronounces the management of pre-primary education under the management of the private sector which limits access.
- 91% of Uganda's children are not accessing pre-primary education. Over 80% of the population cannot afford the fees charged for pre-primary education, which limits access (NPA 2015)

Number of Pre – Primary schools by category

Region	Community Based	Day Care	Home Based	Nursery	Total
Acholi	17	3	1	203	224
Ankole	15	2		255	272
Buganda	97	5	6	1694	1802
Bukedi	18	1	1	193	213
Bunyoro	35	6		478	519
Busoga	18	3		304	325
Elgon	12			153	165
Karamoja	79	5		17	101
Kigezi	12			171	183
Lango	12			232	244
Teso	15	2		207	224
Tororo	98	5	6	387	496
West Nile	14	1	2	171	188
Grand Total	442	33	16	4,465	4956

Source: MOE&S Statistical Abstract 2014

Access to pre school cont'd

- There is an uneven distribution of ECD centres in Uganda exacerbated by the prevailing economic, social, geographical, and cultural differences, as well as general beliefs about ECCE
- Areas whose population earns a high income tend to attract the ECD proprietors with an assumption that the parents and guardians will afford fees. This pattern of setting up ECD centres has eliminated majority of the rural children from benefiting in pre-school.
- According to ESSAPR, 2015, the ECD enrolment stood at only 433,258 yet there were over 5 million aged 3-5 years children. Hence, for every 100 children of preschool going age (3-5 years), only 9 were enrolled. 90.5% will wait until they are 6 years to join primary education most especially those in the rural communities
- In comparison to other East African countries, Uganda's enrolment in pre-schools is far behind. In Kenya, enrolment is at 53.5%; Tanzania at 35.5% and Rwanda at 29%.

Challenges of ECCE in Uganda

- Inappropriateness of Learning Materials. Appropriate materials are only found in “high class” pre-schools. The rest use improvised and sometimes primary education instructional materials. Chalkboard plays a central role in children’s education
- The absence of well equipped outdoor space and outdoor time “more time during the week devoted to ‘book’ or class work”
- Shortage of qualified pre-primary school teachers
- Early childhood educators are not well compensated in Uganda
- General negative beliefs about ECCE
- Poor quality of Infrastructure; according to the Statistical Abstract 2014, 10,255 (66.6%) classrooms were permanent and 5,133 (33.4%) were temporary. There are inadequate pre-primary sanitation facilities. There are only 31,292 latrine stances of which 29.3% are for boys, 30.6% for girls, 12.2% shared by both male and female pupils and, caregivers/teachers and 27.9% for teachers. A big number of these have neither doors nor shutters.
- Inadequate inspection and supervision of ECD centers (inadequate funding)

What should be done to take ECCE to the next level

- Expand professional development and ongoing support of ECCE service providers and actors.
- Community sensitisation regarding ECE (many still believe school before primary is a total waste of time).
- Incentivizing on-time enrollment in preprimary school could help address the significant problem of early enrollment in pre school. It is important to determine the appropriate funding level to maximize effectiveness of policy.
- The Government should consider revising its current policy to increase financial allocation for preprimary education and providing targeted services to disadvantaged children who currently do not benefit from preprimary education (capitation grants, transfers for disadvantaged families upon enrolment)
- Implementation and enforcement of intersectoral policies on ECDE interventions in health, nutrition, education, social and child protection especially targeting pregnant women young children and their parents/ caregivers across regions and socio-economic status. (NIECD policy 2016-2020)

What should be done con't

- National policy to establish a minimum level of public funding for ECDE and mechanisms be put in place to coordinate budgeting across ministries. (gender, education, health, agriculture, justice and internal affairs)
- Strengthen quality assurance of informal and formal early education and care programs and services.
- Provision of good quality community led pre-school centers through collaboration of MOE&S, and the local governments (Harambe “self help spirit” in Kenya)

