Commission 3.2 – The Quest for Quality

Quality Matters: Observations from Early Childhood Programs in Low Resource Environments in Asia

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Quality Matters: Observations from Early Childhood Programs in Low Resource Environments in Asia

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Overview

1. Introduction
2. Issues
3. Our studies
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5. Conclusions
Introduction

• Investment in the early years is a key to “Building the Wealth of Nations”

• Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programs promote child development

• In developing countries ECCE averts the loss of young children’s development potential (Engle et al., 2007)

• However the QUALITY of these programs does matter. Regardless of where one lives, high quality programs...
Offer support to parents in children’s earliest years

Source: UNICEF, Samoa:
Integrate educational activities, nutrition, health care and social services

Source: Integrated Child Development Services, Government of India
Provide relevant educational experiences
Ease the transition to primary schools

Source: Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan
Our Work

- 559 million children under 5 live in the developing world; 22% live in absolute poverty, 28% are stunted. There are 219 million disadvantaged children living in the developing work (UNESCO, 2010).

- Our research focuses on children living in low resource environments in Asia. It has considered the relationship between participation in ECCE programs and child outcomes.
China 19%
India 17%
Indonesia 4%
Pakistan 3%
Mexico 2%
Nigeria 2%
Egypt 1%
Rest of the world 47%

E-9 High Population Countries
Issues Related to the Concept of Quality

- Conceptual Matters
- Measurement Matters
- Quantity-Quality Nexus
- Access and Cost-Quality Relationship
- Government’s Role in Defining and Monitoring Quality
Conceptual Matters

• There are different perspectives and definitions of preschool quality

• Culture and resources influence definitions of quality → must look at quality in context

• Different dimensions of quality have been evaluated
  (structural and process quality; input, process, and/or output indicators)
Conceptual Matters: Dimensions of quality across contexts

- Physical and psychological environment, curriculum
- Learning and teaching approaches
- Teacher-child interactions
- Program management
- Community integration
  (OMEP/ Association for Childhood Education International, 2006)

- Intensity and program duration
- Staff skills
- Other proxies used for educational quality
Measurement Matters

- There must be a constructive alignment between your conceptual framework for quality and its assessment.

- Different criteria/tools are needed for different age groups and different types of programs.

- In many countries access to ECCE had increased markedly in the previous decade. There is a concern that an increase in quantity will be associated with a decrease in the quality of provision.
Quality-Quantity Nexus
Increase in access to Pre-primary education

GERs for Pre-Primary Education

Cambodia  India  Indonesia  Iran  Kazakhstan  Maldives  Mongolia  Philipiness  Republic of Korea

GMR, UNESCO 2009
Access and Cost-Quality Relationship

• Children from poorer households participated in ECCE programs significantly less than those from richer households

• Concern that children who needed the services most were likely to be excluded and/or receive services of lower quality
Government’s Role in Defining and Monitoring Quality

- Regulation and Monitoring
- Private versus public sector
- What happens when preschools fail to meet benchmarks for quality?
Our studies
Samples

• China: Guizhou
  > N = 203, N = 207*
  > Kindergarten, separate pre-primary mixed pre-primary class, control

• India: Andhra Pradesh
  > N = 119, N = 67 *
  > ICDS, private preschool for poor, control
  > * 2 ICDS centers* (near project office, far from project office)

• Cambodia: 6 provinces
  > N = 1312 in State Preschools, Community Preschools, Home-based programs, Control
  > 18 community preschools * selected based on child outcomes
Assessment of Program Quality

• ECERS (Harms & Clifford, 1980)

• ECERS-R (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998)
  43 items (7 subscales, 7 pt. Likert scale)

• ECERS-E (Sylva, Wiltshire & Taggart, 2003)
  Literacy, mathematics, science, and diversity included

• Early Childhood Classroom Observation Measure (Stipek & Byler, 2004)
  (10 programs, 22 teaching episodes)
Assessment of Quality

• **China**
  > ECERS-R  38 items of the 43 items ECERS-R were used
  > ECERS-E
  > Early Childhood Classroom Observation Measure (ECCOM)

• **Cambodia**
  CECERS (Rao, 2007)
  7 sub-scales; 58 items; Scoring: 0, 1, 2 (na for 3 items)

• **India**
  > TECERS (Isley, 2000)
  7 sub-scales; 56 items; Scoring: 0, 1, 2
Example from CECERS: Infrastructure (Furnishing and Physical Setting)

- Under the house
- Under a house
- Under a shelter
- In a big room in house or primary school
Assessed Perspectives of Quality

- Interviewed or followed the “inspectors” of early childhood programs

- Looked at the criteria they employ to evaluate programs
Our findings

- In all studies:
  - Children who attended preschools did significantly better than those who had not
  - Children who attended the highest quality preschools did better than those who had not
Our findings

• In Cambodia, children from State Preschools did better than children from other programs

• In China, children from kindergartens did better than those from separate or mixed pre-primary classes

• In India, children from ICDS did better than children who did not attend. Also location of centre seems to make a difference to child outcomes. Better quality near state capital, and near Child Development Project Offices
Our findings

• Programs that would be judged of low/mediocre quality using western benchmarks had positive influences on children’s development

• Teachers background and characteristics were very important for child outcomes

• The quality of supervision and support offered to the teacher influenced teachers’ interaction with children
Our findings

- Inspectors varied in terms of the criteria they employed and what they talked to the teachers about
  - Focus on nutrition status in India, focus on environment for learning and curriculum in China. Focus on activities in Cambodia.
  - Tended to be less feedback on process quality in Cambodia and India.
Recommendations


2. Specify culturally appropriate and comprehensive guidelines/standards for different types of programs.

3. Develop and implement a system of quality assurance taking into consideration the range of programs available, the ages of children served and contextual variables. For example, the quality of all programs from home-based to centre-based and from public to private provision should be regulated.
Recommendations

4. Focus on training of early childhood educators to enhance the quality of services. Support teachers to enhance quality


6. Assess/track factors that can enhance preschool quality in rural contexts.

7. Assess sustainability.
Conclusions

We cannot afford to postpone investing in children until they become adults, nor can we until they reach school – a time when it may be too late to intervene.

Heckman, J., 2001
(Nobel Prize Economics, 2000)

We must continue our quest to maintain and enhance quality as ECCE QUALITY MATTERS
Thank You