From an uneven to an equitable start: Promoting school readiness in all children

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World President
OMEP
Overview

- Why School Readiness?
- What is School Readiness?
- Disparities in School Readiness
- Early Childhood Development (ECD) and an Equitable Start
- Smoothing Transition
- The Role of OMEP in Promoting School Readiness
- Moving Forward
Why School Readiness?
Why School Readiness?

- Improve school trajectories
- Indicator for school failure
- Educational equity
  - Cultural discontinuities between home and school in culturally diverse contexts
  - Different socio-economic and cultural factors may affect transitional experience
Why School Readiness?

- School readiness: One of OMEP’s objectives
  - OMEP supports all efforts to make sure children develop to their full potentials in the early years so they can be successful in all aspects of their lives.

- UNICEF’s research on school readiness
What is School Readiness?
What is School Readiness?

School Readiness for Children?

Children’s Readiness for School?
What is School Readiness?

What is School Readiness?

How can children adjust to learning environments? How can families work with the school system?

Amount of support from the family.

School environments and practices.

How can schools support transition?

What children should know and be able to do?

Source: UNICEF, 2011
Disparities in School Readiness

- Threats to early development are greatest among children living in the poorest households.

- Such children are less likely to receive support for early learning at home and up to 10 times less likely to attend early childhood education programs.
Disparities in School Readiness

Percentage of Children Ages 3 to 6 with Selected School Readiness Skills, by Poverty Status, 2007

- Recognizes all letters: Above poverty threshold - 35, Below poverty threshold - 21
- Counts to 20 or higher: Above poverty threshold - 67, Below poverty threshold - 49
- Writes name: Above poverty threshold - 64, Below poverty threshold - 46
- Reads words in a book: Above poverty threshold - 9, Below poverty threshold - 6

Note: Data represent parent reports of specific cognitive and literacy skills.
Disparities in School Readiness

Achievement Gap for Cognitive Measures (Young Lives)

Source: Cueto, Leon and Muñoz (2013, forthcoming)

Note: The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGR) and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) include only the children who took these tests in Spanish.

* The gap between groups is significant at 95% level on a t-test for independent samples.
Disparities in School Readiness

Gross enrolment ratios (GERs) for pre-primary education from 2000-2009 in different regions

Disparities in School Readiness

Country/economy's equity and performance in PISA 2009

- Countries/economies with higher performance and higher equity levels
  - Hong Kong-China
  - Canada
  - Korea
  - Japan
  - Singapore
- OECD average: 493

- Countries/economies with higher performance and lower equity levels
  - Australia
  - New Zealand
  - United States
  - Finland
  - Norway
  - Spain
  - Germany
  - France

- Countries/economies with lower performance and higher equity levels
  - Indonesia
  - Tunisia
  - Montenegro
  - Brazil
  - Colombia

- OECD average: 88

Difference in performance between advantaged and disadvantaged students
(higher values indicate lower equity levels)
Disparities in School Readiness

CONSEQUENCES OF INACTION

- Children entering school without being adequately prepared
- Adversely affects their learning achievement and school completion
- Behavioral problems
- Establishes a downward economic and social trajectory in adulthood.
- May lead to long-term costs for countries in terms of stagnant or lowered economic growth.
ECD and an Equitable Start
ECD and Equitable Start

- Children are born into circumstances with unequal opportunity.
- Enhance protective factors
- Minimize potential effects of risk factors
ECD and Equitable Start

Risk Factors
- Low SES/Poverty
- Female
- Low parental educational attainment
- Malnutrition
- Lack of access to clean water, sanitation and stimulating environments
- Other developmental, environmental and cultural risk factors

Protective Factors
- Supportive parental behavior
- High parental educational attainment
- Economic and housing stability
- Enriched home-literacy environment
- Access to quality community health programs and services
- Etc.
ECD and Equitable Start

**Diagram:**

- **Protective Factors** > **Risk Factors**
- **Risk Factors** > **Protective Factors**

**Legend:**

- **Optimal**
- **Recovery**
- **Below Potential**

**Labels:**

- **Prenatal**
- **Birth**
- **Early Childhood**
- **Adolescence**
- **Adulthood**

**Note:**

- Reduction in risk factors, increase in protective factors, or intervention during a sensitive period.

**Additional Text:**

FIRST 1000 DAYS

*Biological and psychosocial risk and protective factors
ECD and an Equitable Start

![Graph showing trajectories of positive and delayed development](image)

- Supports services in early childhood change the trajectory of development, with long-lasting outcomes.

- The magnitude of this effect depends on:
  - Quality of services
  - Breadth of services
  - Timing and Intensity
  - Responsiveness to individual needs

*Case for Early Intervention (Ramey & Ramey, 1999)*
ECD and an Equitable Start

Projected human development based on action or inaction scenarios during school readiness
ECD and an Equitable Start

IMPORTANCE TO INVEST IN COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED ECD INTERVENTIONS

1. To enhance national productivity
   - ECD is the smartest investment in human capital development.
   - Increasing enrolment in just 1 type of ECD program in a low- or middle-income country can result in a benefit to society of between US$10 and $34 billion and a benefit-to-cost ratio of 6.4 to 17.6.
   - Decrease economic gradients.

*Early childhood development is a smart investment*

The earlier the investment, the greater the return.

Source: James Heckman, Nobel laureate in economics
ECD and an Equitable Start

IMPORTANCE TO INVEST IN COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED ECD INTERVENTIONS

2. To promote gender equality

- Programs that directly serve the child
- Parental education and support programs
- Child
- Parents
- Other female family members

e.g., older sisters are able to attend school instead of taking care of younger sisters
ECD and an Equitable Start

IMPORTANCE TO INVEST IN COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED ECD INTERVENTIONS

3. To decrease intergenerational poverty
   - Children who participated in ECD programs → better educational outcomes and earning potential.
   - Parental support, health services and social assistance programs provide a buffer against the negative influence of poverty.
ECD and an Equitable Start

IMPORTANCE TO INVEST IN COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED ECD INTERVENTIONS

4. To promote a healthy start to life

- Nutrition and other environmental factors acting during early development influence susceptibility to non-communicable diseases (e.g., cancer).
- Improved nutrition during early childhood enhances lifetime learning and earnings.
ECD and an Equitable Start

IMPORTANCE TO INVEST IN COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED ECD INTERVENTIONS

5. To meet both Educational for All (EFA) goals and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
   - ECD provides a viable strategy for inclusive social and economic development.
     - Gender equality and empowerment
     - Better health and education outcomes
     - Improved skills ability and productivity
     - Reduced the income, ethnic, geographic, and developmental inequality gaps
     - Cost-effective
ECD and an Equitable Start

- General Comment No.7 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child:
  - “...young children are holders of all rights enshrined in the Convention [on the Rights of the Child] and that early childhood is a critical period for the realization of these rights.”

- Woodhead (2009):
  - “These justifications play a role in policy, but they are not the core rationale for building early education and care policies and services. Child rights are the firmest foundation for policy, recognizing that children are social actors, entitled to respect, care, education and comprehensive services in their best interests, and identifying those with responsibility to secure these rights with and on behalf of young children: caregivers, teachers, communities and governments.”
Smoothing Transition
## Smoothing Transition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Readiness to learn</th>
<th>Supporting the transition of the most disadvantaged</th>
<th>School’s readiness for young children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Development the standards, definition and indicators.</td>
<td>Inclusion and access of the disadvantage to education mainstream.</td>
<td>Develop training and awareness programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>Most parents have limited understand on ECCD. Parents want their children to be taught literacy and numeracy at a very early age.</td>
<td>Provide more training and monitoring of the programme. The programme will also be rolled out to others schools.</td>
<td>Remoteness of the schools and financial constraints often make it difficult for effective execution of such change initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Lack of policy and programme coordination between ECE and primary school education sectors.</td>
<td>Insufficient programme coverage and system mainstreaming to support the disadvantaged groups.</td>
<td>General lack of capacity of lower grade teachers to support young children to promote the smooth transition to schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>ECE still not priority for the government.</td>
<td>To include ECCE as one of menu within safety net program.</td>
<td>/</td>
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Source: Asian-Pacific Regional Policy Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education, 2013
# Smoothing Transition

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<td>Maldives</td>
<td>Lack of “readiness to learn”. No links between preschool and primary education.</td>
<td>Lacks of qualified teachers trained for special need.</td>
<td>Child friendly concept introduced and practiced in the lower primary grades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>An indicator on school readiness is included in Education Management Information System EMIS) called Flash report.</td>
<td>Children from disadvantaged group and from low income quintile group tend to experience difficulties to and succeeding in early primary years.</td>
<td>A mother school concept is introduced to ensure that a school in its catchment should ensure that school in its catchment should ensure that the children from ECD centers are enrolled in primary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Lanka</td>
<td>Capacity development of both ECCD sector and formal education sector.</td>
<td>Sensitization of all stakeholders.</td>
<td>Addressing individual differences during teaching learning process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>Children’s readiness to learn is not assessed.</td>
<td>Proven alternative centre based ECE groups, which serve mostly disadvantaged.</td>
<td>Lack of financing to universalise the centre based ECE groups in Tajikistan.</td>
</tr>
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Source: Asian-Pacific Regional Policy Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education, 2013
Smoothing Transition

EXAMPLES OF NOTEWORTHY INITIATIVES

● USA
  - Child-Parent Center Program
  - Pre-school and primary school components worked in sync
  - Parental involvement
  - High levels of educational attainment
  - Low rates of repetition
  - Low levels of delinquency
Smoothing Transition

EXAMPLES OF NOTEWORTHY INITIATIVES

- Kenya, Zanzibar and Uganda
  - Madrasa Community-based Early Childhood Program
  - Reaffirm local cultural and religious values and knowledge, at the same time enable the children to succeed in school
  - Annual Open Days and workshops for Grade 1 and preschool teachers
Smoothing Transition

EXAMPLES OF NOTEWORTHY INITIATIVES

- China
  - A hybrid of traditional Chinese and Western ideas
  - To reach universal access for at least 1 year of preschool by 2020.
  - Preschool enrollment rate has jumped from 50.9% (2009) to 64.5% (2012).

  - Newly built, and renovated (from primary) preschool increased by more than 90,000
  - Local government allocated additional pre-school investment will be more than 100 billion yuan
  - Central government allocated pre-school education investment will exceed 40 billion yuan

- [Image of a triangle with icons related to education and finance]
Smoothing Transition
‘Going to Big School’

Making the Transition from Early Education to Primary Education

Tips for Parents

Every year thousands of children move from pre-school to primary school. Pre-school starts preparing children for the ‘Big School’ transition from early on. Many children find starting “Big School” exciting and have little trouble with the changes that it brings, while others can find this time stressful. It’s a time of great excitement and new beginnings for the child and their parents, saying goodbye to preschool, meeting new teachers and making new friends.

For children the primary school buildings are bigger with more rooms, more children, more adults and more rules. Those first days at school can be an anxious time for parents who wonder, will she manage on her own, will he make friends, will he be able to sit and listen, will she be able for the school yard? Often it’s the parent who gets a bit overwhelmed and has to hold back the tears as their child takes this next step on life’s journey.

Smoothing Transition

Ireland
Smoothing Transition

GOOD PRACTICES

- A shared understanding of pedagogy
- A shared planning
- Shared information
- Continuous professional development
- Support for parents
- Government’s guidance and support
The Role of OMEP in Promoting School Readiness
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ADVOCACY FOR POLICY CHANGE

- High level side events at the UN
- Production of policy briefs
- Partnership building
- 1 Goal: Ensure all children get the Best Start in Life and for Learning

For more information, see:
Consolidated Goal from the Asia Pacific Regional ECD Conference 18-20 November 2013 in Singapore reviewed and refined by ARNEC’s Steering Committee members on 22 November 2013
The Role of OMEP in Promoting School Readiness

CAPACITY BUILDING

Teacher exchange programs

Environmental Rating Scale for Sustainable Development in Early Childhood (ERS-SDEC)
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CAPACITY BUILDING
The Role of OMEP in Promoting School Readiness

KNOWLEDGE GENERATION
The Role of OMEP in Promoting School Readiness

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Cork 2014
World Assembly and Congress
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RESPONSE TO EMERGENCIES
Moving Forward
Moving Forward

HOW TO DEFINE AND MEASURE “READINESS TO LEARN”? 

- How? 
- Domains? 
- Measure the different domains? 
- Avoid “schoolification”? 


Moving Forward

HOW TO SUPPORT THE TRANSITION OF THE MOST DISADVANTAGED?

- Risk and protective factors?
- Adequate resource?
- Family and community engagement?
HOW TO ENHANCE SCHOOL’S READINESS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN?

- Key characteristics of ready schools?
- Foster a shared understanding?
- Training and support of teachers?
- Young children’s own experiences and perspectives?
- Professional leadership?
- Policy changes?
Lets work together for healthy, peaceful, equitable, sustainable and just environments for the world’s children!
Thank you very much!

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