

# TRANSITIONING

From Home to ECCE Program, from  
ECCE Program/Home to Primary School



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The initiative taken by ARNEC is important because this knowledge and information would be used in future action in early childhood development regarding policy formulation, advocacy strategy, awareness building and effective program design in this region.

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Mahmuda Akhter & Team Members

## Acronyms & Abbreviations

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ARNEC	Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood
BLF	Bernard van Leer Foundation
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DAP	Developmentally Appropriate Practice
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECDL	Early Childhood Development and Learning
E-CG	ECCD Consultative Group
EFA	Education for All
ECERS	Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GO	Government Organization
INGO	Inter-National Development Organization
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organization
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MICS2	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NGO	Non-Government Development Organization
NSCDC	National Scientific Council on the Developing Child
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children (US)
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund

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## Executive Summary

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There is strong global evidence that early childhood development provides a solid foundation for good health, growth, and success in education. Programs focusing on early learning promote awareness of child development and lead to higher enrolments and less repetition, especially among the children from poor families. Transition from home to early child development center and early child development center to primary school are critical moments for young children and for those children who have the opportunity hold a highly positive implication for them (Woodhead, M. & Moss, P., 2007). The positive impact of early childhood development on participation and achievement in primary school and beyond is well documented in many studies (Arnold, 2007; Mustard, 2005; Young, 2002, 2007).

The methodology of this review consists mainly of desk study of relevant materials. The review of academic research, policy papers, documents and reports, links and data on program and practices is the principal source of this review. Categorization and analysis of the relevant data and their synthesis and interpretation regarding the phenomenon of transition of children leading to new personal and social situations for them were our focus.

All these papers has been selected in the basis of significance, relevance and valued related to transition, covered almost last ten years. Mostly in last five years with a specific focus on Asia and Pacific but not limited to this region only.

Transition has clear impact on young children's achievement in the classroom and successful completion of primary education cycle. This impact has been observed in many countries in the region. ARNEC as a network has recognized its significance and has decided to review the state of knowledge and information in order to promote smooth transition in the region. Hence, this effort to document the concepts, programs and policy provisions in the Asia-Pacific region has been taken. The underlying premise is that this knowledge and information are necessary to increase awareness and political commitment in support of Early Childhood Development (0-8).

The growing idea on Early Childhood Development is spread out all over the world in last decades but the idea of transition not emerging among the parents, educators and policy makers in this region. Transition involves a process of moving from one educational setting to another. It means a change in location, teacher, curriculum and philosophy (INTO, 2008 and Margetts, 1999).

In grasping the many dimensions of transition and its magnitude, it has to be recognized as matter of public policy related to children's growth, development and education. Some countries have formulated policies that support transition. In many cases the policies are linked to ECD or ECCE that might cover aspects of transition. In general, a comprehensive policy giving due to recognition to the various facets of transition and its magnitude in terms of numbers who are affected by transition has been rarely articulated and established. On the other hand, there are many ECD programs in the countries of the Asia-Pacific region which in practical terms support smooth transition. Some of the programs have earned wide recognition for their performance in achieving ECD objectives.

Experience in ECCE in the Asia Pacific shows that a practical and pragmatic approach to implementing the ECCE activities makes it possible to embed transition within family, community, and school and in the national human development framework. The widely spoken enabling factors that facilitate children to a great extent in transition are the availability of multiplicity and range of services such as parental support, peer group activities, home support, family engagement, harmonization of curriculum and early childhood education center based care. In addition, ECCE-related services, socio-economic

factors are also important. These include parents' educational status, financial status, home environment and primary school environment and quality.

International research on moving of the children from home to school reveals that transition can be challenging in different ways for the children in all societies (Brostron 2002, Napier 2002, Wagner 2003). There are many contextual challenges which can be broadly grouped under home, school, community and national factors.

The report recapitulated the review of research and relevant literature in the Asia-Pacific region and a selection of materials from outside the region and attempted to interpret the lessons related to smooth transition from home to early childhood center and to primary school. It also attempted to take note of significant policies, strategies and services related to transition in the countries of the region. Examining the initiatives taken in the countries, the review attempted to identify the enabling factors and the challenges regarding smooth transition faced by different stakeholders in diverse settings.

Based on the analysis of experiences in the countries, recommendations have been made regarding policies and practices which are likely to support and promote smooth transition. The recommendations relates to building national policy framework, harmonized curriculum, creation of enabling home environment, parent literacy and education, capacity enhancement of teachers and family involvement.

### **Strategic direction for the region:**

Findings of the multidimensional impact of transition in early childhood development through this desk review of Asia and Pacific Region directed the following actions through ARNEC

- ✓ Create awareness within policy level decision making officials to understand the importance of "Transition" in Early Childhood Development through round table discussions/consultations at national, regional level and beyond.
- ✓ Take initiative to review the existing policies and practices in ECD to find out the gaps, opportunities and scopes in terms of making smooth transition in different learning and educational settings of young children.
- ✓ Disseminate and promote the noteworthy policies and practices of different countries in Asia and Pacific Region through symposium/seminar/conferences.
- ✓ Take "Transition" as a theme to disseminate its multidimensional impact in ECD through advocacy materials, e-discussion, and webinar engaging ECD professionals, practitioners, researchers and program developers.
- ✓ Develop a database on noteworthy transitional activities of this region and make it accessible to all for adaptation within the region.

### **Key Messages for Policy Makers:**

- ✓ Prevailing high drop-out, less successful completion with competencies, less participation and engagement and issue of quality education is the result of insufficient or no transitional activities in early childhood and primary education in this region.

- ✓ Various researches says smooth transition means ready parents, ready teachers, ready community and ready formal primary school for children's potential development.
- ✓ We must all share the responsibility for creating successful transition for children (Myers, R., 1997).

**Further research is needed**

- ✓ To find out the most significant obstacles affecting families' ability to support their children to make successful transitions through early childhood and primary education.
- ✓ To what extent can a sense of ownership of their school by parents and community influence positive early transitions?

## Introduction

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Development of young children in physical, intellectual, social and emotional dimensions can be described as a continuous process of transition. The social and physical environment in which this transition happens is characterized by distinct features and conditions which are generally clustered under the broad labels of the home, organized preschool learning and the formal primary school.

All children are expected to enjoy the benefits of care, love and physical sustenance from home and family. They should participate in a nurturing environment for psycho-social growth in a child-friendly early learning program, and then enter on formal learning in the primary school. Continuity and complementarity as children transition basic services for children does not always exist or exists with major deficiencies in respect of quality and availability of services.

Zigler and Kagan (1982) define transition as an ongoing event that creates linkages between children's natural and supportive environments. Transition occurs both vertically and horizontally in the child's life (Kagan, 1991). Vertical transition relates to moves and changes over time for the child between educational settings such as preschool or school or between home and preschool when children start preschool. Horizontal transitions refer to moving throughout the day among home, school, and community, from one caretaking setting to another (Kagan, L., 1991).

Transitional activities in the early childhood development period can contribute to children's adjustment and performance in primary school. A growing body of research indicates that stimulating early experiences lay the foundation for later learning (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007; EFA 2007)). Early childhood development is recognized as the most important period of human life in terms of learning, development of human capabilities and fulfillment of human potential, because at this stage, change happens rapidly in social, emotional, physical, cognitive and other areas of development, which lay the foundation for later development. The Bernard van Leer Foundation, among others, has compiled evidences about critical rapid changes in the early stage of life. ([www.bernardvanleer.org](http://www.bernardvanleer.org)). It is well recognized that early childhood is a time of remarkable transformation and extreme vulnerability (Fabian, et al, 2007). The positive impact of early childhood development on participation and achievement in primary school and beyond is well documented in many studies (Arnold, 2007; Mustard, 2005; Young, 2002, 2007)

However research in neuroscience confirms that critical brain development occurs in the form of establishment of neural synaptic connections and pathways more particularly in the first 3 years of life (Shonkoff, J., & Phillips, D., 2000; Mustard, F., 2007).The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2010) also confirms that critical aspects of brain architecture begin to be shaped by experience before and soon after the birth.

Hence starting school is an important time in the life of the child. A good start in early childhood setting and in elementary school plays a significant role for success in later education and development. It is established that children who successfully adjust to school, and have positive relationship with the peers and teachers, are likely to experience school success (Kagan, S.L. & Tarrant, K., 2010).

## Transition

Transition is the process of change that is experienced when children and their families move from one setting to another. In terms of location, learning environment, caregivers/teachers, curriculum and individual development, and changes from one mental state to another mental state. To adjust with changing situation is a challenge for young children to perform well in formal primary school. “Transitional activities support the principle of continuity for young children to ease their anxieties about leaving a familiar environment for an unfamiliar one” (UNESCO, 2012). Finally, the common concern is that transitions from home to ECD centers and ECD centers to primary schools should be a positive and successful experience for young children in which family, school and community role is very significant.

### Influential factors

The widely spoken enabling factors that facilitate children to a great extent in transition are the availability of multiplicity and range of services such as parental support, peer group activities, home support, family involvement, parents-teacher partnership, and early childhood education center based care. In addition, ECCE-related services and socio-economic factors are also important. These include parents' educational status, financial status, home environment, and primary school environment and quality.

### Impact of smooth transition

Children develop positive attitudes and feelings about school and learning, establishes supportive social ties with teachers and classmates, feel comfortable and relatively happy in classroom rather than anxious, lonely or upset, is interested and motivated to learn and take part in classroom activities (participation, engagement), and achieves and progresses academically each school year due to smooth transition.

### Lack of smooth transition

Due to absence of smooth transition and school readiness activities, high drop-out and class repetition rates in primary schools, poor quality of primary grades achievement, and socio-emotional and cognitive problems to adjust in primary school is a common scenario observed in South Asian and Pacific countries (UNESCO, 2012).

### Research findings

There is strong evidence that school transitional program affect children's subsequent performance at school. A number of USA longitudinal studies (Myers, 1997 and Arnold, C., 2007) on school readiness found correlation between academic and cognitive action in early years and social and behavioral outcomes in later life.

## Rationale

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The issue of transition is critical for children's long term academic and overall development. However the issue generally gets less attention by the policy makers, educators, parents and program personnel in Asia and Pacific Region. Positive learning and developmental outcomes of each and every young child are the ultimate aim of ECD policy and services. For effective decision-making and improvement of the current practice regarding ECD and transitional program, policy makers and other decision-making groups as well as practitioners need to know what kind of experiences children go through in early learning years. It is required to take initiative in policy action and effective transition program for the development of young children.

In the context of Asia and Pacific region (consisting of low income and middle income countries) there are great needs and opportunities for transitional intervention/activities. The region faces challenge in respect of school completion, high drop-out rate and low retention in many countries, and poor quality of primary education in most countries (UNESCO, 2012). There is lack of parents' awareness, low coverage of ECCD intervention, lack of effective transitional interventions for bridging between home to ECD & ECD to primary school (Arnold, C., 2007 & EFA, 2007)

There is inadequate use of a 'successful first year of school' strategy and widely prevailing problems of access, quality and equity in the education system. Government investment in young children is low and, policy regarding transition and ECD interventions has not been often developed.

Considering the importance of transition strategies and actions, Asia Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC) has taken this initiative of a desk review to take stock of current policies and services, program provision, and existing assessment tools for early learning and development in the region. The aim is to increase awareness and political commitment in support of inclusive and holistic development and learning for children in the early childhood years (0-8). This desk review will provide the updated background of knowledge and information for a wider stakeholder consultation at various levels – national, regional and beyond. The findings will also feed into a white paper to be developed later this year to inform policy makers and wider audiences about expert views on future policy directions and recommended strategies on "Learning goals of early years in the Asia-Pacific region".

The evidence-based research and multi-country experiences make a strong rationale to do further investigation to get the present scenario of Asia and Pacific region on transition. There is a gap in addressing transitional intervention and policy recommendation in many countries (especially in this region) for child development. This desk review attempts to place the issue of transition and mitigate the draw-back to the policy makers, professional's educationist to take further action on it.

## **Scope of Work and Methodology**

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### **Scope of Work**

This report is intended to compile relevant information in order to help policy makers, educators and other professionals to think strategically about the issue of transition-its significance, the roles of different stakeholders and policy makers, current challenges, and future implications. The ultimate goal is to make an impact on appropriate, collective and systematic actions with respect to the transition issues in different country contexts in the region.

### **Methodology**

The methodology of this review study consists mainly of desk review and analysis of available materials from secondary sources: academic research, policy papers, documents, reports and accessible data on program and practices. These papers have been selected on the basis of significance and relevance to transition issues from the last ten years; most documentation is from the last five years, with a focus on (but not limited to) the Asia Pacific region.(See Annex I).

The focus is on analysis and synthesis of the relevant data with respect to transition, with specific attention towards noteworthy examples of programs and benefits. Finally, the findings from the review, analysis, and synthesis of sources will provide the basis for formulating conclusions and recommendations. The authors have worked as a team to reach a consensus on the core findings and outcomes of the review.

# Chapter I

## Early Childhood Development and Transition

### The Concept of Early Childhood Development

The importance of early childhood development is underscored by the UN Convention on the Rights of Children (1989), World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990) Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000) declaration for access to quality education for the poorest and most vulnerable groups (UNESCO, 2006), and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000.

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

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

The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CG-ECCD), a consortium of international groups who work to support ECD activities around the world, have emphasized the ECCD Cornerstones to secure a strong foundation for young children: 1) start at the beginning; 2) get ready for success; 3) improve primary school quality and 4) include early childhood in policies.

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

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

The impact of early childhood care and education interventions is highlighted in a series of articles in the journal, *The Lancet* (Engle et al, 2007; Grantham-McGregor et al. 2007; Walker et al. 2007). Research strongly indicates that during the first three years the brain

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

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

### The Concept of Transition

The word 'transition' in the context of child development refers to the process of change that is experienced when children and their families move from one setting to another. Although there is not a universally agreed definition, there is some consensus that transition is multi-dimensional, highly variable in different contexts, and culturally influenced over time (Myers, R., 1997). In some literature, transition also refers to a child's readiness for school (Docket, 2011). Generally, in this context, transition is regarded as a process of moving from one educational setting to another. This can be a change in location, teacher, or curriculum and philosophy (INTO, 2008 and Margetts, 1999). While the idea of early childhood development has spread throughout the world in recent decades, stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific region such as parents, educators, and policy makers have not fully grasped the concept of transition. Transition is a relatively new idea, especially for the large number of families with first generation learners in the region (Arnold, C., 2007).

Historically, transition was viewed as a matter of a child's academic and social preparedness for a smooth move from the home setting to primary school (Rimm-Kaufman, S, 2004). It is notable that here preparedness mostly referred to the academic skills – reading, writing, and numerical -- related to a child's school performance. The prevailing notion was that the child needed only numeracy and some alphabetic knowledge to prepare for the move to primary school from home environment.

*Transition to school occurs over an extended period of time as children engage in a range of experiences that promote their learning, development and wellbeing. The transition process starts when parents and children begin to think about, and make decisions related to school and it concludes when children and families feel secure and accepted within the school environment (Docket, et. al., 2011).*

With the expansion of early childhood programs, the nature of transition has changed.

Previously, the transition to school 'problem' was defined for the most part in terms of the movement from home to school. Early childhood development programs are supposed to be an effective approach to solve the problem (Woodhead, M. and Moss, P., 2007).

Transition as an approach flourished after the involvement of ecological theory by many scholars. The setting of transition is directly connected with the ecological approach postulated by Bronfenbrenner (1979), which enabled us to consider not only the setting of school, but also the interconnected context in which child and school are located (Fabian H. and Dunlop, A-W, 2007). Transition entails multiple changes: in identity, roles, relations and settings (Griebela and Nielsen 2002, Keining 2002).

Fabian and Dunlop (2007) discussed transition on the basis of ecological theory. In their view, the theory gives a very comprehensive understanding including the societal context as a whole.

It is also established that transition to primary school has often been associated with the context of readiness, defined in terms of a set of predetermined physical, social and cognitive skills that children had to process in order to fulfill school recruitments (Arnold, et al., 2007; Woodhead and Moss 2007).

*Caroline Arnold and colleagues (2007) define transition as the period of time before, during, and after a child moves into primary school, either from home or from an early childhood program.*

The ecological theory seemed to provide an explanation of the phenomenon of high drop-out and repetition of first grade children, which was seen as the result of inadequate preparation for school, which in turn was a product of poverty, malnutrition, poor home learning environment and lack of access to early childhood care and education services (Myers, R., 1997). However, more recent research suggests that schools must also be ready for children, by offering them a quality service that responds to their characteristics and needs. There should be a combination of efforts focusing on the family, school, community, and child life (Woodhead and Moss 2007).

The overarching lesson from the development of knowledge and understanding of transition over the last three decades is that we must all share the responsibility for creating successful transition for children (Myers, R., 1997). However, many of the community-centered approaches attempting to practice shared responsibility are not clearly defined and described in most of the literature. In recent years, increasing attention has been given to the concept of transition with respect to the roles of children, family, parents, teachers, school, and community. There is growing interest and debate about understanding the nature and implications of this conceptual shift.

*The broader definition of transition is influenced by the ecological theory which emphasizes the impact on child experience of broader contexts as well as the people within those contexts. The ecological model situates responsibility for an effective transition to school with all involved in the process. This theory also justified a comprehensive view of child development and learning including in it different perspectives from the family, school, and community and broader policy issues arising from these perspectives.*

During the last two decades there has been an increasing interest in educational transitions because the level of success during transition to school or transfer between phases of education, both socially and academically, can be a critical factor in determining children's future progress and development (Docket & Perry, 2007; Dunlop & Fabian, 2002; Einarsdoair, 2007; Entwisle & Alexander, 1998; Fabian, 2007; Kagan & Neuman, 1998; Margets, 2002).

Today, this conceptual shift opens up the possibility for broader acceptance of a multi-dimensional view of transition as derived from ecological theory, the importance of mutual preparedness of children and school, community, and family, and recognition of the role and responsibilities of multiple actors who have to work together to make transition successful. Families, schools, and communities should collaborate to ensure that the successive transitions from home to ECD centers and ECD centers to primary schools are positive and successful experiences for young children.

### Significance of transition and linkages

All educators, researchers and policy makers recognize the significance of transition from home to ECD center to primary school (Myers, R., 1997). The importance of early childhood to later development and well-being, as well as the related importance of investment in early childhood education, has promoted a great deal of interest in transition research, policy and practice (OECD, 2006). The importance of a positive transition to school has been emphasized in research around the world. It is well recognized that a successful start to school is linked to later positive educational and social outcomes. (Fabian and Dunlop, 2002)

Many studies have also established that a child can be seen as successful in school when she or he 1) develops positive attitudes and feelings about school and learning, 2) establishes supportive social ties with teachers and classmates, 3) feels comfortable and relatively happy in classroom rather than anxious, lonely or upset, 4) is interested and motivated to learn and take part in classroom activities (participation, engagement), and 5) achieves and progresses academically each school year (Ladd GW, 2003).

The transition from home to early learning programs to school has compelled interest from researchers, policy makers and educators:

- There is increasing pressure on primary education to ensure that all children succeed at school (Myers, R., 1997)
- In many countries, the enormous expansion in early childhood programs has focused attention on their role in children's transition to school;
- Several long-term studies of early childhood intervention for disadvantaged children in United States have shown benefits for adult educational outcomes, behavior, and employment (World Bank, 2012)
- There is strong evidence that school transitional program affect children's subsequent performance at school. A number of USA longitudinal studies (Myers, 1997 and Arnold, C., 2007) on school readiness found correlation between academic and cognitive action in early years and social and behavioral outcomes in later life.

There is consistent evidence that growing up in disadvantaged circumstances can have a negative impact on children's development and educational outcomes, including their transition to school (Alexander & Entwisle, 1998,; Duncan et al., 2007; Reynolds & Bezruczko, 1993).

### School Readiness: A Core Concept of Transition

School readiness is the heart of the transition process, to the extent that it's difficult to differentiate the two concepts. School readiness has often been used to explain why children fail to make successful transitions to school or drop-out. Research suggests that children's school readiness is no longer seen as a product of the child alone, but rather of the child, family, school and the community.

*School readiness leads to school success. Researchers, policy makers, educators and parents are trying to discover what it means for children to be ready for school. Typically, school readiness includes physical, motor, linguistic, cognitive, social and emotional development as well as attitudes toward learning and general knowledge. A child is seen as successful in school when a positive attitude about school and learning is developed, supportive social ties with teachers and classmates are formed, comfortable and positive emotions, as well as engagement and participation in the classroom, are experienced; and academic achievement and progress are shown.*

The concept of readiness has many facets and is interpreted differently in different contexts. Earlier discussions on readiness were focused on a set of cognitive skills that a child should possess to start Grade-1 (Arnold, et al., 2007). Under this frame, school readiness is defined in terms of a set of behaviors, skills, and abilities that indicate a children's preparedness in schooling. It can be described and discussed in three terms of major approaches: maturational, integrationist and interactional.

- I. ***Maturational Approach:*** According to this approach, based on maturational theory, children are ready to start school when they reach a level of maturity that allows them to cope with the school system. Development is only marginally influenced by external factors (such as community influence) and children will eventually be able to do the tasks needed only at school. One example of this theory is from Estonia, where school readiness is defined in terms of school maturity (stage of growth) and school readiness (ready for school) (Pandis, 2001 & Gasell, 2004).
- II. ***Integrationist Approach:*** According to the approach, school readiness is rooted in the concept of holistic and integrated development. It is not defined in terms of functioning in one area of development but rather through mastering a comprehensive set of skills and behaviors across several domains of development. The approach is focused on the precursor experiences successful school readiness.
- III. ***Interactional Approach:*** This comprehensive approach in incorporates a child's holistic development and environmental influences. Under this theory, a comprehensive assessment of school readiness needs indicators of the school's capacity to serve both the learning and developmental needs of a child (Murphey and Burns, 2002).

More recently, the concept of readiness is discussed in terms of the required participation of families, schools and communities, along with the child (Woodhead, M. and Moss, P., 2007). Several research findings suggest that children who develop warm, positive relationships with their kindergarten teachers are more excited about learning, more positive about coming to school, more self-confident, and achieve more in the classroom (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2009).

*Dockett and the team (2011) define school readiness as a multifaceted concept incorporating children's readiness for school, ready schools as well as the family and community support required to promote children's optimal development and learning.*

Readiness, therefore, is not shaped by children alone, but is linked to the readiness of the school, community, and family (Kagan, et al., 2007).

### How the concept evolved over time

*The concept of school readiness has evolved over time. Initially, the concept of readiness remained poorly identified and variously interpreted– sometimes mired in confusion with practitioners and policy makers advancing widely differing positions regarding various issues, such as, school entry, retention, tracking, and transitional classes. The concept of readiness was first mentioned by Johann Pestalozzi in 1898, and the term appeared in literature in 1920 (Kagan, S.L., 1990). The concept, however, was not given serious attention for decades, but got greater currency when the International Kindergarten Union formed a committee on reading readiness with the intention to promote better understanding of the concept (Kagan, S.L., 1990).*

*Today, school readiness is considered to hold three key dimensions: i) the dispositions and skills that young children need to succeed in school; ii) the activities and supports that require by parents and families and iii) the efforts and activities that the formal school setting takes to ensure the contribution of school policies, curriculum and practices (Fabian, H., 2007). Readiness is now broadly recognized as a comprehensive idea in development.*

The following stakeholders have significant role in the core concept of transition that is school readiness:

### Family

Involvement of family is important to achieve the objective of pre-primary education and overall developmental goal. Parents should play a role in the different steps and activities of pre-primary education so that the child's formal phase of transition from home to pre-primary education to primary education is an enjoyable and pleasant experience. Research indicates that healthy development depends on the quality and stability of a young child's relationships with the important people in her or his life, both inside and outside the family (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2009). The same research also indicates that the quality of early parent-child relationships can be strengthened but that successful interventions are more difficult to achieve when relationships are significantly troubled or disturbed.

### Community

It is the duty of the community to create an environment that can bring about the full potential of a child. The community is responsible for arranging the appropriate opportunities for play in line with a child's needs and wants. This entails the creation of schools and child development centers, awareness of children's rights, and the establishment of a friendly and cooperative atmosphere.

### School

A school should have all sorts of preparation to receive a child. The pre-primary stage is the inauguration of formal education for a child. A school should be like a home to the child and classmates should be like family members.

In order to overcome the challenges of a child’s coping with transition, parents and schools should engage in collaboration and intensive coordination. School readiness encompasses development in five major areas where children differ greatly (Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2006):

- ✓ Physical Health and Motor Development
- ✓ Social Emotional Development
- ✓ Approaches Toward Learning
- ✓ Language and Literacy
- ✓ Cognition and General Knowledge

Early childhood development programs should address child readiness issue comprehensively. However, the majority of people would agree that the areas referenced above work in concert to ensure child’s “school readiness”. Current literature shows that each area depends on the others.

Understanding readiness has requires a joint focus on three different related phenomena affecting the child – the home, ECD Program, and Primary school. The characteristics of these areas are different with respect to learning approach, environment, and relationships.

There should be a clear understanding of the following framework in the issues of a child’s readiness from home to ECD setting, and the ECD setting to Primary school.

Home	ECD Program	Primary School
An informal, loving adult-child relation	An informal, loving adult-child relation	A formal, less personal adult-child relation
Learning through imitation, experience, and trial & error	Learning through play	Learning through didactic teaching, memorization
Flexibility	Structure with flexibility	Rigidity
Contextualized learning	A mix of contextualized and De-contextualized learning	De-contextualized learning
Modeling, one-on-one Teaching	Numerous children to one Adult	Many children to one adult
Adjustments to the interests and needs of the child	Adjustments to interests and needs of the child, in the context of the group	Adjustment of the child to the demands of the school
Emphasis on the concrete	Use of concrete/objects to teach concepts	Use of symbols
Active participation in chores and rituals	Activity-based learning	Passive role in learning and school events
Learning in mother tongue	Learning in mother tongue, perhaps with the introduction of national language	Learning in the national language
Emphasis on language comprehension	Emphasis on language comprehension and production	Emphasis on language production
Emphasis on process	Emphasis on process	Emphasis on results

*Source: Myers, R., (1997)*

## Getting Ready For School: A Child-to-Child Approach

The Child-to-Child approach refers to a style of child empowerment where children are active participants in their own development process. It is an educational process that links children learning with taking action to promote the health, wellbeing and development of themselves, their families and their communities. Child-to-Child is an approach to children's participation in health promotion and development that is grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Although the Child-to-Child approach has been used in the health sector for promotional and development activities with success for many years, recently this approach has been used effectively in early childhood and transitional programs, especially in school readiness and transition programs.

For school readiness, "getting ready for school a child to child approach," was considered an effective intervention program in a UNICEF (2010) review. The program is an early childhood program that was implemented as a pilot in 6 countries (Bangladesh, China, Demographic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Tajikistan, and Yemen) during 2008-2009. UNICEF commissioned an independent evaluation to the American Institute for Research (AIR) of the pilot cases. The evaluation looked at the children's academic, motor, emotional, and behavioral skills and responses.

Two major outcome indicators of the child-to-child pilot were: increased school readiness and increased on-time enrolment in primary school. The evaluation did not find significant program effect in all the areas of school readiness, but positive program effects were found on several important indicators: color naming, pattern recognition, beginning mathematics, perceptual motor skills, focused attention, persistence, self-confidence, and attention to directions. The evaluation also examined some family caregivers, young facilitators and teachers level outcomes. Positive outcomes were recorded on many of these indicators.

A brief summary of the pilot projects in different countries and their outcomes is given below.

### Bangladesh

Students of grade 5 (about 16 per school) were selected as facilitators who then paired with one or two younger children. 35 weeks out of the academic year were dedicated for this program. The sessions for this program took place once in a week and aimed to develop the learner's basic skills on numeracy and literacy. The session was designed with several games and activities that included pictures, games, rhymes, and songs. Progressively more complex activities were designed using common everyday objects to get the children to draw conclusions, solve problems, and use applied reasoning.

### Congo

In each school 15 young facilitators were selected to guide the young learners. The facilitators were each responsible for 2-3 children. To undertake the program, the school's teachers and principal were given an orientation.

The *Getting Ready for School* program was implemented in 35 sessions over the course of a year. At the conclusion of each session, the facilitators were given the opportunity, with support from their teachers, to explain and discuss their experiences.

### Ethiopia

Six regions of Ethiopia were selected to pilot the program at a pace of 35 sessions a year. Within these regions, clusters of 5-7 schools were established to share resources and logistical support.

### Tajikistan

Both Tajik ministry and district level officials collaborated to implement the program. Grade 4 teachers helped develop young facilitators. Similar to the normal Tajik school system, children remain with the same teacher for their first four years of education. The young facilitators then help the children to accomplish their progress in learning.

This program was implemented over 35 weekly sessions during the year, with most sessions lasting an hour. After each session the young facilitators discussed their understanding of the concept and the issues and received advice and support from the teachers.

### Yemen

Teachers were responsible to find eligible young facilitators, which they selected following program guidelines. UNICEF was involved in the process of matching the facilitators with the learners. As with other countries, the program was implemented over 35 weekly sessions.

The UNICEF-commissioned evaluation study of program implementation in the countries listed above indicated that school readiness with respect to academic skills (color naming, pattern recognition, beginning mathematics [numeral identification, counting, applied addition and subtraction] beginning literacy [letter identification and reading] perceptual motor skills, attention, mastery motivation, and the ability to follow directions), had improved significantly compared to children that had not been in the program. With their advances in knowledge and skills, program participants were more confident and ready for primary school. (“Getting Ready for School: A Child-to-Child Approach”, Program Evaluation Report, UNICEF, New York, 2010)



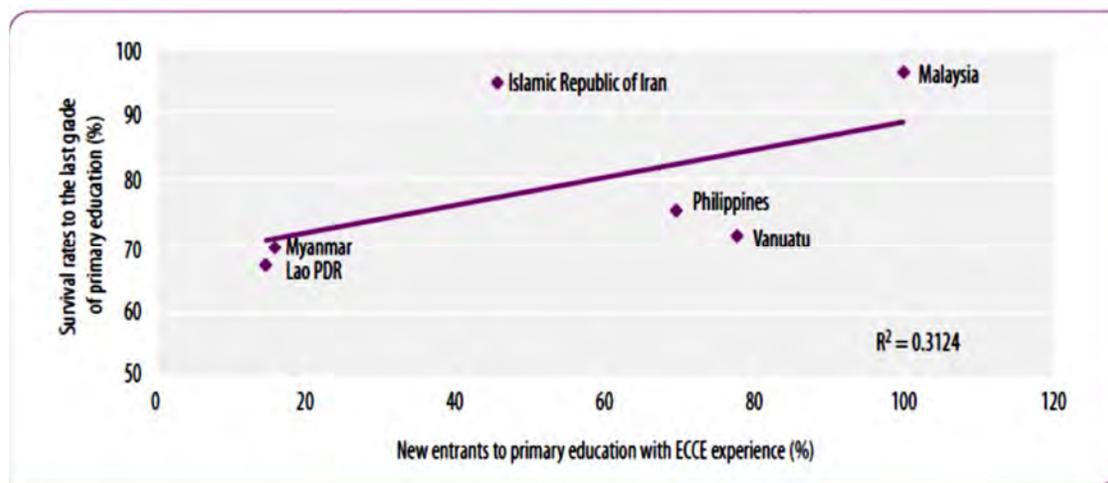
## Chapter II

### Effective Noteworthy Policies and Practices on Transition

Early childhood care and development can play a profound role in helping children make the successive transitions from home to an ECD center and then to primary school. Investment in these early years offers outstanding human and financial returns – as much as seven times more than investments during other periods of a child's life. (Heckman, 2006)

Figure 1 below shows that in some Asia-Pacific countries, children who have had prior ECCE experience are more likely to complete their primary education. This supports Heckman's repeated contention (2000, 2006; Heckman and Carneiro, 2003) that an ECCE intervention during the earlier years makes possible the highest rate of return.

Figure 1: ECCE experience and survival rate to the last grade of primary education in selected countries, 2009



Source: ECCE Regional Report Asia-Pacific, UNESCO 2012

The best way to prepare a child for school is to make sure that, during the early developmental years, they have optimal social, emotional, and educational experiences within stimulating environments, both at home and in community settings.

Following points need to be considered during program design:

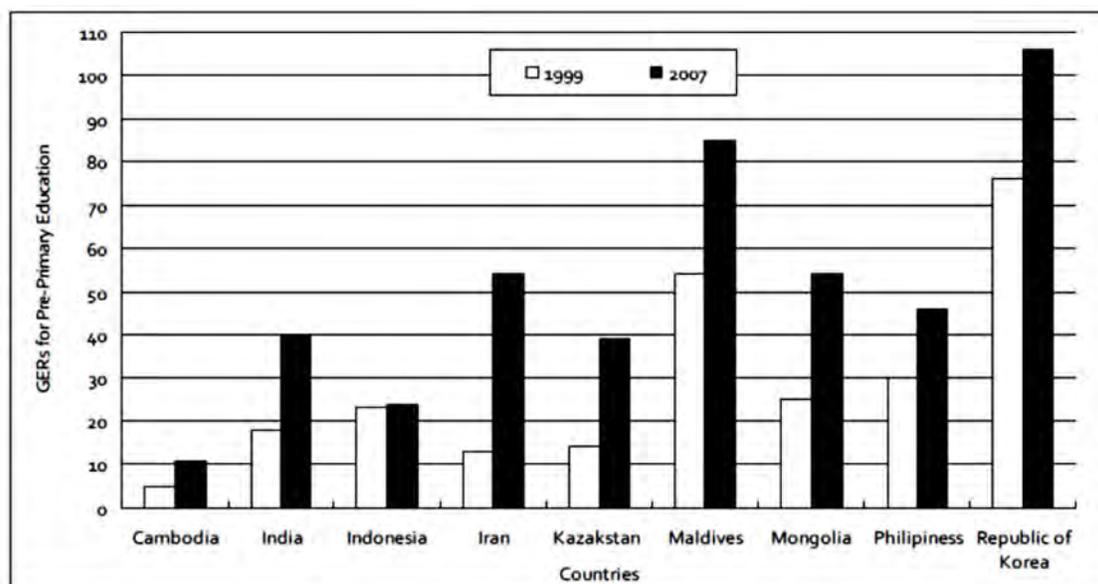
- ✓ *Build opportunities for family involvement in early childhood programs.*
- ✓ *Build strong links and relationships between schools and early childhood services to ensure continuity of care and joint planning of transition support activities. These links are important for transfer of knowledge about the circumstances, needs and interests of individual children and their families.*
- ✓ *Build strong links between families and schools before, during and after transition.*
- ✓ *Provide a variety of supports to help ease children's transition to school.*
- ✓ *Establish integrated service networks, linking early childhood programs with other general and specialize child and family services. Considerable investment is required in the strategies, services and programs that support school readiness.*

Ref: Policy Brief No 10 2008: Rethinking School Readiness [www.rch.org.au/ccch/policybriefs.cfm](http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/policybriefs.cfm)

As contexts differ, there is no global policy for transition. That being said, successful ECCE policies should give attention to the above mentioned criteria. The following are examples ([www.unicef.org/rosa](http://www.unicef.org/rosa) and [www.unicef.org/southasia](http://www.unicef.org/southasia)) of successful ECCE policies that are being applied in countries in the region.

**Brunei Darussalam's** Long-Term Development Plan (2007–2012), also known as Wawasan Brunei 2035, lists early childhood education (ECE) as an investment priority under its Outlined Strategies and Policies for Development from 2007–2017.<sup>2</sup> Brunei's ECE services in the past were the domain of the Ministry of Education (under primary education) ;these services focused largely on education for children aged 5–6 years in pre-school sections attached to government primary schools. The Ministry of Education established an early childhood education unit in 2010, which expanded the focus of ECCE support to children aged 3–6 years.

**Figure 2: Increase in Gross Enrollment Ratios for Pre-Primary Education in selected countries**



Source: ECCE Regional Report Asia-Pacific, UNESCO 2012

**In Indonesia**, 99 per cent of kindergartens are organized by community bodies; the Government operates only 0.6 per cent of centers nationally. This lack of public investment in early childhood may account for huge variations in the net enrollment rates across provinces. Many poor families cannot afford the relatively high costs associated with private facilities for early childhood education. Article 28 of Law 20(2003) made some provision for underserved populations of young children. Because private centers offer ECCE regularly, the principal strategy appears to be the delivery of services through integration with health services (posyandu) and religious institutions (mosques, churches and viharas). The overall strategy is the guidance of early childhood-related initiatives through advocacy and community involvement, rather than through direct policy commitment to publicly provided services.

In the document Education for All: Mid-Decade Assessment Country Report (Ministry of National Education, Indonesia, 2007), the directorate in charge (PAUDNI) made a series of commitments in line with the Ministry of Education's strategic plan 2004–2009, which highlighted the following three agendas: i) ensuring improved ECE access and equity; ii) improving quality assurance of ECE services; and iii) strengthening governance and accountability of early childhood services.

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**In Lao PDR**, Articles 14 and 15 of the Education Law of 2007 refer to early childhood education, (ECE), dividing it into two subcomponents: crèches and kindergartens. Crèches receive children from 3 months to 3 years old. Kindergartens serve children from 3 to 6 years (until the age for entering primary education) (UNESCO-IBE, 2010). Strategies for efficient pre-primary and primary education include an enhanced ECE school readiness curriculum, as part of a comprehensive inclusive education curriculum, and the implementation of village and community-based ECE programs to enhance school readiness.

Community caregivers were trained to deliver the program in existing community locations, targeting 5-year old children in villages with limited primary school classes (only grades 1–2 or 1–3) but no dedicated classrooms. Despite human these and other constraints, the approach provides school readiness programs for children in very remote and poor communities.

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**In Malaysia**, the Child Care Center Act of 1984, amended in 2007, ensures quality of early childhood care and education programming. Act 550, the National Education Act, formally integrated pre-primary education into the educational system. A formal ECCE curriculum was introduced in 2003 as well (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2009). Age wise they divided children into two groups: 0–4 years old and 4–6 years old. ECCE for the older group comes under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (MRRD), and the Department of National Unity and Integration. ECCE for the younger group is the responsibility of the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and the MRRD. The MRRD is regarded as a pioneer in setting up pre-schools in Malaysia (beginning in the early 1970s), known as the KEMAS pre-schools, located in rural and suburban areas at the request of a local community. (Ng, 2010).

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**In Philippines**, the landmark Republic Act 8980 (ECCD Law) promulgated a comprehensive, national, multi-sector policy on early childhood care and development. The national debate over whether government or public-private partnerships should be responsible for oversight for the implementation of the law, maintaining quality, and managing the transition from home-based ECCE to primary school, is ongoing. To meet the EFA 2015 goals, the Philippines Department of Education made pre-school education (kindergarten in this instance) mandatory for 5-year-old children in June 2011.

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**In Timor-Leste**, an ECCE policy was finalized in 2011 that ensured the incorporation of at least one to two years of pre-school into the education system. The application of a 'mother tongue-based' policy is a significant challenge, because the three primary indigenous languages are oral languages. The National Education Policy 2007–2012 (Ministry of Education, Timor-Leste, 2008) states that "access to pre-school education is understood as a vital component of basic education". In 2007–2008, there were 143 pre-primary schools, a dramatic increase of 150 per cent from the 57 pre-primary schools registered in 2002. A shortage of qualified caregivers/teachers remains the more pressing problem in ECCE. The Government intends to invest in human and material resources in its five-year investment plan (UNESCO Jakarta, 2009).

**In Vanuatu**, the Government now has an official policy for ECCE, focused on quality, both of teachers and the learning process. Initiatives for improving teacher quality include:

- support training of as-of-yet-unqualified ECCE teachers
- improve selection criteria for entry into ECCE education training institutions
- develop a National ECCE curriculum that supports ECD, and
- collaborate with the teachers in-service training unit to upgrade ECCE teachers' skills.

Learning quality is supported primarily by efforts towards developing a national curriculum to promote a holistic approach to child development and learning needs. A field-based training for caregivers has been developed that has the approval of the government. A team is currently working on the Vanuatu Early Learning and Development Standards, which will be used as a guide to write the Vanuatu national kindergarten curriculum, which will be the only recognized curriculum (Ministry of Education, Vanuatu, 2010).

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**In Bangladesh**, the National Education Policy includes early childhood provisions, with three ministries involved in providing oversight of related services, particularly in pre-primary education. There is an operational Policy Framework for Pre-primary Education that is based on the national plan of action with an emphasis on a holistic, multi-sector early childhood policy. There is also a policy proposal that covers the full spectrum of 0–8 years and proposes a coordinating mechanism among ministries.

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**In India**, despite increasing population and limited resources, efforts are underway to provide holistic early childhood services. India is home to the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program, a large and relatively established system of holistic early childhood development, initiated in 1975. The ICDS overcame several difficulties, including the fragmentation of its responsibilities into two ministries (the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Ministry of Education). Recently, the 86th amendment to article 45 of the Indian Constitution modified wording to indicate that the State shall “endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete 6 years of age” (Government of India, 2002). Arguments in favor of the amendment included the need for multi-sector responsibility and increased public-private partnerships as the most effective mechanisms for providing ECCE.

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**In Nepal**, an ECD Strategic Plan was developed in 2004 and implemented in 2005 by the Ministry of Education and Sports. The Department of Education (DOE) is active in advanced the cause of ECD as part of its Tenth Five-Year Plan, in both community-based and school-affiliated ECD programs (such as the Shishu Kaksha programs). The number of ECD centers expanded from 5,023 in 2004 to more than 17,000 by the end of 2007 (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2008). The DOE also concentrates on improving the quality of ECD centers, training, and curriculum. Some difficulties persist in the quality and monitoring of programs. The Government has a policy to establish and operate ECD centers in disadvantaged communities. The policy specifically mentions that disadvantaged populations, including ethnic minorities, women, madhesis, Dalits and other marginalized groups, should be identified and that children in these groups should have guaranteed access to ECCD services.

Despite these commendable initiatives across the region, the reports reviewed for this analysis point to differences stemming from diverse definitions of early childhood activities.

For example, the terms ECD, ECCD, ECCE, ECE, pre-primary education, etc. have different meanings with respect to the care, development and education of young children and reflect significant disparities in the target ages of children. In some countries, early childhood policy covers children aged 0–3 years, while in others it is aged 3–5 years. These differences frequently translate into fragmented entry points, and the fallout can negatively impact the underserved and disadvantaged.

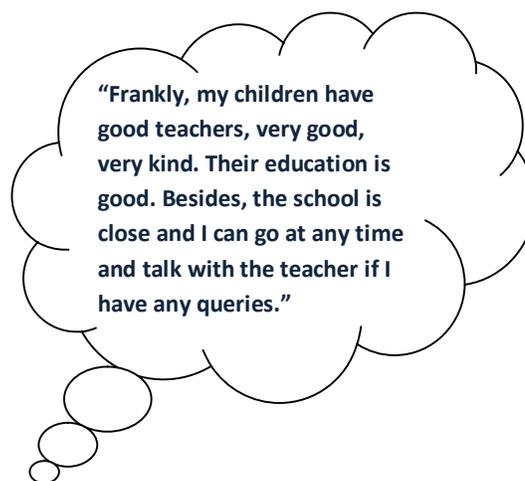
In addition to the problems noted above, there remain gaps in national-regional coordinating mechanisms, an absence of ownership in policy efforts, as well as financial constraints. Experts are calling for enhanced monitoring and evaluation of ECCE policies and programs, greater national-regional cooperation and increased budget allocations for specific programs and good governance, including the ensured participation of all parties in the process (Rao and Sun, 2010; Britto and Ravens, 2009). Several countries in the region are still in the process of developing or refining their policy guidelines and frameworks to address the needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

### Effective noteworthy practices for successful transition

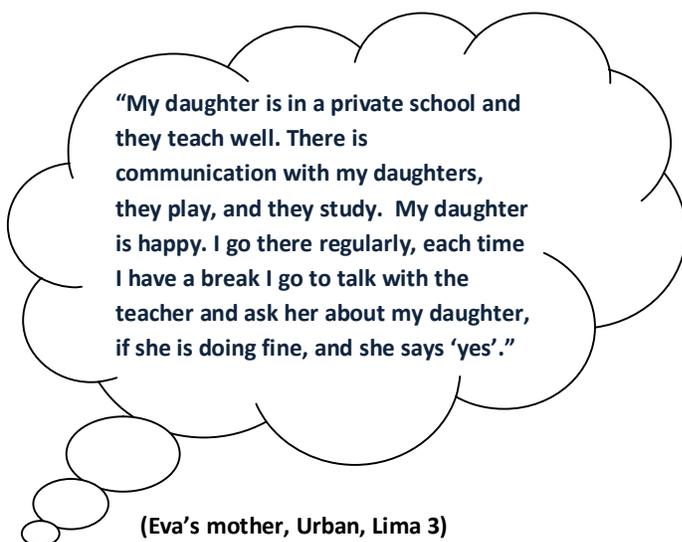
Transitioning cannot be accomplished overnight. It is a process that requires nourishments from different sources such as parents, teachers, school, and government. Although several factors affect the process of transition, school continues to play a vital role for the smooth transition of children. The following case should help flesh out issues.

#### The cases of Lupe and Eva

**The case of Lupe and Eva, who live in the same neighborhood in the capital city of Peru, Lima, but attend different types of schools, provide an entry point. Lupe went from pre-school to primary school in the same public school, close to her home. Eva, on the other hand, went to a public pre-school, where her aunt used to teach, so she could take her every day, but her mother transferred her to a private primary school closer to her home.. Both women assessed their daughters' schools in positive terms:**



(Lupe's mother, Urban, Lima 3)



In these cases both mothers were happy with the service they got, whether public or private, and they mainly stressed the smooth transition and quality of education for their child. (UNESCO, 2006) While policy and legislation help to outline the program, there needs to be implementation of the policies as well. Successful practice is the key to ensuring that ECCE programs eventually smoothen the transition process.

### Successful Programs of Different Countries

Not all the program regarding transitioning the children either from home or from formal institution is necessarily successful. There are also some ECCE programs implemented indifferent countries which seemed to be successful.

**Early Childhood Curriculum in China: A Hybrid of Traditional Chinese and Western Ideas** Early educational concepts and practices that originated in Europe (e.g., the Project Approach from Reggio Emilia, Italy), North America (High Scope) and Japan have now been incorporated into China's early childhood national curriculum. These concepts and practices are, in some ways, at odds with traditional Chinese educational tropes such as teacher authority, discipline, and acquisition of knowledge through rote memorization, all of which are considered important for both early learning and cultural transmission. With respect to early childhood education, China has been trying to find a balance between adopting Western ideas and maintaining Chinese traditions. Tobin al. (2009) interviewed kindergarten teachers and observed classroom activities and in America, Japan, and during the 1980s and 1990s. They found evidence of a hybrid form of Chinese early childhood education that fused constructivist, child-centered principles with Chinese emphases on social mindedness, skill and subject mastery, with the use of critical feedback for self-improvement. In a similar vein, Rao and Li (2008) found that Chinese kindergarten teachers have a unique way of fusing constructivist notions of development and learning from the national early childhood curriculum with their own traditional beliefs. While the curriculum emphasized free choice activities in kindergartens. However, Rao and Li (2008) found that free play in kindergartens accounted for only 17% of overall activity time. They used the term "Eduplay" to refer to a form of play-based education with "Chinese characteristics", prevalent in Chinese preschools. Source: Rao & Li (2008); Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa (2009); Zhu & Zhang (2008)

**In Sweden** carefully designed education policies along with political and financial support enabled primary schools to be more responsive to children's individual learning needs, in many ways mimicking preschool learning pedagogies. "The Swedish experience shows that this link has potential to galvanize a country's efforts to make schools more learner-centered, to bring a paradigm shift in education, in which *care, development, and learning* will no longer be foreign concepts alongside *education*" (UNESCO Policy Brief, 2002).

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**In the United States**, the Child-Parent Center Program was part of the Chicago Public School system, often housed at the local primary school. The pre-school and primary school components worked in sync with each other, which assured a high level of learning continuity for child and family. The preschool program was able to wield more influence on the primary school system, resulting in smaller primary school classrooms, additional resource teachers and low student: teacher ratios. Parental involvement was central - parents dedicated at least half a day a week in the child's classroom. Results included high levels of educational attainment, low rates of repetition and low levels of delinquency (Barnett, 1995, Promising Practices Network, 2003).

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**In Canada**, a similar type of integration of ECD - local primary school and involvement of parents - was a key recommendation of the final report of the Early Years Study to the Government of Ontario (McCain and Mustard, 1999).

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**In Nepal**, a Save the Children-supported transition program introduced children (during their last few months in the ECD centers) to some of the activities and skills that would be emphasized once they entered school. The program also arranged visits to the school and ensured that the Grade 1 teacher visited the children in the center. The primary school interventions included working with the whole school to develop a commitment to children's rights. This involved particular emphasis on ensuring a welcoming and non-punitive atmosphere for all children (especially girls and dalits). And, while general teacher training in child-friendly active learning approaches were provided to all teachers, particular attention was given to those working in the first two grades. In Grade 1, where there was a focus on ensuring a maximum 50:1 child: teacher ratio. Grade 1 textbooks were used as the basis for creating a hands-on practical teacher training package that helped teachers put active learning into practice. The activities with children were recognized by teachers as helping children learn skills and concepts in the textbooks, which was critical to getting the buy-in of teachers who had little in the way of education or professional development support. Low cost/no cost learning materials kits were provided as well. Results included a significant improvement in school attendance, pass rates, promotion and a corresponding reduction in drop-out and repetition (Bartlett et al, 2004; Arnold, 2003).

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

The Transition Program Approach (TPA) is a package of activities practiced within grades I and II children in and outside classroom that improves quality of learning and aware each stakeholder about ones roles and responsibility towards children's holistic development. The transition activities take place with close collaboration from community and school. The TPA package is consists of Parenting Education for the parents of grades I and II, Reception and

Welcome Event for G1 children and their parents, Reading Buddy and Mentoring, School health and Nutrition, Community After-school Circle and Teachers Training on Literacy Boost for grade 1 and grade 2 on Reading Development and instruction for young children.

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

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**In India**, Bodh Shiksha Samiti is a Rajasthan NGO pioneering innovative approaches in education for the most disadvantaged people in urban slums and rural areas. They work both through their own bodhshalas (Bodh's urban non-formal schools, now viewed as a model for replication elsewhere in urban slum areas of Jaipur) and government schools. Classrooms include plenty of low-cost/no-cost learning materials and there is intensive peer support amongst teachers. Teachers undertake continuous assessment of all students across academic subjects, the arts, and social interactions. The strict notion of grades is replaced by having 3 broad clusters, or levels, amongst which children, aged 3 to 16 progresses. The impact of Bodh's approach continues to be documented (AKF, 2006; Gowani and Tiwari, 2006) and is particularly strong for girls and other marginalized students. The *bodhshalas* offer a remarkably seamless integration for students from preschool into primary (Govinda, 2006). Bodh supported primary schools have had four times less drop-out in its primary schools than non-intervention schools in Rajasthan (AKF EMIS, 2004).

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

The MRCs began to organize annual Open Days and workshops for Grade One teachers and Head teachers from the schools the preschools feed into. During these sessions, MRC staff have displayed and offered hands-on experience with many of the madrasa preschools' learning materials. This proved effective in engaging their primary colleagues in discussion with respect to 'active learning' principles – key for persuading those who still view activities in the preschool as "only play".

Requests now regularly come from the early primary teachers for training and support in developing their own teaching and learning materials. Including the head teachers in this process has been critical, as has the practice of having madrasa preschool teachers visit their local primary schools. MRCs are looking to expand their efforts in the area of transition including through sharing of effective practices and advocacy with their government colleagues across the three countries.

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

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**In Cambodia** a UNICEF-supported *School Readiness Program* (SRP) introduced a readiness course in the first two months of a child's formal education, in order to compensate for the lack of formal pre-schooling and generally poor early childhood development experience in Cambodia (UNICEF, 2004). The Program resulted in improved learning (measured by standardized testing). The SRP had a major impact on facilitating learning among repeaters. A follow-up study to examine the impact on core curriculum (language and math) learning achievement at the end of Grade 1 found significant impact in 22 out of 25 areas. Differences were particularly large in topic areas relating to Khmer Language and Reading skills. A similar program introduced into the Philippines some years ago has now been abandoned in favor of making all of Grade 1 a more child-friendly learning experience.

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

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**In Columbia**, operating since the 1970s as a system of community schools in rural Columbia had expanded by the 1990s to 18,000 schools, increasing primary school participation by around 60% (Rugh and Bossert, 1998).

The program's active curriculum encourages children to participate in their own learning. In multi-grade classrooms, teachers are trained to work with students using participatory methods and plan lessons, responding to students' different abilities and interests. Parent and community involvement are central. Participation in adult education, agricultural extension, athletic competition, health campaigns and community celebrations is much higher in Escuela Nueva schools than in neighboring government schools (Psacharopoulos, Rojas, and Velez, 1993). Compared to students in traditional rural schools, students from Escuela Nueva scored considerably higher on tests given on socio-civic behavior, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade mathematics, and 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade Spanish. Children in Escuela Nueva schools were also found to be more confident than their counterparts in government schools and the self-esteem of primary school girls paralleled that of boys, a testament to the effectiveness of the holistic, child-centered philosophy used in Escuela Nueva (Coordinators Notebook, 1997). Escuela Nueva is interesting in part because it does not specifically target lower grades. However, because of the welcoming atmosphere, informal structure, self-paced curriculum and flexible time schedules, lower primary children have the inclination to continue with their education, while their counterparts in traditional schools have dropped out in droves from 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

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**In the Central Eastern European and CIS countries (30)** implemented Step by Step Transition - Primary School Program establishes an intentional connection and overlap in teaching and learning styles between two normally distinct levels. Where possible, Step by Step transitions children together from pre-school into the same primary classrooms. In preschool, children participate in role activities like 'Play 1st Grade'. Conversely, children from first grade are invited to the preschool to talk about their experiences. Parents and community are also actively involved in the transition between preschool and first grade. Collectively, preschool teachers and parents review the primary school curriculum and discuss the child to make sure he/she has the necessary skills for first grade. Additionally, the primary school teachers are trained in the same pedagogic framework as the preschool. The teachers use the same 7 core modules (individualization, learning environment, family participation, teaching strategies for meaningful learning, planning and assessment, professional development, social inclusion), and are expected to demonstrate identical competencies, but through different observable examples. The Step by Step curriculum is also organized based on age, not grade, since primary school entrance age varied between locations/countries. Non-graded classrooms for the first four years (ages 7-10) of primary education ensure continuity of teaching and learning - teachers use the materials with children in a meaningful way and students thus develop strong foundations in their knowledge of the subject.

### Transition Experience from Different Stakeholders

Transitions to school have been experienced differently by teachers, parents and learners across various national and social contexts (Dunlop, 2002; Early, Pianta & Cox, 1999). Different studies exist on the transition of children; some of these are longitudinal studies that range from birth or child care/preschool until the child commences primary school (Kienig, 2002; Margetts, 2003). Others have only captured the child's experience as they enter the first Grade of formal education (Clarke & Sharpe, 2003; Dockett & Perry, 2001a; Fabian, 2002; Einarsdóttir, 2003).

That being said, all of these studies have captured the socio-emotional and behavioral

preschool to primary school. Children's academic self-concepts begin to take form in the early school years and influence the way children behave in academic situations as they move through the school system (Early *et al.*, 1999). Studies have further revealed that the transition process can be experienced by participants as traumatic, stressful, and challenging (Broström, 2002; Clarke & Sharpe, 2003).

### **Children's experiences of transitions**

In studies in developed countries, children expressed their anxiety and apprehension about their entry into school and what the whole process means to them (Griebel & Niesel, 2002; Peters, 2000; Clarke & Sharpe, 2003). A German study indicated that restrictions imposed by the primary school routine were disliked by. In particular, they disliked that they could not go and play when they wanted to. Play was restricted to break times; the remaining time was for serious work (Clarke & Sharpe, 2003; Griebel & Niesel, 2002). Children voiced their dislike of the school, as it was associated with a lot of work and homework. They preferred preschools as they were allowed to move around and were not restricted to their desks.

Children have claimed that the lack of continuity between kindergarten and primary school was unsettling for them. They note that in primary school there was less freedom of choice compared to their kindergarten experience. They also felt insecure and nervous about going to school (Peters, 2000; Broström, 2002 & Einarsdóttir, 2003). These studies reveal that children perceive going to primary school as stressful due to discontinuity between the preschool and the primary school. While some children were wary of discontinuities between the preschool and primary school, there were some children who were delighted to learn new things in a new environment and saw this opportunity as a challenge rather than a threat. They viewed discontinuity as a challenge to prepare themselves well for the new eventuality (Dockett & Perry, 2002b). Children therefore emphasized that knowing school rules would put them on favorable platform to continue to conform to the school's rules and regulations.

The children noted discontinuities in the physical structure of the schools. When children talked about primary school, they tended to talk about features in primary schools that differed from those at preschools. The school was perceived as "big school" where actual learning was to take place. Due to the constructive approach being used in preschools, most of the children felt that they had taught themselves everything they knew in preschools whereas in the primary schools they were going to be taught how to read and write - seemingly more difficult skills to learn than those learnt in preschools. These ideas about the school being a serious place of work seem to have come from older siblings and parents (Broström 1999 cited in Einarsdóttir, 2003).

Children in the Danish study had a vivid and clear image of what a primary school was, and pointed out the differences between the primary school and the pre-primary school. Children seemed to have accepted the fact that they had to undergo change as they were moving from a preschool to a primary school.

Making friends and being in their company was a significant aspect about liking school and making good adjustments to school, a fact mentioned in a number of transition studies (Margetts, 1999; Dockett & Perry, 1999; Peters, 2000). Active and

involved parents, neighborhood and community-based organizations as well as teachers all have an important role to play in supporting

the school's mission. Schools therefore need to understand what parents' value, want and need. Creating a partnership between school and community is an important area of many, if not most, effective school reform efforts. Effective school-community partnerships do make a difference in improving educational quality, academic outcomes, and effective reform efforts (Graue, 1999).

## Teachers' Experience on Transition

Teachers hold different views on the transition of children to school. This difference is largely marked by the phase they are teaching in. Their contributions and inputs are, however, imperative for understanding the process of transition and how transition problems are manifested in children. It would be important to see how transitions have been conceptualized by teachers and whether their sentiments are similar to those of others involved in transitions.

The primary school, preschool, and home are the three main agents in the child's transition to school. The child who has a supportive relationship with all three is most likely to make a smooth transition (Margetts, 2002; Fabian, 2002; Richardson, 1997). There was, however, a remarkable difference in how preschool teachers viewed their work, as compared to the views of primary school teachers. Primary school teachers' conception of learning was associated with reading and writing. Anything falling outside this scope could not, in their view, be ascribed to learning. Pre-primary school teachers, on the other hand, viewed their work as a continuity of what happened in the primary school. Learning, according to them, started right from preschool with basic skills such as recognition of letters, shapes and colors which are basic and foundational to the reading and writing processes (Einarsdóttir, 2003). These views of the preschool and the primary school teachers may be the result of historical differences in the traditions and philosophies of the two institutions (Neuman, 2002).

Preschools have typically employed play-based methods of teaching and learning whereas primary schools are more content-oriented and their activities are teacher-directed instead of learner-directed. These differences are echoed by teachers themselves, who feel that preschool is a period of innocent playing and that primary school is the beginning of more serious times (Einarsdóttir, 2003). These differences seemed to have been internalized by children who now seemed to view starting primary school as a turning point in their lives. These differences are further highlighted by a study conducted in Copenhagen. Broström (2002:60) reported that in this study, aimed to determine transition activities regarded as a "good idea" amongst different teachers, there was a significant difference expressed by preschool teachers as compared with primary school teachers. Preschool teachers were seen as less positive about transition activities, especially of having shared meetings on educational practice and a coordination of the curriculum with the primary school teachers. They may have been worried that a coordination of such nature might result in them implementing a school-oriented curriculum at preschool level.

In another study by the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales, conducted between April 1977 and December 1980, on the experiences of children aged three to eight years when transferring to a school, the primary school teachers revealed no knowledge of which preschool the new entrants were from. There was no form of contact visible between the primary schools and the preschools in their vicinity. Half of the schools interviewed received information about new entrants from the preschools, but nothing came of this information as there were discrepancies between the capabilities of the new entrant held by preschool and primary school teachers (Cleave *et al.*, 1982, Dunlop, 2002). Teachers expressed their desire not to rely on information from preschools, as they treated such information with suspicion. They preferred to generate their own information regarding each child, although information regarding the child's biographical details from parents was regarded as important.

### Parental Experience on Transition

The research on transition is not only confined to the children's experiences but includes parents' views as well. Parents act as a support system, or what Vygotsky calls "scaffolding", to children as they move from one phase of learning to the other (Wertsch, 1986). Despite parents viewing transition with trepidation, Griebel and Niesel (2002) found that the closer the contact between parents and teachers, the less the differences there were with respect to their views of their children's competencies. The less positively the parents viewed their children, the less optimistic they were, regardless of the teacher's high ratings of the children.

When children in British and Italian studies started their first day at school, most of their parents confessed to feelings of gladness, sadness and apprehension. Some were happy that their children were finally going to school and found it a relief. Comments such as "It'll be such a wrench when he's gone" to "I'll be able to start living again" were overheard from parents as they expressed their anxiety and happiness at the child's possible good or poor adjustment to school (Cleave *et al.*, 1982; Corsaro & Molinari, 2005).

Early studies on transition portrayed the parents as entities separate from the school and what happened in the school. Parents in a British study conducted by Cleave *et al.* (1982) felt that boundaries in the primary schools were more rigid and remote than in preschools. These boundaries precluded spontaneous contact between the parents and the teacher and replaced it by scheduled appointments. Parents therefore had little time to get to know the teachers and tell them about their children (Cleave *et al.*, 1982). There was a subtle 'reproachable' feeling between the staff and the parents, with the parents feeling uneasy and unwelcome in the eyes of teachers, even though teachers extended invitations to parents to visit, should a need arise.

A different view of parents from the one above was captured in a study of transition in Germany. Griebel & Niesel (2002) found that parents of new entrants into the school expressed their satisfaction with their children's teachers "despite the sadness that some parents expressed about the idea that somebody else would get influence over their child" (Griebel & Niesel, 2002: 72). Developing a positive picture of the teacher promoted sound relationship that was important for the adjustment of their children.

It is important that teachers integrate and involve parents from poor socio-economic backgrounds. These parents are generally less educated and lack the necessary knowledge, skills and resources to help their children. They also appear to be less interested in the education of their children and tend to avoid schools (Early *et al.*, 1999; Moletsane, 2004). Moreover, economic hardship has a tendency to undermine parenting, thus causing parents to refrain even more from active involvement in their children's education.

The study reported that parents felt they were not accepted in a primary school. They felt the need to know more about what the school offered, but felt repulsed by the teachers' professional style, which kept them at a distance. The teachers' advances towards parents had always been interpreted negatively, seemingly due to a strict appointment system that was unheard of in the pre-primary schools, but had come to characterize the way of life of the primary school (Cleave *et al.*, 1982; Dunlop, 2002).

*The following were mentioned as the best strategies that could facilitate the child's entry into school (Korkatsch-Groszko, 1998; Taal, 2000):*

- ✓ Pre-entry visits to the schools before the child is admitted into the school should be promoted and encouraged. This is to familiarize the child with the new environment so that it should not be intimidating by the time the child is transferred into the school.
- ✓ Forming of new relationships between the teacher and the child and between the child and other peers. The child leaving preschool is leaving behind warm and secure relationships with adults and friends. However, "much depends on the teacher's skill in establishing rapport, on the personalities of teacher and child, and on the teacher's relationship with other children" (Cleave *et al.*, 1982:205). A child has to form new relationships with people at school. Throughout this disturbance, the school relies on the family to help ease the transition. A sibling or friend at school is also important in easing the tension.
- ✓ Explaining unfamiliar sights, sounds and events; showing him around. The new entrant can be baffled by a number of unfamiliar sounds and events, such as the school bell, older learners, big buildings-and this experience can be overwhelming. Children need a clear explanation which is sensitive but not too complicated (Dockett & Perry, 2003).
- ✓ Encouraging and promoting cooperation between parents and teachers and creating opportunities for the exchange of information is imperative in helping the child to succeed (Dockett & Perry, 2003).
- ✓ Disposition and attitudes towards school. Knowing school rules and the behaviour expected from children (Dockett & Perry, 2003).
- ✓ Teaching children to regard other children as their equals and to respect them (Korkatsch-Groszko, 1998).

## **Towards smooth transition**

As ECCE or ECD helps better or smoother transitioning, effective policy and practice in support of ECCE would naturally play an important role in transitioning. Researchers have indicated five core issues for effective transition; the policy that addresses these core issues is noteworthy and effective policy. Caroline Arnold et.al (2007) recognizes the following five areas of effective transitioning policies and practices:

- More and better ECD
- Better links, coordination, cooperation and understanding between ECD programs and the primary school system
- More attention to the early grades of primary school, as a central component of effective education reform
- Parental involvement at all stages, and
- Better data and information

### **More and better ECD**

Greater scope and better coverage of ECD programs can help families support their children's overall development. Before the child's entry into grade one, a one year or two years center-based integrated program that includes in health, nutrition and child development, has to be regarded as a central component of effective transition.

Policy development has to consider ways of reaching and serving the most disadvantaged children. An important element of policy reform has to be the expansion of services for disadvantaged children through formal or non-formal program approaches (for instance, increased public expenditure or legal frameworks for private sector involvement). ECD in many countries has to be reorganized so that it gives adequate attention to 6–8-year-olds in addition to the 0–3 and 3–5 age groups.

Advocacy for policy reform has to be based on evidence of success and effective change backed by research. For example, policy-makers are likely to be drawn to intervention approaches demonstrating system benefits and increased efficiency. The growing body of evidence from developing nations demonstrating the cost-effectiveness of interventions targeting disadvantaged groups should be fully tapped (Boocock and Larner, 1998). Lessons from experience about ECD that show ways to mitigate social, economic, and gender inequalities, reducing poverty, and promoting social harmony should be the focus of advocacy (CGECCD, 2004).

### **Better links, coordination, cooperation and understanding between ECD programs and the primary school system**

Strong links between early learning and pre-primary are crucial. These links help to ensure children are ready for school and school is ready for children. Transition should be planned holistically, rather than only within ECD or primary. Interaction and links in curriculum as well as pedagogical aspects between ECD and Primary have to be promoted. Working with parents of both preschool and primary is essential. Advocacy for adequate ECD provision in school catchment areas can emphasize the benefits of reduced numbers of under-age children in Grade 1 and reduce failure and repetition rates in primary school. This single step could halve Grade 1 sizes in many countries.

**.More attention to the early grades of primary school, as a central component of primary education reform**

In many countries the percentage of children enrolled in ECD programs is still small and the beneficiaries do not come from the disadvantaged groups most in need of educational support. This makes it all the more urgent to ensure that the quality of the first years of primary school is improved.

Experienced and capable teachers need to be deployed in the early grades, contrary to current practice. Friendlier environments free from bullying or humiliation of young children, smaller class sizes and more manageable teacher–child ratios have to be ensured. Stronger emphasis on language skills and reading, using the child’s first language for teaching basic concepts, bilingual classes, provision of books that children can borrow (especially those that build on local culture, stories, songs and poems) and a variety of other low-cost or free learning materials (, are some of the measures that can make the early grades of primary friendlier to young children, many of whom may not have had exposure to an effective preschool and early learning experience.

Teachers’ capacities should be developed in a way so that deepens the teachers’ understanding of how young children learn. The teachers’ skills have to be strengthened in fostering early literacy, numeracy and problem solving. Teachers have to be supported in introducing enjoyable active learning strategies linked to existing textbooks and curriculum objectives.

**Parental involvement at all stages**

A welcoming environment for parents to discuss their children’s progress and other concerns through an informal, open-door policy, specific open days, parent–teacher meetings, and social events has to be ensured. This should lead to better functioning of both ECD programs and the primary school. Representation of parents from different socio-economic groups in schools and ECD center management committees has to be encouraged. Transparency and open communication on matters such as budget and teacher recruitment has to be ensured. Parents can be involved in self-assessments, improvement planning, and building consensus on key ‘quality’ indicators such as equitable girl and boy enrollment, retention and success.

**Better data and information**

Data and analysis on drop-out, repetition and promotion will help find the way forward. Data can be effectively preserved, interpreted and used in the following ways:

**Record-keeping:** Strengthen recordkeeping and help schools and ECD centers to extract information for their own use. In school, this data should be disaggregated by class gender and other locally relevant criteria. The collected information should be reviewed regularly to help plan and track changes in the program.

**Qualitative studies:** Qualitative studies need to be carried to complement quantitative information and deepen understanding of underlying dynamics behind the change within the schools and the community.

**ECD impact analysis:** Investigate what is happening in ECD and how it relates to the formal system. This impact analysis should address –questions such as the following: How are ECD policies developed, implemented and monitored? What are the impacts on children? What are the implications for program quality? Is it an opportunity to positively influence primary or is it an unwelcome downward extension of primary? What happens to family and community engagement and ownership?

To sum up: a transition framework deliberately links ECD and early primary components by expanding ECD initiatives and increasing attention to Grades 1 and 2. The goal is to address the acute crisis of high drop-out and repetition rates in the early primary years, and to eradicate persistent patterns of failure. Early childhood interventions ensure children are ready for school. But, equally important, schools must be ready for children who may or may not have benefited from an early childhood program.

### Financial allocation in ECD and transitional activities

The worldwide significance of ECD and transition has been acknowledged but this has manifested in practical action, particularly with respect to budget allocation. The situation is distressing in developing countries, particularly for transitional activities. In the countries of the Asia and Pacific region, there is largely no integrated policy to fund ECD programs (Nirmola Rao and Jin Sun (2010). In the education sector, funding priorities are for primary schools, with ECD and transitional activities low on the list of priorities.

Country specific information on funding for transition activities is not available, since this is generally not identified as a program activity in budgetary terms. Other than a few exceptional cases, funding in preprimary education is also not identified. Although the importance of ECD, transitional activities and quality ECD programs have been recognized by some national level policy makers, public investment in ECD and transitional activities has not significantly increased. (Rao, N. and Sun, S., 2010). Of course, countries vary in the expenditure on education as a percentage of their GNP, which affects resources for early learning, preschool and transition activities.

It is estimated that, on average, less than 2% of worldwide education (UNESCO, 2010) budgets are being allocated to early child care and development. An even smaller proportion of this is being used for transitional activities.

Private investment in ECD and transitional activities appears to be growing relative to public investment, but this growth generally serves the more privileged segments of society, thus increasing present disparities. In Indonesia, for example, 99 per cent of kindergartens are conducted by community stakeholders, while the Government operates only 0.6 percent of centers nationally. This lack of public investment in early childhood accounts for huge variations in the net enrolment rates across provinces. Generally, though, adequate information or a system of collecting information regarding private sector spending in ECD and transition activities do not exist.

Typically, in most countries in the region, integrated policies for financing and governance of early childhood care and education programs are absent. (ECCE regional report - Asia Pacific). Better information is available for primary education financing. Some data are available for pre-primary education for countries which have given a relatively high priority to expanding pre-primary opportunities in the public sector.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of public expenditure on primary education

REGION	1999	2007
<b>EAST ASIA</b>		
China	34.3	
Mongolia		27.1
<b>PACIFIC</b>		
Cook Island	53	
Niue	31.9	
Samoa	32.4	
Vanatu	38.9	
<b>SOUTH &amp; WEST ASIA</b>		
Bangladesh	38.9	43.4
Bhutan		26.9
India	29.9	35.8*
Iran		29.5
Maldives		54.1*
Nepal	52.7	62.9**
<b>CENTRAL ASIA</b>		
Tajikistan		27.1*
<b>MEKONG REGION</b>		
Lao PDR		45.9*
<b>INSULAR SOUTHEAST ASIA</b>		
Philippines		53.6*

Source: ECCE Regional Report Asia-Pacific, UNESCO 2012

Table 2: Percentage distribution of public expenditure on pre-primary education

REGION	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>EAST ASIA</b>										
Mongolia			14.61		18.97			20.02		
<b>PACIFIC</b>										
Fiji					0.20					
Samoa	2.32									
Vanuatu		0.15							0.53	
<b>SOUTH &amp; WEST ASIA</b>										
Bangladesh	7.73	6.95					2.40			
India						1.29	1.14			
Iran		0.95	0.95	1.01	0.85	1.10	1.73	0.97	1.11	
Nepal				4.34						1.69
<b>CENTRAL ASIA</b>										
Kyrgyzstan			6.70	6.33	6.11	6.25	6.35	6.47		
Tajikistan						4.35				
<b>MEKONG REGION</b>										
Cambodia	2.55	1.15								
Lao PDR			4.21			2.61				
Thailand		10.81							5.44	
<b>INSULAR SOUTHEAST ASIA</b>										
Philippines	0.13	0.13	0.12	0.13	...					
Malaysia	1.20	1.30	1.16	1.00	0.93		1.66			
Indonesia								0.80		

Source: ECCE Regional Report Asia-Pacific, UNESCO 2012

Table 1 and 2 shows the percentage of public expenditure on education allocated to primary and pre-primary education for countries in the Asia Pacific (for which the data were available). Countries tend to spend about 30 – 50% of their education budgets on primary education, and the proportion increased between 1999 and 2005. Notwithstanding the difficulty to calculate total expenditure on early childhood services, countries spend considerably less on years 1-3 of pre-primary education than they do on primary education. With the exception of Mongolia (20%), Kyrgyzstan (6.47%) and Thailand (5.44%) most countries allocated less than 2% of their education budget to pre-primary education. Mongolia has increased its allocation to pre-primary education but Bangladesh, Nepal and Thailand decreased their allocation over time. Bangladesh increased its allocation to primary education from 38.3% in 1999 to 43.4% in 2007 but decreased its allocation to pre-primary education from 7.73% in 2000 to 2.4% in 2006. A similar pattern is evident in Nepal where allocation to primary education increased from 52.7% in 1999 to 62.9% in 2008, but decreased the percentage of public expenditure on pre-primary education from 4.34% in 2003 to 1.69% in 2009. While governments may be focusing on care and health services (through allocations to Ministries of Health and/ or Social Welfare) and/or meeting EFA Goal 2, the proportionate decrease in the allocation of the funds to pre-primary education is disappointing.

**Table 3: Total Public Expenditure on Education and Preschool Education, 2004 (Percent of GNP)**

Country	Total Public Education Expenditure	Public Expenditure on Preschool Education
Mongolia	5.7	1.00
Jamaica	5.3	0.30
Norway	7.6	0.30
Canada	5.4	0.20
Nepal	3.4	0.10
Australia	4.9	0.10
Lao PDR	2.5	0.05
Malaysia	8.5	0.10

Source: Adapted from EFA GMR EFA Early Childhood Development (UNESCO 2006)

**Table 4: Public and Private Expenditure on Preprimary Education (Ages 3 – 6), 2005; Percent of GDP**

Country	Public Expenditure	Private Expenditure	Total
Australia	0.07	0.03	0.1
Denmark	0.65	0.15	0.81
Sweden	0.52	0	0.52
United Kingdom	0.45	0.02	0.47
United States of America	0.38	0.11	0.49

*Source: Adapted from OECD (2006) Starting Strong II; Table 5.4, Page 247*

In table 3 and 4 shows as even beyond Asia and Pacific preschool education remains a low-priority investment.



## Chapter III

### **Key Enabling Factors, Challenges and Possible Barriers**

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#### **Key enabling factors**

Barnard van Leer Foundation explored and identified the following key enabling factors related to effective transition.

- ✓ **Peers interaction and support:** Parents and teachers are well recognized authority figures and are in close contact with children at home and school to support children in challenging situations. But, although the peers of children are generally not given much credit, they have a great influence on children as they cope with new challenges. In deciding and weighing the right things to do as a given situation demands, or in assessing what to expect in new situations, children can and often do get support from other children, especially older siblings or other older children.
- ✓ **Inter-generational support:** Regarding entry into ECCE centers or the formal schooling system, children's parents and grandparents usually turn out to be decision makers. Children are influenced in their attitudes and expectations about preschool or primary school by their families' expectations. Family cultural knowledge and maternal education are transmitted to the children engrossed with the values, expectations and norms regarding participation and performance in the early childhood education or primary schooling system.
- ✓ **Curriculum and pedagogy:** Curricular content, objectives, and pedagogic norms and practices derived from curricular provisions for preschool and primary school determine to a great extent the performance and achievement of children. How curriculum has been developed, how detailed or general its elaboration, and its flexibility to accommodate local circumstances are important considerations in curriculum evaluation. Evaluation should be used to identify needs for continuous improvement and to bridge the gap between practice, outcome, and expectations of parents.
- ✓ **Children's agency:** Children have their own identity and the potential to influence their environment. They should be encouraged to participate in assessing and identifying their needs for change in their learning environment. At the same time, they should be helped to learn their responsibilities within their respective collective and communal identities. Children's agency can be revealed and expressed through evolving capacity, motivation, self-confidence and relationship-building.
- ✓ **Leadership and supervision:** Decision makers and supervisors should provide appropriate leadership for the performance of institutions and for further improvement in transition years. The institutions should be accountable to the community.

In addition, researchers highlighted the following issues related to smooth transitions.

- **Parent Occupation & Status**

Parents' occupational and socio-economic status is a significant key enabler of smooth transitions (Hart & Todd, 2003). Hart and Todd's study shows how professional parents help or hinder children's development through supportive or discouraging behavior. It attempts to quantify the behavior patterns of professional and working class parents and demonstrate their respective impact on children. The research confirms intuitive ideas about how parental status helps children to be self-confident and develop self-esteem, important ingredients of children's readiness for participation in learning and social interaction.

- **Home Environment**

A study in the UK (Sylva et al. 2004) demonstrated that the home learning environment is could have even greater impact on children's intellectual and social development than socio-economic status, parental education, and parental occupation. This finding indicates that parents can help provide a good start for their children and scaffold learning through home environment and activities whether they are poor or rich. But they may need help and support from parenting activities in ECD programs to accomplish this.

- **Quality ECD Program**

A quality ECD program is a key factor in smooth transitions, building synergic connections between protection, good health and nutrition (Arnold et al. 2007). The impact of ECD programs on entering primary school and performance within primary school has been shown through numerous studies both in the region and out, some of which have been noted in previous sections.

- **Parent Education and Skill**

It is expected that parents' knowledge, education and skills as respects child development impact transition. A mothers' training project in Turkey, the Turkish Early Childhood Project (Kagıtcıbası et al 2001), provided training to mothers who were poor and low educated. The training provided knowledge and assistance to mothers on how to cultivate cognitive, social, and personality development in their children. The project had dramatic results: after seven years, 86 percent of the participants' children were still in school, where only 67 percent of the non-participants' children were in school.

- **Financial Resource Availability**

Financial support to poor families could have a positive impact on early childhood development outcomes, with positive effects on cognitive, socio-emotional, fine-motor, and linguistic development. A project on Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) in Cambodia, Nicaragua, Honduras, Jamaica, Turkey and Mexico to poorer households demonstrated that beneficiary families used more health services (Naudean et al. 2011). A doubling of the amount of cash transfer in Mexico showed that young children (36 – 68 months) ended up with better gross motor skills, long and short-term memory, visual integration, and language development (Fernald, Fertler, and Neufeld 2006).

**■ School Environment**

The views of society on school role are changing. Schools are seen not only as a place for cognitive learning, but also an environment for wider personal and social development of learners (Arnold et al. 2007). Children are often worried about formal school setting, like finding their way around large school buildings and grounds. Schools have to be welcoming to children and create an atmosphere that involves and sustains children in positive social interaction. (Dockett & Perry 2004, Perry, Dockett & Horward 2000, Yeo & Clarke 2005, Peters 2000).

**Challenges & possible barriers**

The following points have been identified as challenges and possible barriers on smooth transition.

**✓ Cultural & Philosophical continuity**

Preschool or early childhood care and education programs generally follow a play-based approach, creating a congenial and joyful environment within the activities and overall culture of the center. Children coming from the home environment could adapt themselves rapidly to preschool or ECCE center because of this atmosphere. Yet children stumble in the primary school with its different culture and philosophic approach. Children often perceives school atmosphere and rules as negative or as sources of anxiety, as these caused them trouble when they broke the rules. A Hong Kong study shows that children are often worried about being punished for breaking school rules (Wong 2003). Another study in Australia indicated that children saw learning the rules as adjustment to school (Dockett & Perry 2002), which was not easy for them.

The overly academic focus in primary school posed a shock for many children. Cultural differences impacted the process of transition of children. Educators across countries are concerned about the difference between goals of preschool and primary school as well as the roles of teachers in these two different settings (O'Brien, 1991; Myers 1997, Ledger 2000). Early child education settings are likely to encourage active participation and involvement of children, as well as adults. On the other hand, primary schools are more likely to be stern about compliance with school discipline and rules and follow a teacher-dominated instructional approach characterized by talking to children, rather than listening to children (O'Brien, 1991).

**✓ Curriculum continuity**

Another concern is the shift from learning goals in early childhood education to performance goals in primary education (Carr, 2001; Peters, 2002). An early childhood curriculum is organized to achieve learning by domains (physical, cognitive, social etc.) whereas primary school focuses on subjects (science, math etc.).

Some countries have tried to develop an integrated curriculum for pre-primary and primary school, organized around the developmental cycle of the child. This approach was applied in transition projects in Jamaica and Guyana (UNESCO, 2006). Three interlinked curricula have been developed in Sweden, based on a common set of goals and values for children aged 1 to 18. The possible advantage

from this alignment is its promotion of a synergy of cultures (Neuman, 2005), although there is a risk for “intellectualization” of early childhood care and education.

### ✓ **Equal Participation**

The smooth transition of children from early childhood education to primary education should be influenced by relationship between these two sectors, but unfortunately the relationship is one sided, with the school system taking the dominant role. This presents a policy challenge in balancing the priorities of early development and formal education. (Woodhead & Moss, 2007) Woodhead & Moss suggest that children themselves find this a challenge that the schooling system and policy makers have a responsibility to address.

### ✓ **Pedagogical Continuity**

Ensuring pedagogical continuity through early childhood education to primary school would make it easier for children by protecting and enhancing children’s self-esteem and promoting their relationship with teachers. It is the mutual responsibility of early childhood education and primary education authorities to ensure pedagogical continuity and harmony from early childhood time up to age 8. The “Releasing Confidence and Creativity” program in Pakistan is an attempt to maintain this pedagogic continuity by using a common approach in preparing learning material for early childhood education and grades 1 and 2.

### ✓ **Linguistic Continuity**

Children face an obstacle if class instruction is provided in a language other than the mother tongue. Learning in the mother tongue for 6-8 years old works better than receiving instruction exclusively in an official language (Thomas and Coller 2002).

### ✓ **Professional Continuity**

When professionals in early childhood and primary education settings communicate and collaborate children do better. In this context, professionals can develop compatible program philosophies and broaden the understanding of children’s trajectory from preschool to primary school (Neuman, 2005). A study in Ireland shows that educators are authoritarian in their pedagogic behavior and philosophy (Einarsdóttir 2003). Sixty-nine percent of children (79 out of 101) in a study in Singapore were concerned about getting into trouble with teachers (Yeo & Clarke 2005). Children in a project in South Australia revealed how they were influenced by good relationship with their teachers; positive examples included children being taught in fun ways, being rewarded or praised for their behavior, and being cared for and helped and being given free activities and choices (Potter & Briggs 2003).

### ✓ **Low Investment for Early Childhood Development**

Increasing interest about ECCD has been observed all over the world (Arnold C. 2004). This is crucial to the goal of creating opportunity for children at home and outside, but investment in early childhood programs is less than 1% of the total allocation for the typical education budget (Myers, 2000). The funding situation is more serious in African countries, as the allocation for ECCD programs is less than 0.01% of the education budget (Kabiru & Hide 2003). More than 60% children in the

poorest countries have no access to ECCD programs. (Jaramilo & Mingat 2003). Poverty is a basic obstacle to pursuing an integrated development approach. (UNICEF 2000). Stakeholders' participation needs to be supported by adequate resource and budgets (Dasgupta 1993 World Bank 2000).

### ✓ **Reaching the Marginalized**

Reaching disadvantaged groups is another challenge, as reflected in a UNICEF survey of 48 countries (MICS2). It indicates that the richest are getting twice the support of the poor in health and education. UNESCO Policy Brief Dec 2003 (UNESCO 2003), which depicts the scenario of access to early childhood care and education in the Asia-Pacific region, reveals the influence of income in gaining access to ECCE. It shows that children from families with low income have less access to ECCD programs for children aged 3-5 years.

In Botswana, 10% of low income family can send their children to early childhood care and education program, whereas 35% of high income families can do so. Hart and Todd showed that low family income and low parental education are barriers for ensuring smooth transition of children from home to ECCE or primary school.

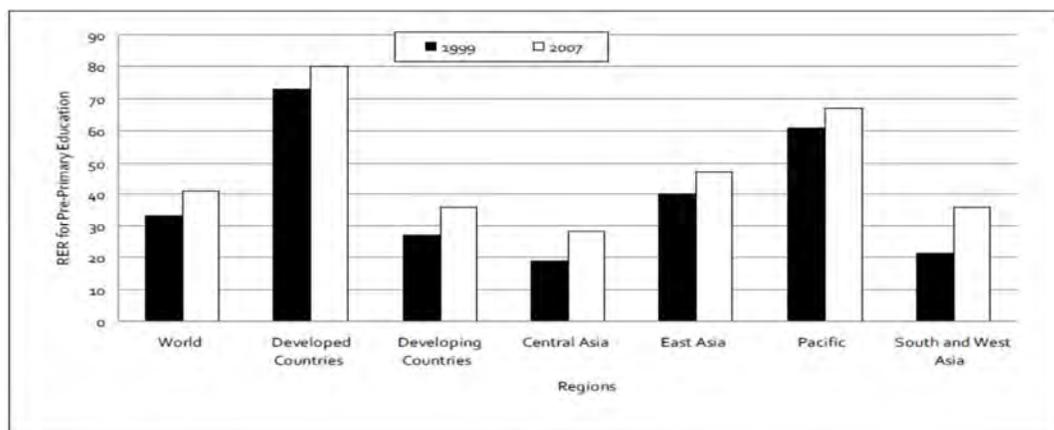
### ✓ **Financial Ability and Parents' Support**

It is unsurprising that a family's financial ability affects children's preparedness for school. Poverty is one of the most serious barriers to young children's development all over the world. Whether we think about families, communities or countries, a lack of resources undermines the ability to provide children the opportunities they need. Even the opportunity to go to school appears meaningless to many poor children when they do not see the potential benefits, due to the many contextual barriers in the community and society.

### ✓ **ECCE Program Coverage**

While the impact of preschool on children's readiness for primary school has been demonstrated, actually extending participation to all children is a significant challenge. Even though coverage is increasing in many countries, expansion of opportunities in developing countries lags far behind attendant needs. The figures shown in the Early Childhood Care and Education Asia-Pacific regional report (Figure 3 below) should be of great concern to educators, policy makers, implementers, and other stakeholders.

Figure 3: Gross Enrolment Ratios in Pre-Primary Education



Source: UNESCO (2009)

### ✓ Policy Framework

As the chart above shows, state support in terms of policy is inadequate or non-existent in many countries. While a few countries have established national frameworks that address the need to implement early childhood interventions, there is mostly a lack of comprehensive ECCE policy frameworks that ensure mandatory attendance in pre-primary programs. This remains the principal barrier to smooth transition of children from home to preschool and primary school.

## Chapter IV

### Conclusion and Recommendations

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The growing interest in the notion of transition and its many uses and implications has generated adverse conceptual discourse and innovative actions. This review has tried to provide an overview of theoretical and practical approaches to applying the concept in diverse contexts, with a focus on the Asia-Pacific region.

Our recommendations for promoting smooth transition through ECCD policies, strategies, and practices in the Asia and Pacific Region are as follows:

- ✓ **Strong Political Will:** Every country in the region has to show strong political will for ensuring smooth transition for each and every child. Without having a strong commitment from political leaders and policy makers, any meaningful change would not be possible.
- ✓ **A National Comprehensive Policy Framework:** Countries in the region should develop a comprehensive national policy framework that articulates policy provisions for comprehensive early childhood development opportunities for each and every child, irrespective of urban/rural or rich/ poor distinctions. While some countries have a policy on ECCD, most in the region have no specific policy that emphasizes transition. Transition should be a specific component of any comprehensive policy framework.
- ✓ **Formation of Transition Planning Teams in Localities**  
There should be policies that mandate the formation of transition planning teams in localities. The teams should involve school personnel, preschool staff, families, agency workers, and community leaders. This collaboration would focus on better informing the public about preschool and early school opportunities for children, enhancing learning experiences for young children, and promoting the development and implementation of transition practices that smooth the shifts between preschool, home, and school.
- ✓ **Advocacy for budget allocation in transitional activities:** Advocacy based on evidence of the impact of transition should be considered when obtaining substantial financial commitments towards the holistic development of young children. The present level of allocation for ECD in the Asia Pacific region is inadequate to implement programs with quality, equity, and coverage.
- ✓ **Promote Local Level Initiatives:** Local community, NGO, and other civil society ECD initiatives should be given appropriate attention and financial aid towards the purpose of enhancing smooth transition and coverage.
- ✓ **Lessons from Noteworthy Practices:** There are examples of noteworthy transition programs and practices in different countries of Asia and Pacific region; these experiences should be studied by policymakers in other countries.
- ✓ **Harmonization of the Curriculum:** Development and harmonization of an integrated curriculum that provides a smooth pathway for children to enter the formal schooling system from early childhood education center or home environment should receive

high priority. An integrated curriculum for preprimary and primary education could create a more homogeneous environment.

- ✓ **Strengthen bonds between families and schools:** Require teacher training for building partnerships with families, especially those from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Help to build a stronger and more equal partnership between families and teachers.
- ✓ **Parental Literacy and Lifelong Learning:** The literacy rate in developing countries of the region is low and their governments struggle to raise it. Literacy and adult education, within the framework of lifelong learning as conceptualized by the series of World Congresses on Adult Learning and Education, (the latest consensus in this respect was expressed by the Belem Framework adopted in 2009 at the Sixth Congress – CONFINTEA VI) have to be a part of the literacy and adult education programs.
- ✓ **Capacity enhancement of primary school teachers:** Building the capacity of primary school teachers, with the aim of enhancing quality and encouraging a child-friendly environment within the classroom should be given a high priority. The understanding of early grade teachers should be wider and deeper with respect to child development in order to address the individual child's needs.

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# Appendix 1

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**List of website and link visited**

[www.arnec.net](http://www.arnec.net)  
[www.bernardvanleer.org](http://www.bernardvanleer.org)  
[www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)  
[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)  
[www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)  
[www.ecdgroup.com](http://www.ecdgroup.com)  
[www.child-encyclopedia.com](http://www.child-encyclopedia.com)

# Appendix 2

## Annotated Outline

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### Title

Transitioning from Home to ECCE Program, from ECCE Program/Home to

Primary School

#### **Acknowledgement**

In this section, acknowledgement will be provided to the name of potential sources, links, related agencies, institutes, respected professionals and ARNEC for their support and contributions in conducting this review study. Also, the author(s) will acknowledge for the help that would receive at national, regional and international level to complete this study successfully for the greater interest of the Asia pacific region and the society as well. Due recognition will be paid to the relevant authority for using their data and information in this review study as secondary sources of literature review.

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#### **Acronyms & Abbreviations**

Pertinent terminology, related jargon and abbreviations will be cited in this part for better understanding and clarification to the reader of this report. Moreover, the names and abbreviation of agencies, organization and institute will be quoted here in the script with necessary explanations.

## Executive Summary

In this portion, a concise figure of all contents areas will be illustrated including a brief description, recommendations and conclusion for describing the major parts of the study. We will illustrate the major views of this study in short form in the executive section purposefully. Moreover, the total features of this study including goal and objectives would be depicted in this section concisely. The reader will get an overview of this study from this executive summary section on each and every significant points of the desk review.

### 1. Introduction/Background

A brief description, background, and existing perspectives of this report will be elucidated in this initial stage of this review. The introduction part will present the theme of the study that will be 'transitioning from Home to ECCE Program, from ECCE Program/Home to Primary School' and it will help to grapes the background, different perspectives, and notion that will cover in different ways. Moreover, the incredible growth period of Early Childhood Development (0-8), importance of ECD, concept of transition, and relationship between transition and early childhood development will take place as relevant subject. On the whole, we will present in this section the answer of the questions which are 'what is the study about' and 'what is the subject-matter of this study' with given required importance.

### 2. Rationale

Why this study will be conducted as the noteworthy initiative of ARNEC that will be clarified in wide-ranging point of views in this area. Significantly, the statement of increasing awareness and political commitment in support of inclusive and holistic development and learning for children in the early childhood years (0-8) will be spell out as purpose of the study. This section also focuses the purpose of the review study from the perspectives of parents, community, teacher, school, country and regional level as well. It will target to meet the future policy and advocacy issue, enhancing knowledge and awareness, guiding the educator and country-wise policies on transitions.

### 3. Scope of Work and Methodology

This section will provide the detail process and approaches of the review work from data collection to finalization of the report. It will cover the data collection process, process of academic and research document review, analysis of the related document, and synthesis and reporting the final report in a systematic approach. The whole process will be conducted in a team approach. The major process followed in this desk review are-

- Collection of data from published literature, reports, research documents, website and other potential sources;
- Compilation, review and analysis of the collected documents;
- Synthesis and organization of documents in a systematic ways;
- Finalize the review report after adjustment of necessary consultation and feedback from various levels.

### 4. Early Childhood Development and Transition

We will provide the definition of transition in this section both in academic and in functional views. We will provide several definition of Transition which are important, widespread and provided by renowned educator/researcher. We would try to clutch an evolvement of definition of transition in course of time and practice, in different settings. The notion of transition will be grasped from the period of its evolvement idea to current period elaborately in course of time. We will try to grasp the all concepts, or approaches of conceptualization of 'transition'. Simultaneously, we will explore the reason behind the innovation of new/different concept. There will be endeavor to reveal out how this differences have been germinated to address the demanding situation. Having gradual importance, increase of knowledge and chronological practices, the concept of transition have been developed in communities, how this concept has been proliferated will be depicted. The significance of early childhood care will be explored in different settings and viewpoints. In addition, the imperativeness of care in consistently and continually will be explained with due rationale and clarity in relation to the environment. purposively. We will also discuss the importance of early childhood development, school readiness and factors regarding school with giving importantly. Moreover, it will depicted the parents' support for making 'children ready for school' and 'school ready for children' and describe on the related issues of school readiness. The collaborative effort from parents and teachers can provide important support to children in transition.

We will describe this joint collaboration and provide such examples and success stories in different countries. Child to child is another approach to make children ready for school; this approach will be discussed also in relation to smooth transition.

The major sub-head of this area are-

- The concept of Early Childhood Care and Development
- Academic & functional definition, modification of transition in course of time, evolving the concept;
- Significance of transition;
- School readiness;
  - Parents support and children readiness
  - Ready school

#### **5. Effective noteworthy policies and practices on transition**

In this part, the effective policies and practices regarding transition will be explored through this desk review. The noteworthy policies in the countries of Asia-Pacific region that have positive impact on fostering successful programs and practices for smooth transition will be depicted. How the policies are supporting the programs and stakeholders pertinent to successful and smooth transition will be explored and elucidated. Cost implication is part of effective and sustainable policy for programs. Budget allocation to particular sector or program indicates how government is concern about that. So, we will explore the ratio/percentage of budget or GDP, allocated for ECD programs, in particular to the initiatives pertinent to transition. In addition, there will be effort to exploration of community initiatives to make children ready for school or outside world. We will try to present case studies as good examples or success stories.

- Positive impact on children/programs/school/families
- Successful and smooth transition

#### **6. Key enabling factors, challenges and possible barriers**

Faced challenges, key enabling factors for ensuring smooth transition and possible barriers will be discussed in this section. The factors that enable the program provision and good practices existing in countries for transitioning the children from home to ECCE center and to primary school will be explored through this desk work. In addition, the challenges and barriers faced in different countries while implementing the programs will be identified and described comprehensively in this section.

#### **7. Implications of findings and recommendations**

In this part, the recommendations will be provided as derived through this desk review and analysis, made for implication of effective policies and program provisions for smooth transition of the children. The action oriented recommendations will be pointed out for forthcoming use in national, regional and wider level suggestion. Some action words might be highlighted in this areas which is-

- a) Smooth transition for flourished children
- b) Invest for supporting children at home and outside
- c) Ready home, ready community, ready school and ready children
- d) Key recommendations for policy action

**Part II**

1. Sources of Information.....
2. Annexes.....

**1. Sources of Information**

Information will be collected from reference books, research articles, various reports, secondary data from the different national and international organizations, policy papers, program documents, case study, and website data will be presented in table, box and chart.

Source will be cited in systematic way following American Psychological Association (APA) system.

**An example of citation:**

Bronfenbrenner, Urie (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development Experiments by Nature and Design*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

**2. Annexes**

- Annex 1 Terms of Reference of the assignment
- Annex 2 List of documents reviewed
- Annex 3 Annotated outline
- Annex 4 Name of consulted ECD Stakeholders
- Annex 5 Lists of Tables, Boxes, Charts and Graphs

## Appendix 3

### List of Tables and Graphs

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