Master Plan for the Expansion of the Department of Education's National Preschool Program[1]

Executive Summary

This master plan for the expansion of the early childhood education program of the Department of Education is anchored on updated, scientific and cutting-edge theoretical and conceptual frameworks that have guided best practices and innovative programs in early childhood education in both industrialised countries and the so-called Majority World to which the Philippines as a developing country belongs.

The development of this plan, which began in the first quarter of 2010, involved consultations with the primary stakeholders in policy development and program implementation at national, regional, division level within the Department of Education. During the time that this plan was being developed and finalized, the first workshop within the training program for teachers involved in the "Model Preschool component" was conducted in April and May 2010. It allowed the Bureau of Elementary Education and its partners in the development of this master plan to solicit feedback, validate the situation in the field, and reaffirm basic assumptions about the prospects for the successful implementation of the recommendations made here.

The conceptual and theoretical frameworks establish a rationale for the programming strategies and recommended interventions that appear to transcend traditional or conventional parameters i.e. first, beyond the school per se (teacher, school heads) with the recommended emphasis on strategies that engage parents, support them and mobilize communities and other institutions as partners; and second, beyond the range of the age group (five year olds) and grade level (preschool or kindergarten) to purposefully consider a strategic focus on the so-called "transition years" from age six to eight or Grades One to Three within this expansion plan for preschool education. Curriculum reform and quality improvements in basic education cannot be done piecemeal nor out of its real and comprehensive context because as Jerome Bruner and other renowned learning specialists have taught us, the nature and direction of curriculum development and the learning process itself is spiralling rather than simply linear.

"Learning begins at birth." was one of the most significant and powerful declarations made at the start of the Decade of Education for All in 1990. Educators, social scientists, health and allied medical professionals, economists, policy-makers, political leaders reached consensus on the importance of the early childhood years and the urgency of investing in early childhood care and development programs. Exactly twenty years later, it is only fitting that we "think outside the box" and explore viable and effective strategies for fulfilling the goals of EFA particularly in regard to early childhood education. Evidently the fact that we are not yet able to reach and serve majority of the five year old population gives sufficient reason to explore beyond what has been believed, assumed, tried and tested in order

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to achieve the goals of quality education for all. The time frame of this master plan corresponds to the six years which also comprise the term of a new President who is committed to achieving the goals of EFA reaffirmed by the government's commitment to achieving the Millenium Development Goals . The bottomline is this: basic education cannot be reformed nor transformed without a systematic, viable and innovative approach to expanding access to and achieving the goals of early childhood education for ALL Filipino children. This master plan proposes a multi-stage process within the public school system in partnership with local government units, the private sector and with civil society towards achieving this important goal.

The goals of this master plan are: 1) Improve the existing preschool and primary school program in the public schools to ensure continuity and more importantly, developmental-, cultural - and contextual appropriateness and ensure the stability of these classes in terms of staffing and supervision; 2) Expand the number of kindergarten classes in public schools with priority attention given to schools that serve communities with high poverty incidence, high drop-out rates and poor school achievement rates in the early grades ; 3) Improve and systematically expand the implementation of viable and sustainable programs that support young children in their transition from home and community to school and facilitate their adjustment to school life in the first grades of elementary school ***which include parenting education and curriculum reform within the first three primary grades;*** 4) Establish a viable and sustainable support system for the continuing professional development of teachers and school heads and pre-service education for early childhood educators with a special focus on integrated early childhood care and development; 5) Establish an effective and highly functional management information system and database for ECCD that provides accurate, comprehensive information about the situation of five and six year olds in the public school system (including child development indicators) and that provides both quantitative and qualitative information about the early childhood education programs throughout the country. 7) Revisit and redefine all national policies, Department orders and memos and school level interpretations of such policies in order to update and reconcile with effective and developmentally and culturally appropriate practices.

This national implementation plan for expanding access to early childhood education builds on two complementary programming strategies: 1) Model-building within the existing schools and the public education system to demonstrate best practices and heighten chances to replicate success ; 2) Develop, implement and strengthen **transition and bridging programs** for young children including those that currently exist and that have been previously pilot-tested and broadly implemented such as the Summer Preschool Program, the 8-week Early Childhood Curriculum in Grade One. It is urgently recommended that these transition programs include a systematic effort to improve the primary school curriculum (Grades One to Three) to ensure that appropriate scope, coverage, materials and teaching approaches and methods are truly effective for children from ages 6 to 8.

The first programming strategy is designed to expand the number of preschool classes within the public schools but with attention to program quality. (Goals #1 and # 2) It also provides an important context for the professional development of teachers as these "model" preschool classes should eventually function as demonstration classes for in-service training and for the all-important capacity-building of

teachers and school heads on appropriate and best practices in early childhood education. (Goal #4). In order to precisely determine which are the priority areas and to monitor progress towards the achievement of the goals of expanded access to quality ECCD programs, there is a need to set-up an updated, accurate, comprehensive data base on service delivery and child development indicators within the public schools system that is easily accessible from school level to district and division offices to regional offices and the Dep Ed central office. (Goal #5) .

The second program strategy is anchored on the conceptual frameworks that clearly identify the importance of working with parents and families who greatly influence the quality of a young child's early learning experiences from birth onwards. (Goal #3) The recommendation is to take as many concrete steps as possible to work with parents and families and take the rhetoric of partnership to more functional and practical actions that will ultimately be in the best interests of young children.

The plan concludes with recommendations for immediate actions, policy changes for the short-term and for long-term system wide implementation. These recommendations are consistent with the Dep Ed's decision to work towards a lengthened basic education cycle.

Based on most recent available Dep Ed figures for public school enrolment over a five year period from SY 2004-05 up to SY 2009-10 (a five year period) there was a 118% increase in enrolment of five year olds. The most significant leap - at 31.3% - was made from SY 2008-09 to SY 2009-10. The enrolment figure for SY 2009-10 (976,959) represents 40.3% of the total projected five year old population (2,424,000) for 2009 based on NCSO projections. Assuming that 70% (based on national poverty indicators) of the total five year old population cannot afford the costs of private preschool education, this plan will show how universal coverage for priority groups i.e. those who cannot afford the costs of private preschool education can be attainable within a three-four year period with certain pre-requisites and conditions met. But it must be stressed that the quality of the preschool program must ***simultaneously be improved*** to ensure developmental-socio-cultural appropriateness and that this initial year in school will be a positive constructive experience for five year olds. Otherwise, the hastened expansion of the preschool program for five year olds and the lack of attention to improving Grades 1 to 3 will result in more harm than good for children in the initial stages of their lives as schoolchildren.

I. Conceptual Frameworks:

There are two complementary conceptual frameworks for the Philippines' Early Childhood Care and Development Program. The same conceptual frameworks and an additional complementary framework are used for the expansion and improvement of the Department of Education's Preschool Program . The conceptual frameworks establish the relationship between the young child, the family, the community, and society. These conceptual frameworks also provide for a strong justification for a strategic emphasis on the transition years of earl
y childhood from age 6 to 8 which are well within the parameters of the Dep Ed's responsibility. This relationship takes into consideration both the nature and processes of early childhood care and development as well as the social, cultural, economic and political factors that affect the lives of children and families. The first is Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model for Child Development that provides a wholistic description of the young child's learning environment. It was adapted by the ASEAN member countries in 2000 at the First ASEAN ECCD Regional Seminar hosted by the Philippine government. Prior to that it was broadly promoted by the Consultative Group on ECCD throughout the decade of Education for All (EFA). Following the Dakar end-of-decade assessment it was applied to global and significant national policies and programs for ECCD across the continents.

The second recommended framework is the World Health Organization's (WHO) Total Environment Assessment Model of Early Childhood Development (TEAM-ECD)[2] Framework which is also anchored in part on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Framework. From the document "Early Childhood Development : A Powerful Equalizer" the most important and strategic insight relevant to this national implementation plan is that "the nurturant qualities of the environments where children grow up, live and learn matter the most for their development, yet parents cannot provide strong nurturant environments without help from local, regional, national and international agencies.... Recognizing the strong impact of ECD on adult life, it is imperative that governments recognize that disparities in the nurturant environments required for healthy child development will impact differentially on the outcome of different nations and societies. In some societies, inequities in ECD translate into vastly different life chances for children; in others, however, disparities in ECD reach a critical point, where they become a threat to peace and sustainable development. ... The environmental conditions to which children are exposed in the earliest yeas literally 'sculpt' the brain. The environments that are responsible for fostering nurturant conditions for children range from the intimate realm of the family to the broadest socio-economic context shaped by governments, international agencies, and civil society. ***These environments and their characteristics are the determinants of ECD; in turn ECD is a determinant of health, well-being, and learning skills across the balance of the lifecourse.***"

The third additional framework for the Dep Ed's Preschool Program is Beryl Levinger's Active Learning Capacity Model [3] which helps to sharpen the focus and strengthen the rationale for investing in both the

[2] The full text of the framework is in "ECD: The Powerful Equalizer" by Dr. Arjumand Siddiqi, Dr. Lori G. Irwin and Dr. Clyde Hertzman for the Commission on the Social Determinants of Health with contributions from the Knowledge Network for Early Childhood Development,

[3]Levinger's Active Learning Capacity Model is one of the frameworks applied to problem analysis and programming for school health and nutrition see http://www.unesco.org/education/wef/en-leadup/findings_school%20health%206.shtm

existing preschool programs and additional programming strategies that are designed to support parents as their children's primary caregivers and to facilitate the child's transition from home to community and school from ages five to six and to support the so-called "transition years" i.e. from 6 to 8 years old that correspond to the first three primary grades.

The three models and a discussion on their relevance to the master plan for ECCD of the Department of Education follows.

A. An adaptation of the Ecological Model for Early Childhood Care and Development by Urie Bronfenbrenner[4]

While the field of human development (of which child development is a part) has been dominated by the field of psychology with a focus on the evolution of cognitive, emotional and social processes within individual over a lifetime, since the 1970's the trend has been towards a broader approach to the study of human development. This broader and now more prominent, approach views development as a constant interaction between a growing human being and the environment in which he or she lives. In turn many factors affect this interaction, for better or for worse depending upon the timing, the setting in which they occur. Urie Bronfenbrenner has been a primary exponent of this view of human development. He has drawn heavily from social psychology, sociology and anthropology as well as psychology in analyzing the environmental part of the accommodation process.

Bronfenbrenner's framework describes four environmental systems namely: micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, and macro-system which can be visualized as "nesting structures" or concentric circles. These systems comprise an ecological system within which child growth and development occurs. See Fig 1. below.

[4]Source: Final Report of the ASEAN ECCD Regional Seminar (Phase Two ASEAN ECCD Project) 2000

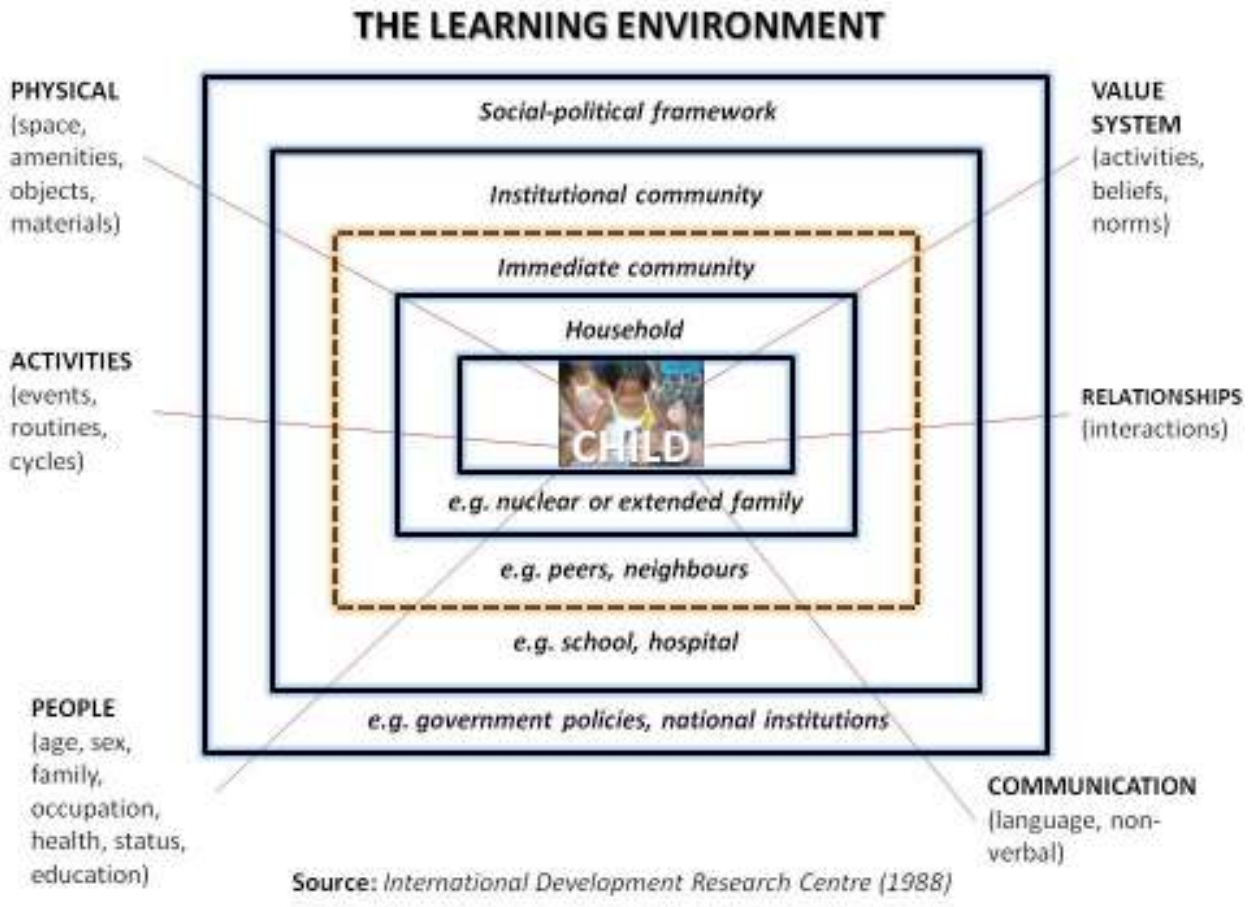


Fig. 1. The Child's Learning Environment: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model

The four systems are described as follows:

1. **The micro-system**. This is the immediate setting in which a child acts and interacts with others. For the child from 0 to 5, the home is the main setting. A child may also spend time in another childcare setting outside the home e.g. a child minding center or a family day care setting. The caregiver may seek other services for the infant e.g. health care. At this innermost level of the ecological scheme is the "dyad" or two- person system of the caregiver and child. Their interaction is influenced by the presence (or absence) and the participation (or non-participation) of other family members, friends and neighbors who form an informal social support system.

2. **The meso- system**. As the child grows and develops, the child becomes part of more than one immediate setting (e.g. the home plus the day care center) and moves within both settings. The interrelationships between these settings constitute a second level of analysis which Bronfenbrenner called a "meso-system". At this level, a child's development is influenced by the number of different settings and the extent to which they are similar or different, whether these settings are linked and are supportive of one another or if there are conflicts between them. For

example, it makes a difference if the barangay-based service providers such as the health workers and day care workers work closely with parents and support them as caregivers. It makes a difference if parents are helped to become aware of the importance of the early childhood years and how they can best support their children's growth, development and learning. It also makes a difference when school heads and teachers make an effort to reach out to families and provide information about the benefits of children's participation in the preschool program and it makes a greater difference when these classes for five year olds and the first three primary grades are indeed positive and engaging learning environments.

The two levels are especially significant because they recognize a level beyond family but below national structures. It is especially appropriate for the Philippines because of the existence of informal social support networks which in turn support the child's caregivers, i.e. the extended family system or an approximation of it. However, applying this concept of the community in programming for ECCD requires more elaboration on the development of a more cohesive and sustained community support system. Mobilizing community members to support one another is not always a natural and easy process particularly in the poor urban communities with a generally mobile population or unstable relationships within the family or between families. It is also challenging in situations of armed conflict and displacement due to natural and man-made disasters.

3. **The exo-system**. Broader societal organizations and practices affect both of the immediate settings described above and affect their interaction. Governing organizations e.g. local government units and agencies or institutions in charge of service delivery especially schools, social services, mass media and other legally established structures form part of this third- order system labelled as the exo-system by Bronfenbrenner. For example, laws and policies affecting women as workers e.g. maternity leave, availability of workplace- related child care, access to affordable maternal and child health services affect the young child. The influence of mass media on the young child as well as on parents has been noted and can either serve as a positive force or create conflict or dissonance between the family's values and those promoted by mass media. National legislation such as R.A. 8980 and the definition of ECCD programs are critical to promoting broader access and sustained participation in various parent-child focused ECCD programs.

4. **The macro- system.** This is at a still higher level of generality in the framework and it provides continuity to the form and content of the three previous levels. The macro-system consists of the broader social and cultural context, the value systems that also determine and influence attitudes towards children and family life, their development and the quality of their lives. It defines relationships between and within the three settings and provides a "blueprint" for the broader social institutions. Bronfenbrenner asserts that the blueprint can be modified and thereby produce corresponding changes in behavior and development. For example, the introduction of the concept of children's rights" combined with more knowledge about how children grow and develop can contribute to decreasing child abuse and the use of physical forms of punishment to instill discipline among children. Thus, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international agreements or plans of action intended to promote the rights of children and women are both a result of changes in conceptions of children and family life and can also be used to effect more changes.

The start of primary schooling has been perceived as one of the most important transitions in a child's life and a major challenge of early childhood. Initial success at school, both socially and intellectually, leads to a virtuous cycle of achievement and can be a critical factor in determining children's adjustment to the demands of the school environment and future progress. A range of authors (Fabian and Dunlop 2002a; Dunlop and Fabian 2003) propose that the way in which transitions are experienced not only makes a difference to children in the early months of a new situation, but may also have much longer-term impact, because the extent to which they feel successful in the first transition is likely to influence subsequent experiences. No matter how different the systems of institutional education, school entry has turned out to be a significant developmental step for children and their families.

Children's transition from home to school and within school through the primary grades is best understood within an ecological framework such as Bronfenbrenner's. He stated that "an ecological transition occurs whenever a person's position in the ecological environment is altered as the result of a change in role, setting or both". This is important because he says "public policy has the power to affect the well-being and development of human beings by determining the conditions of their lives" (1979, p.xiii). Two of his hypotheses are significant for the transition to school: Hypothesis 27 states that "the developmental potential of a setting in a mesosystem is enhanced if the person's initial transition into that setting is not made alone" (1979, p.211); and Hypothesis 42 states that "upon entering a new setting, the person's development is enhanced to the extent that valid information, advice, and experience relevant to one setting are made available, on a continuing basis, to the other" (1979, p.217). This links with the work of Basil Bernstein (1990), about knowing the rules, because in order to succeed in the education system children need to be told the rules of the system; for example about the curriculum, the pedagogy and ways of evaluating. Bronfenbrenner's systems theory is useful in helping us to understand that optimal development occurs through strong mesosystem links. However, there are several ways to theorise early childhood transitions, including: seeing transition as a 'rite of passage' (van Gennep 1960) where a new uniform, lunch box and other paraphernalia marks the change to a new setting; as a 'border-crossing' (Campbell Clark 2000) where physically going between two domains or cultures marks a border between two worlds; and as 'rites of institution' (Bourdieu, 1991) where it is necessary to transpose the 'symbolic capital' gained at home, to school. Other theoretical perspectives also offer insight into ideas about transition. These include 'life course theory', which places children and families in the context of the social structures, cultures and populations which affect them over time and place (Elder, 2001); and 'critical life events' (Filipp 1995), which considers that the appraisal of the critical event itself is important and that it is the coping process that makes it a transition.

Bronfenbrenner's framework allows us to simultaneously consider several levels at which program interventions could be made, directly with the child and/ or the caregiver, at the level of the family (e.g. parent-child programs, conditional cash transfers for education), at the community level (water and sanitation projects, agri-coop), at the level of broader social institutions (maximizing media for parent education and for children's education, amending or introducing legislation and policies e.g. related to labor and social services) and at the level of cultural values.

B. The Total Environment Assessment Model of Early Childhood Development (TEAM-ECD) of the World Health Organization (WHO)

While genetic predispositions and biophysical characteristics partially explain how environment and experience shape ECCD, the best evidence leads us to consider the child as a "social actor" who affects and shapes his or her environment just as he or she is affected and shaped by his or her environment. This is consistent with 'developmental – transactional – interactive ' models of human development and learning which emphasize that the principal driving force of child development and learning is relationships. And since strong nurturant relationships can make for healthy and optimum ECCD, socioeconomic circumstances, despite their importance, do not set the limits or parameters on a child's future in such a way as to predetermine his or her future as necessarily dismal and doomed.

The family environment is the primary source of experience for a child, both because family members and other primary caregivers provide the largest share of human contact with children and because families serve as "gatekeepers" vis a vis the broader environment. The most salient features of the family environment are its social and economic resources. Social resources include parenting skills and education, cultural practices, health status and intra-familial relations. Economic resources include material possessions, dwelling conditions, occupational status. According to the WHO TEAM-ECD framework "the gradient effect of family resources on ECD is the most powerful explanation for differences in children's well-being across societies. Young children need to spend their time in warm responsive environments that protect them from inappropriate disapproval and punishment. They need opportunities to explore their world, to play, and to learn how to speak and listen to others. Families want to provide these opportunities for their children, but they need support from community and the government at all levels."

"Early experiences and the environments in which children develop in their earliest years can have lasting impact on later success in school and life. Barriers to children's educational achievement start early, and continue to grow without intervention. Differences in the size of children's vocabulary first appear at 18 months of age, based on whether they were born into a family with high education and income or low education and income. By age 3, children with college-educated parents or primary caregivers had vocabularies 2 to 3 times larger than those whose parents had not completed high school. By the time these children reach school, they are already behind their peers unless they are engaged in a language-rich environment early in life."[5]

[5] . Source: Hart, B., & Risley, T. (1995). Meaningful differences in the everyday experiences of young American children. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

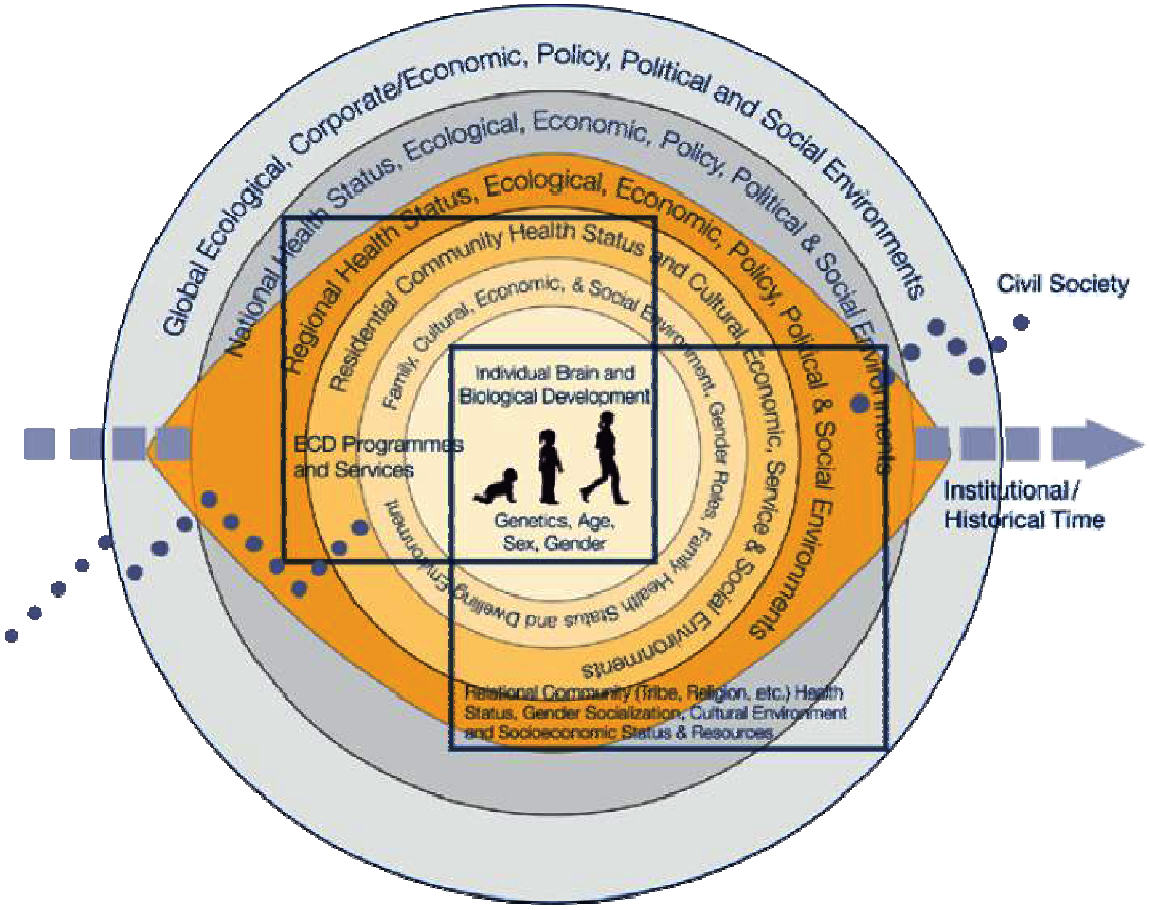


Fig. 2. WHO TEAM-ECD Model

The TEAM-ECD Model and the following model, Beryl Levinger's Active Learning Capacity Model both point to the importance of schools (teachers and school heads) taking the initiative to reach out to parents and to providing them with support as their children's primary caregivers and lifelong teachers. These partnerships are best established upon the child's entry into school whether it is through the preschool program or when the child enrols in Grade One. Schools must be proactive partners of parents because the child's success in school depends largely on the quality of parental involvement in the child's education at home and ideally also in the life of the school as a part of the school community through effective communication with the classroom teacher on matters affecting the child's class as well as through involvement in the PTA.

C. Beryl Levinger's Active Learning Capacity Model

In the early 1990's in support of the mission to achieve Education for All, Beryl

Levinger of EDC wrote for USAID and UNDP about the need to concentrate on improving a child's "active learning capacity" (ALC). Consistent with theories in education and the social sciences, she defined ALC as "*a child's propensity and ability to interact with and take optimal advantage of the full complement of resources offered by any formal or informal learning environment"* (Levinger, 1994). The importance of this definition lies in its belief that to maximize learning, a child must be psychologically, emotionally and physically well, able to concentrate on and participate actively in the learning process, able to pay attention and concentrate on tasks, and missing only a few days of school for illness or other reasons. The ALC framework focuses on improving the quality of the child as one of the most important factors in achieving the goals of Education for All.

A comprehensive examination of how health and nutrition considerations influence school achievement needs to reflect some implicit or explicit theory regarding the factors that determine classroom learning. Such a theory must encompass both child and school characteristics as well as an understanding of the processes that shape the teacher-learner interaction. A more dynamic model is needed to capture relationships among variables. How, for example, do the effects of nutrition status interact with a child's access to school? How do a child's early social environment and nutrition status reciprocally influence each other? In short, causal relationships among independent variables must be analyzed in depth, given their potentially high significance.

A requirement for a model seeking to depict the relationships among health, nutrition, and successful completion of basic education is that the model must reflect some of the higher order cognitive demands that active learning places on students. This is because, with the advent of basic education reforms, more active engagement in the learning process by primary school children is either underway or imminent. Will children have the cognitive and physiological capabilities to fulfill these new demands and expectations? Asked another way, the question is whether a new conceptualization of school achievement determinants is needed in order to capture some of the changes occurring in developing countries with respect to teaching-learning behaviors and expectations.

The notion of active learning capacity (ALC) was introduced as critical in understanding how child quality acts as a determinant of learning outcomes. If the quality of instruction (including the availability of teaching-learning resources and teacher quality) and quality of the school plant are held constant, then the following relationship is posited: As a child's ALC increases, the child's school achievement will also rise (assuming that the school does not penalize or discriminate against children with high ALC).

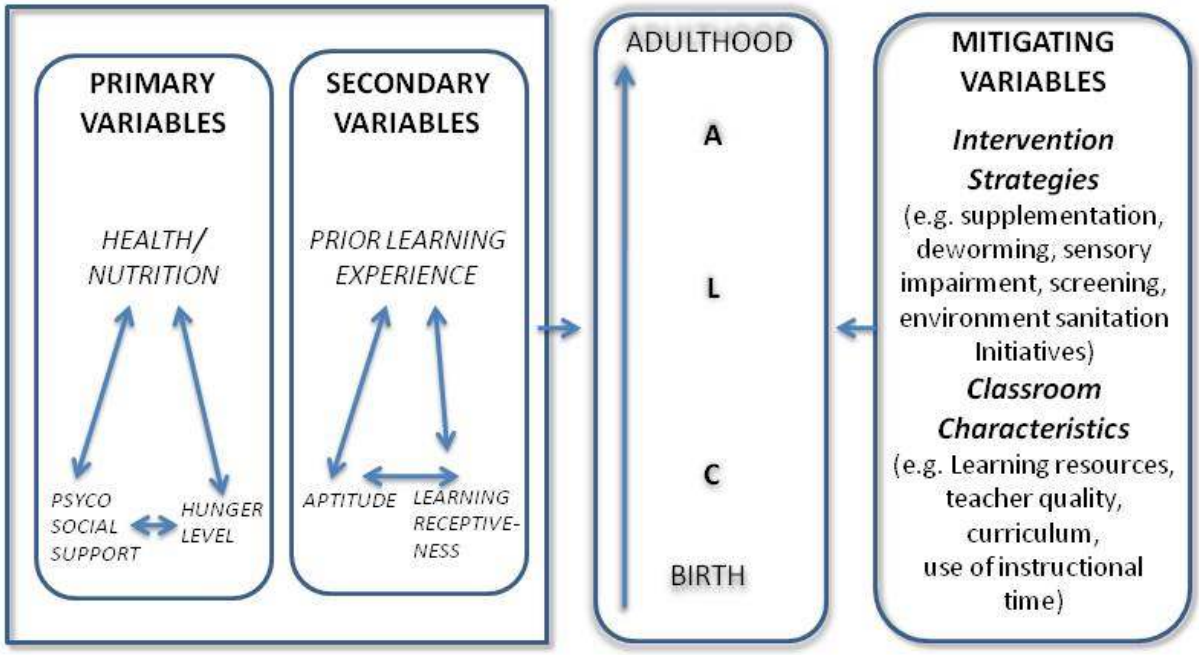
Three sets of variables influence ALC. Primary variables are those that significantly affect ALC both directly and, through their effects on the secondary variable set, indirectly. The variables within the primary set interact with each other, at most, to a *moderate* degree. *Primary variables are also influenced by the secondary variable set, although this relationship is not as intense as its reciprocal.* Among variables in the secondary set, the level of interdependence is *high.*

Both the primary and secondary set of variables focus on child quality, that is, those *characteristics the learner brings to the classroom* that play a significant role in determining school outcomes. *Mitigating variables,* the third set, have potential to alter, for better or worse, the impact of primary and secondary variables. The focus of mitigating variables are the processes and interactions that occur *in school* to determine ALC and, through ALC, school achievement. In other words, mitigating variables capture those moments when child quality and school quality encounter each other. The nature of this encounter - its content and processes - will largely determine whether a child completes basic education or be among those who are almost assuredly confined to the margins of society.

Beryl Levinger
Active Learning Capacity Model

Characteristics Children Bring to the Classroom

Characteristics of the Classroom Setting



Birth to 6 years

School years

Reference:
International Development Research Centre 1988

Fig. 3. Levinger's Active Learning Capacity Model

Primary ALC Variables

Three primary variables determine ALC: health/nutrition status; hunger level; and, psychosocial support. These factors are, to be sure, often associated with such family background indicators as family size, family social class, family income, birth order, and gender. Indeed, family background appears to be influential in determining school achievement in developing countries when the formal schooling is highly institutionalized, when class structures are clearly defined and for subjects that are linked to the parents' own knowledge (Lockheed, et aI., 1989). However, the significance of these background (or environmental) variables in terms of ALC is that they are assumed to influence, or serve as a proxy for, the primary variable set (and, indeed, for several of the secondary variables as well). Thus, their effects are captured implicitly albeit not explicitly. Each of the primary variables will now be defined and reviewed in turn.

Health/nutrition status refers to both *current* and *prior* bouts of PEM, micronutrient deficiency disorders, sensory impairment (particularly vision and hearing), helminthic infection, and other physically or mentally handicapping conditions that impede a child's propensity and ability to interact with and take optimal advantage of learning resources and opportunities. There are numerous findings concerning the ways in which health/nutrition status influences ALC . (see Annex A. For Salient relationships between schooling and children's health and nutrition)

The second primary variable that determines ALC according to the model under discussion is the child's temporary hunger level. As noted earlier, the malnourished child does not necessarily experience hunger, and the hungry child is not necessarily malnourished. Hence, a distinction is needed between health/nutrition status and short term hunger for the purpose of determining how each contributes to ALC.

Hunger contributes to a child's distractibility, inattentiveness to environmental stimuli, and, adaptive behaviors of passivity and inactivity. These effects are more apparent when the child who is hungry is also malnourished. The response to hunger directly impinges upon the development of a child's ALC. Exploratory activity is likely to be shunned rather than sought after by the hungry child.

The final primary variable in the ALC model is psychosocial support. Encompassed in this concept are such traits as the degree to which parents, caretakers, community leaders, and other significant adults encourage child independence and inquisitiveness; promote play; and, hold expectations that favor learning as well as formal schooling. Psychosocial support also relates to the degree to which community institutions, values and norms promote the healthy growth and development of children. The extent to which parents and caretakers differentiate their behaviors and values on the basis of a child's gender will also play a role in establishing how much psychosocial support a child receives.

One dimension of psychosocial support is the quality of caretaker-child interaction – the level of stimulation and nurturance a child receives from primary caretakers, generally mothers or older siblings. Malnourished mothers and caretakers often provide limited stimulation to their children as an adaptive response to their low energy levels. Similarly, malnourished and hungry children often exhibit, depending on their condition, lassitude or irritability. These conditions often fail to elicit responses from caregivers and teachers that facilitate healthy growth and ALC development.

There is also a cultural dimension to psychosocial support. Research in Nepal, for example, demonstrated that modernity of parental attitudes and parental demand for their children's education were both significant determinants of children's schooling (Jamison and Lockheed, as cited in Lockheed et al., 1989). In Thailand investigators found that parents' aspirations for their children's education was the most important predictor of educational attainment for sons (Cochrane and Jamison as cited in Lockheed et al. 1989). It has always been said and thus assumed that Filipino families value education but many years of work with children in especially difficult circumstances – e.g. street children, working children, children in armed conflict – indicate that the value of education to a Filipino family does not necessarily translate into supporting a child through to completion of even the basic education cycle. In addition to poverty and lack of resources, there are other deterrents to children's schooling. At the same time, what is also clear is that for many families, poverty is not necessarily a disabling factor and there continue to be poor children and families who manage to translate the value of education and formal schooling into concrete terms.

Just as the health/nutrition status variable interacts with hunger level so that the impact of temporary hunger is exacerbated in a malnourished child, the same type of interaction occurs with psychosocial support. Specifically, parental expectations for malnourished children appear to be lower; this explains the tendency among parents of malnourished children to delay school enrolment and to accommodate (and perhaps reinforce) such adaptive behaviors as low levels of exploratory behavior. Despite this relationship between psychosocial support and a child's nutrition/health status, psychosocial support is considered to be a primary variable in the ALC model because, by itself, it is likely to account for a significant portion of the variance among children with regard to ALC. It should be noted that while psychosocial support is related to family class, it is a different, broader construct.

Futhermore, studies have proved that "Cognitive, emotional, and social capacities are inextricably intertwined in the brain, and, in like fashion, learning, behavior, and both physical and mental health are highly interrelated throughout the life course. One domain cannot be targeted without affecting the others. The brain's multiple functions operate in a richly coordinated fashion: Emotional well-being and social competence provide a strong foundation for emerging cognitive abilities, and together they are the bricks and mortar that comprise the foundation of human development. The emotional and physical health, social skills, and cognitive-linguistic capacities that emerge in the early years are all important prerequisites for success in school and later in the workplace and community."[6]

Secondary ALC Variables

Three variables are considered secondary in determining ALC: prior learning experience; a child's learning receptiveness; and, a child's aptitudes for learning. Thefirst variable focuses on interactions the child has with others. The remaining variables are concerned with qualitative characteristics of the child. Each of these variables will be defined and examined in turn to establish patterns of relationship *between* the primary and secondary variable sets as well as *within* the secondary set. Prior learning experience refers to the child's exposure to formal and informal situations conducive to the acquisition

[6] Core Concepts on the Science of Early Childhood Development" Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University http://developingchild.harvard.edu/library/multimedia/interactive_features/coreconcepts/

of new knowledge and skills. This experience may take place within the home, in a primary school, day care center or in a less formal preschool setting. Participation in preschool programs is known to improve significantly a child's subsequent school performance (see, for example, Landers; Lockheed and Verspoor; Haddad; McKay et a1.).

A child's health and nutrition status unquestionably influences prior learning experience. As noted earlier, age of school enrolment, school attendance, and academic progress (all aspects of prior learning experience) are sensitive to insults to a child's biochemical makeup. It is because of these relationships that prior learning experience is categorized as a second tier determinant of ALC.

Learning receptiveness refers to a child's motivation, arousal, attention and vigilance. Health/nutrition status and hunger level primarily exert influence on this variable in ways that are either reversible or temporary. Prior learning experience and psychosocial support (particularly the quality of the caretaker-child relationship) also combine to further influence learning receptiveness.

Aptitude is frequently associated with IQ. More generally, it relates to the time a child needs to learn a particular task. Learning receptiveness, particularly those dimensions it that relate to the child's ability to attend to stimuli and to concentrate, affects aptitude. Malnutrition (especially PEM and iodine deficiency) significantly depresses a child's aptitude although the effects may be reversible in some instances if the child's environment is highly facilitative. Iron deficiency anemia also has a direct bearing on aptitude although the effects of this disorder can also be corrected. Studies have shown that students vary in the effort they expend on schoolwork. When children perceive themselves as performing efficaciously (i.e., "aptitudinally"), the effort they put forth increases (Lockheed et a1., 1989). Thus, aptitude influences ALC by increasing the intrinsic reward (and, hence, the level of positive reinforcement) a child is likely to reap from taking optimal advantage of the full complement of learning resources available.

Mitigating ALC Variables

Mitigating variables are concerned with processes and interactions that occur in the classroom. Included among these variables are quality of instruction, teacher quality, availability of learning materials, and the provision of direct services to school children that reduce hunger, malnutrition, infection and sensory impairment. They are described as "mitigating" because they have the potential to partially offset some of the ill effects to ALC caused by the primary and secondary variables. Classroom instructional strategies that are developmentally facilitative and compensate for accumulated nutrition- and health-related learning and attention deficits constitute an important mitigating strategy. Little or no research has been done to date on whether malnourished, ill, hungry or impaired students elicit a less favorable response from their teachers than their healthy peers, However, such a negative interaction is highly plausible in light of evidence that suggests such a cycle between young children and their caregivers. Studies bear out that pupil performance is higher when teachers hold high expectations for student achievement. To the degree that malnutrition, infection and sensory impairment deflate teacher expectations of students, the full potential of the school to mitigate the effects of ill health and poor nutrition cannot be achieved. Deworming, micronutrient supplementation (particularly with vitamin A and iodine), simple vision and auditory screening, and the provision of school breakfast or snacks, figure among those measures that are currently receiving increasing attention in light of the ambitious basic education goals agreed upon by international donors and developing country governments alike at the Jomtien meeting. Measures to improve environmental sanitation (e.g.

provision of water and latrines) and nutrient intake through the introduction of school gardens are also viewed, under this definition, as mitigating variables as is the inclusion of health and nutrition-related content in the curriculum.

Figure 3. shows the relationship among the three sets of variables and ALC The figure clearly depicts that interactions occur both *within* and *between* variable sets. The figure also reflects the theoretical assumption that gains in a child's ALC directly influence school achievement outcomes. Note that the primary and secondary variables describe characteristics that the learner brings to the classroom (assuming the child is enrolled in school) and thus focus on child quality. In contrast, the mitigating variables refer primarily to qualitative variables *exogenous* to the child that have a bearing on ALC. Also note that the variables in the primary set while somewhat interdependent, are less so than the variables included in the secondary set. Thus, within the primary variable set interrelationships are shown with thin arrows; thick arrows are used within the secondary set. Similarly, the flow of influence from the primary to secondary set of variables is captured by a thick arrow, whereas the reciprocal movement is depicted by a thin arrow.

The ALC model responds to the need for a dynamic portrayal of the complex relationships among the determinants of educational outcomes. It represents a departure from previous analyses in that it captures the high degree of influence health, nutrition, sensory impairment, and temporary hunger exert on the quality of the child and, hence, on the child's learning outcomes. The model depicts relationships both within and between distinct sets of variables so that negative synergies that operate to impede school achievement can be readily understood.

Important implications of the Three Models: Attention to Critical Transitions in a Child's Life: From Home & Community to School[7]

Taken together, one of the most significant implications of these three complementary conceptual frameworks is that children are going through a challenging and life-transforming transition during the last stages of the early childhood years i.e. from ages five to eight. What these three models highlight is the importance of ***actively facilitating*** young children's transition from home to school in the early childhood years particularly from age five to eight which correspond to the preschool to primary grades in the basic education program of the Philippines. "Faciltate" comes from the latin root word "facil" which means "easy". To facilitate this transition for children the family, the school and the community must then ensure that supportive mechanisms are activated and that the initial years of a child's school life - from preschool throughout the first three primary grades - are indeed characterized by positive, constructive and meaningful interactions within the learning environment earlier described in the discussion of the three models.

Currently, educational transition is defined as the process of change of environment and set of relationships that children make from one setting or phase of education to another over time (Fabian and Dunlop 2002b). Transitions are characterised by phases of concentrated learning and accelerated development in a social context (Welzer 1993). Certainly changes of relationship, teaching style,

[7] Some text in this section is from "***Outcomes of good practice in transition processes for children entering primary school"*** by Hilary Fabian and Aline-Wendy Dunlop. Published by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, the Hague, the Netherlands.

environment, space, time, contexts for learning, and learning itself, combine during transition, making intense demands on children and families (Fabian and Dunlop 2005). Change can bring the excitement of new beginnings, the anticipation of meeting new people and making new friends, and the opportunity to learn new things. Indeed, Plowden identified the fact that "children, like adults, enjoy and are stimulated by novelty and change. "

The first day of school, the transfer to 'big school', are landmarks in the process of growing up. Even when children are apprehensive, they look forward to change...'"(DES 1967, para 427). However, this element of apprehension about the unknown can cause confusion and anxiety, leaving an impression that may still affect behaviour many years later if it is not addressed. School priming activities (Corsaro and Molinari 2000) offer day-to-day nursery and home experiences that provide children with opportunities to learn about the next phase of education. The nature of these transition activities might allow children the chance to engage in activities in peer groups, with older and differently experienced children already in elementary education, or indeed with the various adults who populate their lives. Page (2000), on the other hand, suggests that allowing children to experience discontinuity is seen as part of the continuum of life and learning. If going through a transition is a learning skill in its own right, it is important that children build resilience to change but are also given support to help them to both mark and negotiate change.

Ensuring that each transition is successful is significant for children's emotional well-being and to their continuing cognitive achievements. Thus, transition may also be viewed as a support for early integration of groups from different backgrounds, thereby becoming a necessary element of inclusion. The majority of children will have a positive transition brought about by the support of their family, early childhood setting and school, but research (Curtis 1986; Cleave and Brown 1991; Dowling 1995; Kienig 1999) has raised concerns that starting school might cause anxiety that affects some children's emotional well-being and their long-term social adjustment, thereby hindering future learning (Cleave and Brown 1991; Dowling 1998; Kienig 1999).

If children's emotional well-being is significant for continuity of learning, it is also likely that better provision for transitions will result in fewer difficulties in later schooling. Parents' values, beliefs, and socio-economic status, as well as their own experience of education will affect how families live (Goodnow 2001) and the kinds of transitions which their children will experience (Fthenakis 1998), but transitions that include parents in the initial stages are likely to offer parental support into inducting them into the way in which their child will learn at school. Given the emphasis that is currently being placed by a number of governments upon parental programmes and continuity in the early years, successful transitions are clearly seen as being cost-effective, contributing to the retention rate at primary school and likely to reduce the need for later social and educational remediation. Therefore, the involvement of families in the transition to school is likely to be advantageous not only to the children's welfare but also to parenting skills and the wider economy. The imposition of school into the lives of young children marks an artificial boundary, which demands that development has reached particular key markers. Not being ready to make the transition to school at a particular time can have detrimental effects on future learning and self-esteem.

With an increase across the world of early childhood education for all, there is not only increasing emphasis on the transition that occurs as children move into school, but also recognition that children are vulnerable at this point both emotionally and pedagogically. In schools, the educational philosophy, teaching style and structure of education often varies from the preschool experience. Recognising that

children can find it difficult to cope with such changes, many schools have made efforts to smooth the entry to school by preparing both children and their families for the differences they will meet. Any lack of emotional wellbeing at transition can cause worry and stress, leading to aggression, fatigue or withdrawal, all of which have the potential to impair learning capacity (Featherstone 2004)

Changes in environment, resources, curriculum, institutional culture, pedagogical approaches and styles of classroom interaction, all carry a potential to have an impact on how children respond during the first major educational transition. Starting school means having to learn the social rules and values of the organisation as well as coming to terms with changes in identity, roles and relationships (Griebel and Niesel 2000). Furthermore, on entry to school children become a 'school pupil', with different expectations placed on them such as learning in different ways, concentrating for longer periods and behaving in a more responsible manner by playing co-operatively.

Literature on the transition process strongly emphasises the point that early childhood programmes are most effective if they are part of a broader coherent framework, linking early child development initiatives to the child's home and to primary schooling (Lombardi 1992). Curriculum frameworks that bridge pre-school and primary education strengthen pedagogical continuity, thereby helping to maintain enthusiasm for learning and school attendance. Indeed, some countries are moving toward integrated initial training across the age span, so that teachers of all phases of the education system share a common theoretical base and understanding. Training about transitions, particularly for those teaching the first class in school, might help to highlight and resolve the issues, helping to make a positive start to school for all children. For example, understanding that concrete materials are not always available in early primary classes where the critical skills of language, literacy, numeracy and problem solving require considerable use of concrete materials in order to process and ensure deeper understanding and comprehension. A highly divided day with very short periods and too many subjects that are presented in the abstract will work against many young learners (particularly those who are not confident, have not had pre-school experience, come to school with a different home language, and so on).

I. Goals of the Master Plan for ECCE Expansion by the Department of Education:

The following are the goals of this national implementation plan for the expansion of ECCE within the Department of Education:

1. Improve the existing preschool and primary school program in the public schools to ensure continuity and more importantly, developmental-, cultural - and contextual appropriateness and ensure the stability of these classes in terms of staffing and supervision

2. Expand the number of kindergarten classes available in public schools with priority attention given to schools that serve communities with high poverty incidence, high drop-out rates and poor school achievement rates in the early grades

3. Improve and systematically expand the implementation of viable and sustainable programs that support young children in their transition from home and community to school and facilitate their adjustment to school life in the first grades of elementary school such as: 1) the Summer Preschool

Program; 2) revised Grade One curriculum and program that is truly responsive to six year olds in Grade One (including mother –tongue teaching for all curriculum areas); 3) an improved and expanded multi-age/multigrade program for Grade One in areas where there are over-aged Grade One students; 4) the Preschool + Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program in both public schools and Madrasah schools

4. Establish a viable and sustainable support system for the continuing professional development of teachers and school heads and pre-service education for early childhood educators with a special focus on early childhood care and development

5. Establish an information management system for ECCD that provides accurate, comprehensive information about the situation of five and six year olds in the public school system (including child development screening using the nationally-normed Philippine ECD Checklist) and that provides both quantitative and qualitative information about the early childhood education programs throughout the country.

6. Revisit and redefine all national policies, Department orders and memos and school level interpretations of such policies in order to update and reconcile with effective and developmentally and culturally appropriate practices.

The Numbers: How many are served and how many more have to be reached?

Pre school Enrolment (Public School)

School Year	Enrolment	% Growth
2004- 2005	448,741	
2005- 2006	524,075	16.8%
2006- 2007	570,812	8.92%[8]
2007- 2008	661,205	15.8%
2008- 2009	744,066	12.5%
2009- 2010	976,959[9]	31.3%

Data of February 7, 2010, Department of Education

Total population of five year olds in 2009: 2,424,000[10] . The above comprises 40.3% of the total five year old population for 2009.

[8] Figures highlighted were recomputed and revised by the author from the original provided by Dep Ed at 8.19%, 13.7%, 11.14%, 23.84%

[9] This figure includes 10,424 five year olds enrolled in Day Care Centers

[10] Council for the Welfare of Children based on NCSO projections

Private school preschool enrolment for SY2009-10 is reported at 435,574. However, it is not clear whether this figure really represents only five year olds. Assuming it is, then private school coverage accounts for 17.96% or 18% of total coverage of five year olds.

Combined public school and private school enrolment account for **58.30%** of the total five year old population (2,424,000 as of 2009.) This means that more than 40% are to be accounted for and reached. That would include five year olds in day care centers. Since there are no updated age disaggregated figures for day care enrolment to clearly establish five year old enrolment, we will make the assumption that the public school system is expected to reach another **40%** of the total five year old population if we are to achieve universal coverage for five year olds. This means that 80% of the total five year old population must then be served by the public school . The remaining 20% are expected to be served by the private sector. There is also an assumption that there will be a slight increase in the number of families who will be able to afford private preschool education.

This means that in order to achieve universal coverage (through combined public and private preschool enrolment) for all five year olds by 2015-16, the Dep Ed will have **to double the current infrastructure and teaching staff in two[11]-three years.** If the Dep Ed maintains the previous schoolyear's growth rate at 31.3% public school coverage of 80% of five year olds can be achieved by SY 2014-15. See table below:

School year	Enrolment: 5 year olds in public schools	Additional students at growth rate of 31.3%	% of total 5 year old population*
2010-11	976,959	305, 788	39.2%
2012-13	1,282,747	401,449	50%
2013-14	1,684,246	527,169	63%
2014-15	2,211,416	692,173	81%
2015-16	2,903,589	908,823	104%

***child population computed with projected increase of 2.8% per year**

It may be apparent that the next logical step is to project how much and how long it will take to : 1) recruit and hire double the number of preschool teachers (23,831 additional teachers) 2) build and

[11] If countdown includes this Schoolyear 2010-11. Baseline enrolment figure is Dep Ed's reported figure for 2009-10.

furnish preschool classrooms in the public schools (at least 18,163 preschool classrooms to be used by 36, 927 additional classes in two shifts) . However, there is a context for this master plan for expanding the public preschool program. That context consists of: 1) the entire public school system and the current situation in regard to classroom and teacher shortage for the elementary and secondary school program; 2) the public school system and the current status of existing preschool classes ; 3) the national ECCD program and other ECCD services available in the same *barangays* and municipalities where there are five year olds who are among the 40% who are currently not served by the public school, the public day care centers and the private preschools; 4) the socio-cultural and economic considerations that either make it possible or that prevent families from making the decision to enrol their children in any of the ECCD programs including the public preschool class.

It is thus necessary to revisit or highlight some significant facts and insights in regard to the aforementioned contextual considerations in expanding access to preschool education.

1) The public school system : the fact is that there remains a large and growing gap to be filled system wide as far as classrooms, teachers, textbooks and other materials for the entire basic education program. The expansion of preschool **while urgent and should be considered a priority** still has to share the financial, material and human resources with the elementary and secondary school program. Thus, at best what is viable would be a gradual expansion in enrolment as projected above that is premised on maintaining a growth rate previously demonstrated once i.e. from SY 2008-09 to SY 2009-2010. This will allow for a gradual build-up of resources that is realistic and manageable.

School year	**5 year olds in public schools + students at growth rate of 31.3%**	**Number of classes at 25 students/per class**	**Additional Teachers required for additional students****	**Number of classes at 30 students/per class**	**Additional Teachers required for additional students****	**Number of classrooms needed (two classes sharing a room, a.m.& p.m.) 25 / 30 students*****
2011-12	976,959* + 305, 788	51,309 (28,282 classes need teachers)	14,141	42,758 (19,731 classes need teachers)	9,866	14,141/9,866
2012-13	1,282,747 + 401,449	67,367	8,029	56,139	6,690	8,029/6,690
2013-14	1,684,247 + 527,169	88,456	10,545	73,713	8,787	10,545/8,787
2014-15	2,211,416 + 692,173	116,143	13,843	96,786	11,536	13,843/11,536

2015-16	2,903,589 + 908,823	152,496	18,177	127,080	15,147	18,177/15,147

*figure includes 10,424 five year olds in Day Care centers

**from baseline of 23,027 teachers as of 2009-2010; but new teachers to be hired exclusively PS w/ full load of 2 PS classes/day

*** maximum number & not recommended especially for new teachers

II. Programming Strategies

Applying the principle of ***focused targeting*** towards identifying and reaching out to the high-risk, disadvantaged families through the public schools and their partners in their respective communities, the national implementation plan for expanding access to early childhood education builds on two complementary programming strategies:

1) Model-building within the existing schools and the public education system to demonstrate best practices and heighten chances to replicate success

   The ultimate goal is to establish at least one kindergarten class in every public school in the country over a four – five year period prioritizing areas with large numbers of children aged five and six who are currently ***not served*** by any form of ECCD program[12], ***where the sustainability of maintaining a kindergarten class is highly likely and is within the reach of families to be served (in terms of geographic access and costs of participation to be borne by the family)***

   To this end, in order to ensure continuing improvement in the ***quality*** of early childhood education services provided through existing and projected kindergarten classes, Year I of the implementation plan will include setting up demonstration preschool classes. At least one "model" preschool class will be established in every region by selecting a school in each division that can reach out to children from disadvantaged communities who are currently not served by any ECCD program. These model preschool classes are designed to demonstrate ***best practices*** in early childhood education i.e. developmentally, culturally and contextually-appropriate[13] as well as effective program management and processes of supervision by school heads and division level preschool supervisors. The special challenge in early childhood education is that there are still more "traditional" highly structured and therefore developmentally –inappropriate. It must be emphasized that inappropriate approaches to early childhood education especially when combined with ineffective teaching and inappropriate curriculum in the primary grades will be even more damaging than not having access to preschool education. Thus the importance of clarifying and demonstrating what is "good practice" before expanding any further.

   In addition to these identified "model classes" for Year I, it is also suggested to the Dep Ed that documentation and dissemination of information on existing classes within the public

[12] This refers to various center-based ECCD programs that exist: LGU-run public day care centers, private or NGO-run community-based ECCD centers or private preschools

[13] including mother-tongue education as the foundation for multi-lingual education that includes Filipino and English from Grade One onwards.

school system that already implement the appropriate integrated curriculum and teaching practices in regard to young children be undertaken as part of an action research component.

2) Develop, implement and strengthen **transition and bridging programs** for young children including those that currently exist and that have been previously pilot-tested and then broadly implemented such as the Summer Preschool Program and the 8-week Early Childhood Curriculum in Grade One which should be made an integral part of the Grade One curriculum and expanded to at least one full quarter.

   It is also urgently recommended that a **thorough review of the curriculum and enhancement of the educational program (including teaching methods, materials , schedules) applied in Grades One to Three classes be undertaken to ensure that these are developmentally, culturally and contextually appropriate.** This comprehensive strategy will ensure that there will be continuity in the process of undertaking significant reforms to improve early childhood and primary education which comprise the foundations of lifelong learning.

   As an initial step and innovative move for this "Transition/Bridging Program" component within this proposed master plan for expanding quality ECCD in the public school system the "Home-School-Community Partnership Model for Early Childhood" shall be developed. At least one more school in each division where there is a "model preschool" will also be a demonstration site for the Home-School-Community Partnership Model. As the name suggests, this model has two important features : 1) effective ways of working in partnership with parents as the primary caregivers and lifelong teachers of their own children and 2) establishing and strengthening partnerships with the community that will serve the best interests of the schoolchildren particularly those in the preschool to primary school classes in the public school. "Community" here is defined in two ways: first is the immediate neighbourhood i.e. sitio, barangay, municipality where the school is situation and second is the broader institutional community at the macro-level that includes other government agencies and civil society i.e. non-government organizations that are also focused on supporting children, families and the goals of quality education for all.

   In this programming strategy, the school's preschool PTA members and other parents of schoolchildren from Grades One to Three as well as those from older grades who have younger children (under five's) shall be invited to participate in at least one quarterly Parent Education workshop within the schoolyear that initially focus on child growth and development and early literacy development. The primary objective is to raise awareness about the importance of parent-child interaction within the home to support optimum child growth, development and learning. Parents and teachers shall learn together about the values of storytelling, reading aloud with and to children from the early years of childhood through the primary grades. The goal is to work with the PTA and other parents in the school ultimately so they can be a parent-support group and learning network focused on supporting early childhood care and development through informal but regular neighbourhood activities such as storytelling sessions

and playgroups facilitated by parent and community youth volunteers. The collaboration with the PTA s as entry point for reaching out to parents with young children - especially the four and five year olds who are not yet enrolled in any ECCD program.

This programming strategy can also be applied in sites where other government agencies , LGUs and some nongovernment organizations are already working or plan to work. For example, the National ECCD Council is leading a nationwide effort to promote and expand Home-Based ECCD in collaboration with selected LGUs. There are currently three demonstration sites : Malabon, Valenzuela and four municipalities in Aurora Province. As the ECCD Council expands this country-wide there are definite areas for convergence and active collaboration. Two effective approaches to convergence with the National ECCD Council's Home-based ECCD are : 1) applying a team approach to conducting parent education and support for the PTA members with school heads promoting their participation in these parent education groups organized by the Municipal ECCD teams ; 2) systematically recruiting the 5 year olds for the Summer Preschool program or the kindergarten class after their participation in the home-based playgroups.

There are also some private sector initiatives focused on promoting reading among schoolchildren and on providing parenting support and education for families. These include AGAPP (Aklat, Gabay, Aruga tungo sa Pag-Angat at Pag-Asa) and the "Silid-Pangarap" (library + preschool classroom) to be set-up initially in 200 schools throughout the country, "I love 2 read" campaign in one district in Quezon City, as well as projects of the Museo Pambata in Manila, the Philippine Board on Books for Young Children (PBBY), "Sa Aklat Sisikat" Foundation who are all advocates for literacy development.

The first programming strategy is designed to expand the number of preschool classes within the public schools but with attention to program quality. (Goals #1 and # 2) It also provides an important context for the professional development of teachers as these "model" preschool classes should eventually function as demonstration classes for in-service training and for the all-important capacity-building of teachers and school heads on appropriate and best practices in early childhood education. (Goal #4). In order to precisely determine which are the priority areas and to monitor progress towards the achievement of the goals of expanded access to quality ECCD programs, there is a need to set-up an updated, accurate, comprehensive data base on service delivery and child development indicators within the public schools system that is easily accessible from school level to district and division offices to regional offices and the Dep Ed central office. (Goal #5)

The second program strategy builds on the conceptual frameworks that clearly identify the importance of working with parents and families who greatly influence the quality of a young child's early learning experiences from birth onwards. (Goal #3) The recommendation is to take as many concrete steps as possible to work with parents and families and take the rhetoric of partnership to more functional and practical actions that will ultimately be in the best interests of young children.

And in order to ensure that all policies and programming guidelines are effectively implemented they must be clearly articulated so as to avoid confusion especially at the level of program implementation, a thorough review of all policies and directives to determine consistency with developmentally-appropriate principles and take into consideration socio-cultural and contextual appropriateness is necessary at this point. (Goal #6)

III. Immediate Tasks and Priority Actions

The following tasks are recommended for immediate implementation in regard to the aforementioned goals. They are presented in relation to specific goals that are also interactive or related.

A. Goal #2 (increase number of preschool classes) and Goal #5 (establish functional MIS):

In order to systematically plan for expansion of classes i.e. determine potential school enrolees for preschool classes, project staffing and other resources, there are more detailed information requirements. Most of the information is available from schools and the families currently served by the schools. Some are at household level so the barangay and municipality must be involved since they already undertake household surveys for purposes of health and social service delivery.

Complete and accurate information at all levels that is useful to those who record and submit the information i.e. to improve the quality of their own work is the goal. Effective planning and program management must be anchored on updated and accurate information about the direct implementers and direct participants/beneficiaries. This translates to classroom and school level in regard to preschool to Grades One to Three .

1) Undertake an internal audit of available information on ECCD within the public school system i.e. exactly what information is available about early childhood education programs at the level of schools (age and gender disaggregated class lists and enrolment data, teacher status and profiles, staffing patterns, facilities used for ECCD and the status of these facilities. The audit should also include actual status regarding fulfilment of current reporting requirements system wide.
Based on Dep Ed data at this time there are 36,927[14] preschool classes in 17,336 public schools. However, only the following information is (in principle) easily retrieved from schools through Division Offices: total number of classes , total number of students (only gender disaggregated) and average daily attendance; names of teachers handling preschool classes and their designation and assigned grade level. [15] This is insufficient information to collect and

[14] Source: Dep Ed BEE-CDD Data as of February 27, 2010 includes the following types of preschool classes: Permanent Preschool (SRA Divisions), Preschool Service Contracting Program, Dep ED Subsidized classes (previously PTCAs, LGU organized), Headstart Program for the Gifted, Early Intervention for Children with Disabiltiies.

[15] Every principal or school head of each public school is required to submit DECS Form 3 (Revised August 1952) "Principal's Report of Enrollment and Attendance". This information is what is included in DECS Form 3.

maintain if the goal is to monitor both quantitative and qualitative indicators of progress of implementing ECCD programs within the public school system.

2) Pre-test and pilot test the collection of basic and complete ECCD related information from school (i.e. teacher and principal) to district and division level using updated forms available in both hard copies and electronic forms transmitted vertically and horizontally within the public school system using affordable and now more widely accessible wireless and mobile technology in addition to the traditional ways of physically submitting forms to the district offices for transmittal to division and regional offices. There are IT consultants who have developed information systems like these for health services as well as for the NCSO who can collaborate with ECCD specialists to assist the Dep Ed with designing the forms and the system including the ways that teachers and school heads can be taught to use the system and more importantly the information that is recorded and transmitted within the system.

3) Use the information gathered for systematic planning and mapping of expansion in terms of staffing patterns and capacity-building, facilities construction or allocation, financing for the next five years. If the goal is to achieve universal coverage for five year olds by SY 2015-16, it is first necessary to validate the available data and collect accurate data for SY 2010-11 to be able to map out a systematic expansion and ensure that the realities of actual child population in specific geographic areas are considered. Expansion cannot be based on a template since population density varies tremendously countrywide with highly congested pockets of urban poverty vis a vis isolated rural communities in mountainous areas or coastal and island villages. In addition to filling in the void for half of the country's public schools by constructing new classrooms or transforming available classrooms into a preschool classroom, there are larger elementary schools with growing populations that require more than one more additional classroom.

B. Goal #1 (improve quality, establish & demonstrate best practices) and Goal #4 (invest in capacity-building of teachers and school leaders to improve quality)

Inputs to quality : Work in progress

The competencies for five year olds, the 40-week preschool curriculum and the Summer Preschool curriculum have been recently revised and improved by the BEE-CDD to comply with updated child development principles, learning principles and developmentally and culturally-appropriate practices. The ALIVE [16]Preschool Curriculum for Madrasah Schools and Public Schools is now being completed. Learning materials will be developed within this schoolyear.

A standard ECD Package of basic learning materials compatible with the revised Summer and 40-week ECCD curriculum was prepared, procured and distributed to the Model Preschool teachers during the first wave of training conducted in April and May 2010. (see Annex A.) These are all essential constructive steps towards significant improvements in the preschool/kindergarten curriculum. However, there are still some important tasks that can be done immediately as well as for the medium term to expand dissemination and use of the revised curriculum.

[16] Arabic Language & Islamic Values Education (ALIVE)

Recommendations :

1. "Diagnosis of needs" is the very first step in the process of curriculum development. This is done especially at classroom level so that teachers truly know and understand their students and can respond appropriately to their needs at the outset and throughout the school year.

Fortunately, the Philippine government[17] has wisely invested in what is now a nationally-normed developmental screening tool: the Philippine ECD Checklist – quick screening tool for five and six year olds that has a well-designed protocol for administration and scoring. Unfortunately it has not yet been adapted by the Dep Ed nor widely promoted by the DSWD for the day care centers. In the past years, the Dep Ed has focused on the developing, revising and using the School Readiness Assessment for Grade 1 (SREA.) The National ECCD Council has recently decided to actively promote the Philippine ECD Checklist for the various ECCD programs. It would be in the interest of truly establishing national indicators for children up to age six and maximizing a truly reliable tool for developmental screening if the Dep Ed would consider the Philippine ECD Checklist for national application for all five and six year olds. It would also be useful to assess even the over-aged children in Grade One classes (7 and 8 years old) to establish the extent of developmental delays among schoolchildren.

Since 2000, the Philippine ECD Checklist has been used and actively promoted in the field by non-government organizations like Community of Learners Foundation (COLF) in partnership with public school teachers, LGU-based ECCD service providers e.g. day care worker, barangay health workers and barangay nutrition scholars. It is an effective, reliable and user-friendly tool which provides significant information about a child's developmental status from 0 to 6. It is valuable for detecting developmental delays and have been established - developmental delays and possible disabilities,

It is recommended that the SREA be refined, scoring procedures improved further and its purpose revised to be an assessment tool for purposes of mid-term evaluation and further curriculum planning. The process of reconciling the SREA with the revised competency standards from preschool to Grade 1 & 2 must be completed. The SREA can also be expanded to include ages 6 and 7 (Grades One and Two) preferably **after** the revision of the Grades One to Three competency standards and curriculum. The point must also be made that if the national policy is to expand preschool/kindergarten to universal coverage by the public school system, LGU day care centers and private schools then it renders the original purpose of the SREA for determining school readiness at Grade 1 moot and academic. The government is committed to providing basic education starting at age 5 and 6 so there is no rationale for differentiating between "ready and not ready" for school. Furthermore, it has been agreed that the 8-week ECCD curriculum in Grade One should not be an optional part of the Grade One curriculum

[17] Work on the development of the Philippine ECD Checklist began in 1995 under the auspices of an East Asia ECCD Working Group composed of ECCD specialists from the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and UNICEF-EAPRO. This same working group was also involved in coordinating the ASEAN ECCD Project and its outputs. When the WB-ADB Philippine ECD Project was implemented the draft ECD Checklist developed by the Philippine experts was recommended to the Office of Population Studies in Cebu which was responsible for the longitudinal study that was part of the ECD Project. The project covered thirteen provinces and about 2.2 million households in Region 6 (Western Visayas), Region 7 (Central Visayas), and Region 12 (Central Mindanao). It was in 1999-2001 that the national norms for the Philippine ECD Checklist Project were generated including the children and parents involved in the Kinder Plus project in Nueva Ecija province.

but instead be an integral part of the Grade One curriculum. Whether or not a child has had prior early childhood education experience, every child stands to benefit from a positive, success-guaranteed experience during the first weeks of school . The revision of the Grade One curriculum to fully and clearly integrate those lesson plans for the first 8 weeks is one of the recommended priority actions to provide the supportive transition mechanisms that ALL children stand to benefit from. Support for this can be drawn from the most updated and progressive learning theories such as "scaffolding" and Vygotsky's zone of proximal development.

2. In 2010-11 up to 2012-13 organize a multi-stage national Training Program for all Preschool Coordinators in all school divisions and counterpart Regional Office ECCD Coordinators to systematically re-design the in-service training program in collaboration with ECCD specialists and practitioners who have worked with various public schools. Participants may also include selected school heads that are from priority divisions i.e. where there is a large void to fill in terms of expanding the number of classes. The focus of this national training program is to present an improved capacity-building program and prepare the trainers to work even more effectively with teachers and other potential partners. The content and methodology should include: adult development and principles of teaching adults as learners, processes of supervision as instructional leadership and organizing support systems for professional development, child development principles, psychology of learning, conceptual frameworks for integrated ECCD, curriculum development with a focus on integrated curriculum, developmental assessment screening tools and expanded assessment and evaluation tools for curriculum planning and student evaluation purposes.

3. Linked to this, the establishment of Regional ECCD Resource Centers and Division level ECCD Resource Centers that includes access to on-line support for teachers is recommended. This does not require additional infrastructure. What it simply requires is allocation of space within the existing offices with a meeting table, bulletin board, dedicated PC with internet access, book shelf and storage cabinet for reference materials on ECCD and prototype teacher-made learning materials i.e. games for language, mathematics, science and supplies for preparing learning materials.

4. The requirements of quality ECCD programs include access to information especially a wealth of ideas for activities (and variations), games, songs, poetry, learning materials that are appropriate and interesting for young children. Ideally a website or virtual Teacher's Resource Center can be set-up by the Dep ED BEE-CDD and SDD as part of their function for providing support to teachers. Copies of the summer and the 40 week curriculum, the technical manual for the Philippine ECD Checklist, the Preschool Handbook should be accessible through this website. A dynamic and useful feature would be a section that provides descriptions, procedures for activities and games, photos of teacher made materials and compilations of songs, poetry in Filipino, English and the major languages/dialects can be added to this virtual resource center. Links to other websites for ECCD should also be featured. A mechanism for asking questions and receiving replies or a chat room/forum can also be included. Over the long term this is a low-cost, affordable and sustainable information resource that can also be readily accessible to teachers and supervisors. It promotes both independent study as well as interaction with peers and school leaders around continuing education on early childhood education. BEE staff can be trained to serve as webmasters and partnerships with the private sector on this can be facilitated.

5. Establish a viable and sustainable support system for continuing professional development focused on ECCD for teachers and schools heads. Human resource development is one of the most important investments to be made for a truly effective and sustainable national implementation plan for ECCD within the public school system. The proposed approach requires a paradigm shift within the Dep Ed in regard to teacher training and staff development for school heads and supervisors. The current approach to capacity-building is mainly anchored on an internal trainers' training system that cascades like an upside-down funnel from national level (Bureau of Elementary Education) via the Division (Preschool Coordinators) to the school level (teacher). The recommended shift would be in terms of 1) ensuring that the most intensive, high-quality inputs would be at the school level and that there would be strategic investments at the district level to create a support system among teachers and supervisors across schools within a district. 2) ensuring that the most updated, cutting-edge knowledge base on ECCD that is applicable to the social and cultural realities of the public school system is utilized for the design (content, approaches and materials) for teacher and school leaders' capacity-building. The approach to training teachers for the Model Preschool Program initiated this SY2010-11 by the BEE-CDD as part of this expansion plan, has started to move in this direction. The National training program for the teachers and Division Preschool Coordinators was jointly conducted by the staff of the BEE-CDD and the Community of Learners Foundation with support from UNICEF-Phil. to augment DepEd resources. However, a more comprehensive multi-stage training program has yet to be designed .

Dep Ed has worked with external consultants for ECCD for curriculum development since the 1980's through the various stages of expansion up to this stage. From 2008-09, the Dep Ed has also entered into institutional arrangements with selected academic institutions for more formal teacher education on ECCE with academic credits. It would be timely to review the content and also evaluate the initial impact of the teacher's participation in these two summers of ECCE courses in the partner academic institutions. There is also a need to audit the current status and teaching assignments of those who were provided scholarships for these early childhood education courses to determine how many of them remain in the preschool classroom and how many have been assigned.

Consultative meeting/s with all the current partners of the Dep Ed to review content and approaches and to provide feedback from teachers and school heads in regard to impact on their classroom and school practices would be timely at this point. After these consultative meetings the Dep Ed can finalized an updated comprehensive capacity-building program focused on ECCD to include the teachers and school heads responsible for five to eight year olds. It would be more cost-effective to work towards site-based cluster teacher workshops for preschool to the first three grades with experienced resource persons in tandem with Dep Ed trainers. At this stage a good number of preschool teachers are also teaching another class in the primary grades. The in-service and pre-service capacity-building program is best built on public-private partnerships that build on the strengths and address the needs of both the public schools and the private institutions or organizations committed to developmentally and culturally appropriate early childhood care and education programs.

C. Goal #2 (increase number of preschool classes) Goal #5 (revisit national policies)

The final recommendations in regard to national policies directly affect children's access and the greater challenge of providing the all-important human resources for the public school early childhood education program.

1. In an ideal world, this is possibly one of the single most important policy directions to pursue in order to achieve quality in public and private education: **The most competent and experienced teachers should be assigned to handle the early childhood/kindergarten through primary grades.** Why? Because if children's earliest experiences in school include the chance to interact with and be nurtured and taught by caring and competent adults who truly understand children as learners, know how to teach them effectively using the most updated methods, tools and materials and are well-versed in the process of curriculum development, this is a major cornerstone in the foundation for lifelong learning.

Fulfilling the requirements of a good preschool and primary school teacher are based on a combination of the following : individual personality traits and competencies, academic qualifications and formal training, work experience, a commitment to continuing education and professional development.

However, at this point we are still at the relatively early stage of re-orienting existing highly structured, traditional kindergarten classes towards more child/learner –centered programs that have long been proven to be the most appropriate and good quality learning environments for young children. We are also barely at the halfway point as far as establishing the infrastructure and human resources for national universal coverage for preschool .

More than the resources for the physical infrastructure, the greater challenge whether for a fast-track approach to expanding access to preschool or a more conservative medium-paced approach is that of recruiting and hiring competent early childhood education teachers.

It is not going to be easy to fill the current teacher shortage given the continuing increase in the public school student population and at the same time recruit sufficient numbers of qualified teachers for the planned expansion of preschool classes. It is recommended that the Dep Ed convene a working group composed of representatives of CHED, TESDA, Teacher Training Institutions and ECCD experts to design a post-secondary certificate course on Early Childhood Care and Development and a multi-step career path in ECCD that will also consider other ECCD service providers. R.A. 8980 provides for this and it must be systematically done in a way that facilitates professional development opportunities and ensures stability for the existing cadre of ECCD service providers whether in the public school system, in the public day care centers and community-based ECCD programs established by non-government organizations. A system of accreditation that gives adequate consideration not only to pre-service formal education i.e. certificate courses whether post-collegiate or post-secondary as well as to accumulated in-service training credits and most importantly to work experience must be developed.

Other countries like Thailand (for public schools up from preschool to high school) and even the United States (Headstart) have built such large national public education and ECCD programs on a similar system that provided secondary school graduates or tertiary school students with opportunities to earn their certificates and work then continue further studies while on the job.

2. Ensure that there is consistency in principle and actual implementation of national policies that exist and that in fact these are complementary rather than contradictory. Review all departmental orders, memoranda and guidelines and revise as needed to ensure that these are updated, consistent and will contribute to achieving the goals of expanded access to quality early childhood education for all children.

Although the legal bases for national level implementation of public preschool (i.e. for five year olds) education has been existing for decades now, the political will to ensure financing for it and the conviction to allocate the necessary resources has not yet been demonstrated. The level of investment has not reached a point wherein concerted efforts to raise awareness among families, communities and the local governments about the importance of the early childhood years and of investing in ECCD programs has been sporadic rather than sustained. It must be emphasized that legislation - even if it is designed to include sanctions against parents for failure to enrol their children in preschool classes - is both premature and ineffective. In fact it can only do harm as it will only disenfranchise and exclude hundreds of thousands of five year olds from entry into school. The situation will be replicated in many parts of the country where five year olds will be "out-of-school kids" even before they have been admitted to and served by the public school system.

Furthermore, there is hardly any industrialized country where such approaches to making preschool compulsory with punitive measures for parents and families will be acceptable. More so for countries where public resources remain limited and universal coverage is impossible with the current levels of provision. It is not advisable to create policies that make enrolment in kindergarten a requirement for entry into Grade One **until** ***the public education system and the public ECCD service delivery system can actually ensure that the infrastructure and the human resources for service delivery is fully in place and operational.*** If the expansion plan is to be successfully implemented within the next three-four years, the immediate and urgent task at hand it to raise public awareness about the importance of ECCD for all children in order to educate parents and all stakeholders who affect the delivery of such essential services to children.

It must be emphasized that transitions and efforts to improve and transform existing programs will require changes in frameworks, perspectives, attitudes and practices. The challenges of expansion present excellent opportunities for such transformative processes to be initiated and taken to completion. The actions that are crucial to expansion must at all times be in tandem with actions that are designed to enhance the quality of a young child's active learning capacity and improve the quality of every Filipino child's learning environment.