

## A STUDY ON CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY STAGE

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### Abstract

Early Childhood Development refers to the physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development of a child from the prenatal stage up to age eight. This development happens in a variety of settings (homes, schools, health facilities, community-based centers); and involves a wide range of activities from child care to nutrition to parent education. Providers of services can include public, private, and non-governmental agencies. Early Childhood Development encompasses a number of distinct sub-stages, each of which presents particular needs. Pregnancy and pre-natal: prenatal care, attended births, registration, postnatal care 0 to 3 parent education, early stimulation and nutrition interventions, home-based care, crèches 3 to 6 parent education, preschool 6 to 8 transition to formal education, improved early primary school. From a development point of view, children who come from the most vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds need good-quality services and care the most, including children with special needs for early childhood development. To ensure a nation's children develop well, adequate investment in early childhood development is essential. However, a study by the Child and Family Policy Center (CFPC) shows that although brain growth and general child development is most important during the initial stages of life up to three to five years of age, the amount of public spending for that period in 12 states of the United States was vastly inferior to investment in later years.<sup>35</sup> These results mirror those in many other nations where far greater emphasis is placed on investing in formal education from ages five or six forward. It is instructive to compare national investments in children from zero to five years with funding for children from six to 14 or up to 18 years.

Note; [Different programs classify the early childhood period according to their own context. Therefore, it is recommended that users of this guide refer to their own early childhood development national policy guidelines when planning and implementing early childhood programs.]

**Keywords;** Early, child, children, Childhood, Development.



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### Introduction;

The future of any society depends on its ability to foster the health and well-being of the next generation. Stated simply, today's children will become tomorrow's citizens, workers, and parents. When we invest wisely in children and families, the next generation will pay that back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship. When we fail to provide children with what they need to build a strong foundation for healthy and productive lives, we

put our future prosperity and security at risk. Two recent developments have stimulated growing public discussion about the right balance between individual and shared responsibility for that strong foundation. The first is the explosion of research in neurobiology that clarifies the extent to which the interaction between genetics and early experience literally shapes brain architecture. The second is the increasingly recognized need for a highly skilled workforce and healthy adult population to confront the growing challenges of global economic competition and the rising costs of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid for the aging baby boomers. In an effort to identify those aspects of development that are accepted broadly by the scientific community, the National Scientific Council, based at the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, brought together several of the nation's leading neuroscientists, developmental psychologists, pediatricians and economists. This document presents their critical review of the existing literatures in their fields and a consensus about what we now know about development in the early childhood years. The objective of the Council is to move beyond the public's fascination with "the latest study" and focus on the cumulative knowledge of decades of research that has been subjected to rigorous and continuous peer review. The goal of this document is to help the public and its policy makers understand the core principles of that body of work that are now sufficiently accepted across the scientific community to warrant public action. It is our hope and belief that better public understanding of the rapidly growing science of early childhood and early brain development can provide a powerful impetus for the design and implementation of policies and programs that could make a significant difference in the lives of all children. Without that understanding, investments that could generate significant returns for all of society stand the risk of being rejected or undermined. Thus, there is a compelling need for scientists to share with the public and its representatives an objective basis for choosing wisely among competing demands on limited resources. This paper is designed to provide a framework within which this complex challenge can be addressed most effectively. Its goal is to promote an understanding of the basic science of early childhood development, including its underlying neurobiology, to inform both public and private sector investment in young children and their families. To this end, the paper presents a set of core developmental concepts that have emerged from decades of rigorous research in neurobiology, developmental psychology, and the economics of human capital formation, and considers their implications for a range of issues in policy and practice.

### **Objectives;**

- To assess the growth of early childhood development.
- To study specific factors of early childhood development.

### **Research Methodology:**

This is a descriptive research paper, where secondary information produced by different authors and researchers has been used. For obtaining necessary information, various books, journals as well as websites have been explored by the researcher which has been mentioned in the reference section.

### **Different Stages in Early Childhood Development;**

#### **Advancing early childhood development 2016;**

On 25 September 2015, countries around the world adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all as part of the new sustainable development agenda (United Nations, 2015). For young children and families this was a landmark moment, as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognize the critical importance of assuring that all young children get off to a good start. For the Bernard van Leer Foundation, after more than 50 years of experience investing in early childhood development (ECD), this represents the dawn of a new era. We are therefore relaunching this journal in a new format, on a new publication schedule and to serve a new purpose. Early Childhood Matters: Advances in Early Childhood Development will be published annually with the aim of elevating key issues, spreading awareness of promising solutions to support holistic child development and strong families, and exploring the elements needed to take those solutions to scale. It is our hope that by documenting the advances in these areas each year, we will be sharing the latest ideas, inspiring innovations and contributing to momentum on behalf of young children and families. That momentum is growing around the world. More than ever before, the earliest years of life are being recognized as the foundation of human development and economic success. Propelled by a combination of science, economics, parental demand, new champions and common sense, we are witnessing a revolution in thinking about the importance of the period from pre-conception to the early primary grades. One of the most exciting examples of this growing early childhood movement was the announcement by the World Bank and UNICEF, on 14 April this year, of a joint effort to urge greater investment in early childhood development: The two organizations announced the establishment of a new alliance that aims to make ECD a global policy, programming and

public spending priority, to give all young children access to quality services that improve their health, nutrition, learning ability and emotional well-being. (World Bank and UNICEF, 2016) From the emergence of early childhood in the Sustainable Development Goals, to increasing research, to the growing number of local, national and regional early childhood networks, there is a sense that early childhood has finally 'come of age' and is on the move.

### **Education in early childhood development;**

- **The terminology of Pedagogy-**

Different approaches to early childhood practice are informed by different educational philosophies, values and theories about how young children learn and develop. Consequently, early childhood practice is informed by a variety of approaches to curriculum. It is not surprising then to learn that there are a variety of approaches to pedagogical or teaching practice as well. Differences in pedagogical practice mainly refer to the degree of influence that adults should have over the early childhood curriculum. Although most early childhood settings offer a play based curriculum, this does not mean that there is pedagogical uniformity in the balance of involvement between children and educators.

### **What is Pedagogy?**

Pedagogy refers to that set of instructional techniques and strategies which enable learning to take place and provide opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions within a particular social and material context'. In other words, **Pedagogy (or teaching) is the interactive process that takes place between the educator and the child to enable learning to take place. Pedagogy is distinct from and complementary to curriculum. In other words, curriculum describes the 'what', that is, the learning opportunities on offer and pedagogy describes the 'how', that is, how the educator can assist the child to learn.** The pedagogical interactions between the educator and the child will be greatly influenced by the early childhood curriculum model in place within the early childhood service. Pedagogical practice can be defined through three main types:

**- Structured Approach**

**- Open Framework Approach**

**- Child-led Approach**

All children deserve excellent teaching. Teaching in early childhood is a highly skilled process where there is no single correct way to respond to children in order to optimize learning. It is the teaching skills and practices of the early childhood educator that make interactions educational. Skilful educators draw on a wide repertoire of pedagogical techniques and strategies during their interactions with children. This section will explore some of the common techniques by explaining what the technique is and how it enhances children's learning and development, how the technique is used and what the technique looks like in practice. The following eight techniques are discussed:

- **Positioning**
- **Empowering**
- **Scaffolding**
- **Co-constructing**
- **Modeling**
- **Questioning**
- **Encouraging and Praising**
- **Problem Solving**
- **Document**
- **Well-being as a Cornerstone for Learning and Development**

When the early childhood curriculum pays attention to the development of positive dispositions towards learning, a solid emotional foundation for all future academic, skills and knowledge based learning will have been created. Children who have successfully developed positive dispositions have conquered the most fundamental component of learning for life – they have learned how to learn. Social competence and emotional well-being are central to children's educational achievements. Regardless of the learning opportunities presented, a child who feels emotionally insecure, afraid or anxious will struggle to reach their optimal stage of learning and development. Children develop social competence through stable, caring and responsive relationships with adults. These relationships form the foundation for learning and development. It is essential that the early childhood educator has a highly developed awareness of the following five emotional building blocks, how to support the child in these areas and their importance for the development of positive dispositions towards lifelong learn.

**Health and physical activity in early childhood development;** Immunization protects people against harmful infections before they come into contact with them in the community. Immunization uses the body's natural defense mechanism the immune response to build resistance to specific infections and helps children (and adults) stay healthy by preventing serious infections. It copies the body's protective response to diseases, helping the immune system detect and destroy the infection when it is encountered in the future before significant symptoms or complications can occur. This booklet focuses on the vaccines for young children funded under the National Immunization Program. The routine childhood immunizations given through this program currently provide protection against 13 diseases:

- Diphtheria;
- Haemophilus influenza type b (Hib);
- Hepatitis B;
- Measles;
- Meningococcal C;
- Mumps;
- Whooping cough (pertussis);
- Pneumococcal;
- Polio (poliomyelitis);
- Rotavirus;
- Rubella (German measles);
- Tetanus; and
- Chickenpox (varicella).

**Physical activity** is important to many aspects of child health and development. In young children, lack of physical activity is a risk factor for many health problems such as high blood pressure, weight gain, excess body fat, bad cholesterol, respiratory difficulties, cardiovascular diseases and bone health problems. Moreover, the health benefits of physical activity extend well beyond physical health, having a positive impact on the domains of motor skills, psychological well-being, cognitive development, social competence and emotional maturity<sup>1-7</sup>. Early childhood that is, 0 to 5 years is also a critical time for establishing healthy behaviors and patterns that will carry over into later childhood, adolescence and adulthood<sup>1-4</sup>. Until recently; it was generally assumed that young children were naturally physically active. In the last 10 years or so, it has become evident that many young children do not

participate in sufficient physical activity to remain healthy<sup>4</sup>. According to the Canadian National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), only 36% of 2 to 3-year-olds and 44% of 4 to 5-year-olds engage in unorganized sport and physical activity each week<sup>8</sup>. Alarming trends in childhood obesity among preschool children have refocused attention on the importance of physical activity in this age group<sup>9</sup>. In Canada, national data show that 15% of 2 to 5-year-olds are overweight and 6.3% are obese<sup>8</sup>. In this context, various initiatives are underway to develop guidelines for physical activity in the early years. Physical activity is typically categorized into different intensities<sup>2</sup>. Light intensity physical activities for young children include dressing up in costumes, standing and painting, and slow walking. Moderate to-vigorous physical activities include running, jumping and playing ball games. These activities happen through structured physical activities, which include any planned programs like gymnastics or swimming lessons, or through Unstructured physical activities like playing at a playground, dancing or going to the park. Guidelines for physical activity in the early years focus particularly on facilitated unstructured play and the importance of April 2011 • Parenting Series • Physical Activity.

#### **Early childhood development basic concepts;**

- **EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND ITS BENEFITS DEFINITION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Generally, early childhood is defined as a time that “spans the prenatal period to eight years of age and it is the most intensive period of brain development throughout the lifespan” (WHO & UNICEF, 2012). This period is the most critical time for the growth and development of the child and needs the utmost attention and appropriate care. This guide describes only the early childhood development of children from birth to five years of age. Early childhood development is defined with many different terminologies by different programs or institutions. Here is how the ECD policy documents of the governments of Malawi, Kenya, and Zambia define early childhood.

- **THE BENEFITS OF INVESTING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT;**

The early childhood period is the basis for later success in life. It is the time when a child's brain develops at a rapid rate creating plenty of opportunities for children's learning and development. A child can have a good start in life when he/she grows up in a nurturing and stimulating environment that meets his/her essential needs such as nutrition, health, and

safety, as well as the psychological, social, spiritual, and intellectual needs. This also means that the child has a greater chance of reaching his/her full potential later in life. Therefore, it is important to address children's needs holistically because the absence of one or more essential needs can lead to negative developmental outcomes for children. Each and every child has a right to early childhood development. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 6 (Article 6, UNICEF) highlights that the child has "a right to live...and develop healthy" and that every child has "the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs" (Article 27, UNICEF). The ECD policies of Kenya, Malawi, and Zambia recognize that investment in the early years of life has multiple return values to the development of both children and society. For example, Kenya's national ECD policy document (June, 2006, pp. 2-4) states the benefits of investing in early childhood development as follows: *Brain development*: The development of the brain is most rapid during the first three years of life. Quality early childhood stimulation, nutritional support, and nurturance

#### **EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT—BASIC CONCEPTS;**

Enhances the development of the brain. Lack of a responsive and sensitive care giving can seriously affect the child's development, and cause failure to thrive. *Early identification and intervention*: Investment will be spent not only to deliver outcomes but to also reach the children who need it most. Therefore, children with disabilities and vulnerable children who are socially marginalized and discriminated against will have opportunities for early detection and intervention which ensures child's survival, health, growth, and psycho-social and intellectual development. *School readiness*: All children, regardless of their sociocultural background, will have equal opportunity to enter school at their appropriate age. The opportunity to help disadvantaged children attain an equal start in schooling is in the early years of life. The experiences of early years help young children to build their competence in all areas of development; the physical-motor, the social-emotional, the cognitive language and the moral-spiritual, including a positive attitude towards learning. *Cost savings for society*: A quality early childhood environment and education will translate into better health, fewer illnesses, good academic skills, and fewer school drop outs and repetition, preparing the child to become a productive citizen. Families and social services will have less cost in child care and intervention and invest in other family or national development programs. *Poverty reduction*: Quality early childhood development experiences and

education lead to better success in school, which in turn prepares the child to become an adult with higher employment and earnings, better health, and lower levels of dependency on families and society as well as lower crime rates compared to children who don't have these opportunities.

### **Childhood Implications for Policy and Practice;**

- Policy initiatives that promote supportive relationships and rich learning opportunities for young children create a strong foundation for higher school achievement followed by greater productivity in the workplace and solid citizenship in the community.
- Substantial progress toward this goal can be achieved by assuring growth-promoting experiences both at home and in community-based settings, through a range of parent education, family support, early care and education, preschool, and intervention services.
- When parents, informal community programs, and professionally staffed early childhood services pay attention to young children's emotional and social needs, as well as to their mastery of literacy and cognitive skills, they have maximum impact on the development of sturdy brain architecture and preparation for success in school.
- When basic health and early childhood programs monitor the development of all children, problems that require attention can be identified in a timely fashion and intervention can be provided.
- The basic principles of neuroscience and the technology of human skill formation indicate that later remediation for highly vulnerable children will produce less favorable outcomes and cost more than appropriate intervention at a younger age.
- The essence of quality in early childhood services is embodied in the expertise and skills of the staff and in their capacity to build positive relationships with young children. The striking shortage of well-trained personnel in the field today indicates that substantial investments in training, recruiting, compensating, and retaining a high quality workforce must be a top priority.
- Responsible investments in services for young children and their families focus on benefits relative to cost. Inexpensive services that do not meet quality standards are a waste of money. Stated simply, sound policies seek maximum value rather than minimal cost.

The need to address significant inequalities in opportunity, beginning in the earliest years of life, is both a fundamental moral responsibility and a critical investment in our nation's social and economic future. Thus, the time has come to close the gap between what we know (from

systematic scientific inquiry across a broad range of disciplines) and what we do (through both public and private sector policies and practices) to promote the healthy development of all young children. The science of early childhood development can provide a powerful framework for informing sound choices among alternative priorities and for building consensus around a shared plan of action. The well-being of our nation's children and the security of its future would be well-served by such wise choices and concerted commitment.

### **Findings and Suggestion;**

- Early childhood development programmes to be implemented by various actors, whether governmental, non-governmental or local organizations. UNESCO Beirut is working with a group of NGOs in Lebanon to enhance their delivery mechanisms and build their capacity to offer quality education, health, socio-condition, family environment, physical and society in the most difficult circumstances – training teachers and education personnel on innovative solutions that ensure the right to quality early education and relevant learning in a manner that is inclusive and respectful to the needs of learners.
- We encourage early childhood education and care programmes to be designed to fit the context and environment of the Syrian child and his or her family. They should be implemented in a safe and friendly space and must include activities that stimulate the child's cognitive, social-emotional and language development. In addition to providing literacy and numeracy activities, there should be recreational opportunities for learning, including play, art, music, drama and sport. It is of the utmost importance to deliver programmes, as far as possible, in the mother-tongue language of the child.

### **Conclusion:**

If early-life conditions have lasting effects on human capital formation and adult economic success, the United States' disadvantage in infant health relative to other wealthy countries could have far-reaching implications. The link between early-life conditions and outcomes throughout the life course. Studies on this topic vary substantially in empirical methods, data, and context. Despite this variation, the research provides overwhelming evidence that early-life conditions affect the population's wellbeing, measured by health, educational attainment, adult earnings, and other indicators throughout life. This article also reviewed the effectiveness of interventions targeting the early-life environment. WIC, medical interventions such as

vaccinations and center-based early childhood care and education programs have all been shown to improve early-life conditions. Moreover, these programs are quite cost-effective, with benefit-cost ratios generally exceeding one. Of course, an important caveat is that cost-benefit analyses rely on many assumptions (for example, they must generally assume a discount rate) and don't take into account some costs and benefits that are difficult to put a price on. Nevertheless, the calculations suggest that public spending on these programs is more than justified by their benefits. The research thus points to a critical window of opportunity for improving children's life chances through evidence-based early-life interventions. However, all is not lost if we don't successfully intervene in early childhood. Indeed, many policies that impact children's health and development later in life are described in other articles in this issue.

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