

# Newsletter

## Early Childhood Education

### ECE - *the First Pillar of EFA*

Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children



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# Editorial

I would like to draw the attention of our readers towards a very sensitive period of life called early childhood. Globally, it is firmly rooted in the first goal of the Dakar Framework of Action (2000) reaffirming the EFA Declaration at Jomtien (1990);

**“Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.”**

Despite this commitment, initiatives for ECE in public sector are very limited, mostly funded by donor agencies. Private sector, on the other hand, only packages its offerings to successfully convince parents for making the best investment in their child's future; catching them as early as they can so that they can be prepared for entry to elite missionary schools, Aitchison College, Grammar Schools, Beacon House, City Schools or other comparable elite or non-elite versions, depending on the socio-economic class they belong to. Children are provided with stimulants like the proverbial Pavlovian dog to be conditioned to the virtual reality of a mindless pursuit of success as early as possible, ensuring that twenty years down the line, it could result in the correct branding, networks and status. Whatever happened to childhood? What happened to nature? What happened to the exploring spirit of child? The principles of the Quran on child rights and the cognitive constructivism of Plato, Rousseau, Piaget, and Maria Montessori surely did not envisage ECE programs on such myopic patterns, so distant from the essence of childhood!

Education sector had been one the most severely affected sectors due to the devastation caused by the earthquake of 8th October, 2005. While the physical damage of natural disasters such as this is easy to see, the impact such a crisis can have on communities in general and specifically on a child's cognitive and emotional development is far more devastating often leaving deep scars. The importance of ECE must therefore be seen not only in terms of addressing the wider EFA and MDG education goals, but also in relation to the intrinsic benefits it brings to children and their families in times of instability and trauma. Moreover, for a sector that had already been under functioning and was in a silent state of emergency, this is an opportunity to really “build back better”! Good quality ECE interventions should therefore be seen as an opportunity to ensure mitigation against poor quality early learning education, managing trauma through care, providing stimulating and safe play learning environments

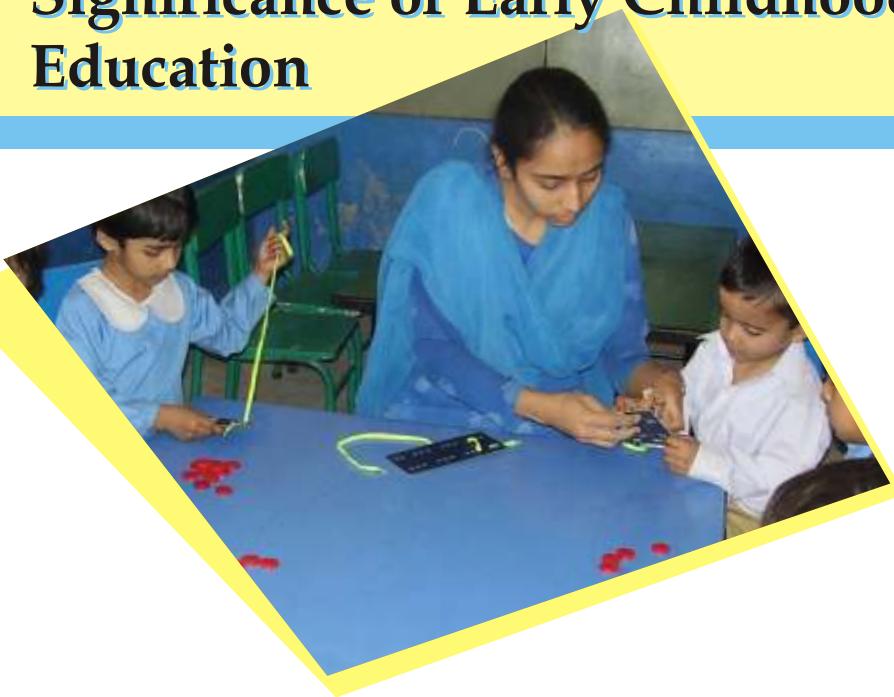


a c a d e m i c

*“Expanding  
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EDU

# Significance of Early Childhood Education



Once upon a time, children had to be six years old before they started attending school. Younger children had to pass their time in "child-care centers" with "caregivers." It was not an interesting place but was meant only to provide a safe environment for the child. It also meant that most of these centers didn't have enough fun stuff like paper and paint, books, games and computers. Imagine what it was like for children, especially for poor children who didn't have much fun stuff at their homes either.

With the passage of time, things began to change. Grown-ups discovered that babies are eager to learn language and other skills. As a result this realization child-care centers graduated into "care-and-education centers", encouraging children to learn, experiment and explore as they played. People also started realizing that caregivers were really teachers who needed to be trained like teachers and paid like teachers so they can stay with the children. Everyone, especially children from poor families, lived more happily ever after.

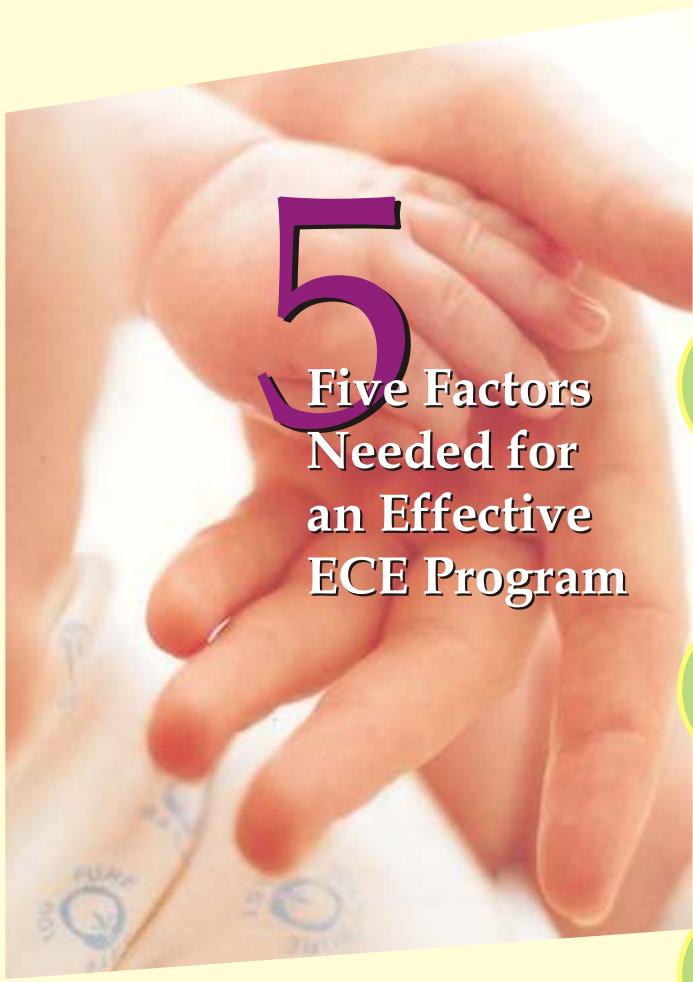
This anecdote leads up to the question: what is early childhood and what is its significance? Early childhood experiences have great effects on the emotional and physical growth of children. Therefore, the purpose of early childhood education should be to support young children, their families and communities during these early years physically, emotionally, socially, cognitively and intellectually. It also should place a special emphasis on children who are at a disadvantage or are vulnerable due to their economic, ethnic or religious circumstances. Every child needs a good foundation if he/she has to prosper in life. In the early years children develop emotionally, intellectually and socially at a quicker pace, and it is at this time when the base for a strong, secure and vigilant person is laid down!

Early childhood education is important for ensuring quality education because:

1. An appropriate early childhood education would serve as a stepping stone towards the attainment of Millennium Development Goals and EFA goals.
2. When a child is young, from birth to age five or six, s/he is developing many of the psychological and social aptitudes that will form the basis of his/her approach towards life as an adult.
3. Early childhood education prepares a child to get the maximum benefit out of school; where a child is already curious about what is out there in the world and how it works.

Early childhood care and education takes many forms, both within country and across countries. Possibilities include everything from a formal government pre-school to informal care at home. Unfortunately, opportunities for early learning are often unequally distributed. Children living in poverty have a substantially lower chance of benefitting from any form of early childhood care and education, including informal childcare.

The biggest constraint in successful planning, organizing and delivery of ECE is the limited availability of resources. It is particularly difficult to set balanced priorities among the competing demands of ECE, primary, secondary and higher education. In the light of the needs and nature of early childhood care and education, governments should put in place a national legislative framework after widespread consultations between government and other stakeholders.



# 5

## Five Factors Needed for an Effective ECE Program

# 1

### Quality Staff

Teachers in the early childhood program should have a comprehensive knowledge about child's development as well as skills required for teaching young children. Teaching staff should adhere to interactive approaches, mentor development of child, plan individually for each child.

# 2

### Suitable Environment

A suitable environment should be provided which would allow children to learn according to their own development.

# 3

### Appropriate Grouping

The program should use effective grouping practices that enable each child to grow and develop to the best of his or her ability.

# 4

### Consistent Schedules

The program should follow a daily schedule that provides the children with continuity and security.

# 5

### Parent Involvement

Parents' and families' involvement as partners in ECE program is essential for the efficacy of the program.

# School readiness

Young children are ready to have successful experiences when there is a positive interaction amongst child's developmental characteristics, school practices and family support. In the past, school readiness was defined as a level of development a child is expected to have to be successful in a typical kindergarten classroom. This narrow scope of focus has changed over the years and current research now shows that readiness should focus on a several factors and not just the child.

Before entering kindergarten, children should have basic knowledge of themselves, their families, and the world around them. Through play and interactions with caring adults, children can come to school equipped with many skills that teachers can build upon.

Social readiness is as important as academic readiness. Being able to get along with other

children, follow directions, take turns, and say "goodbye" to parents are skills that kindergarten teachers hope to see in incoming children.

When children complete basic self-help tasks such as tying their shoes, they feel a great sense of pride. Independence builds confidence and self-esteem. In school, children are expected to do many things on their own. Listening and speaking are the first steps to reading and writing in the preschool years. Through conversations with parents, teachers, and friends, children learn about people, places and objects about which they will later read and write. It is through speaking that young children tell us what they know and understand about the world.



## Communication Skills

### Social readiness

Social readiness: being able to get along with other children, follow directions, take turns, and say "goodbye" to parents.



## Independence

### Academic readiness

Academic readiness: refers to a child's ability to identify colours, letters, numbers shapes and sizes



## Recommendations for ECE/ECD in Pakistan:

### Some principled approaches and strategies

Building on the recommendations put forward by Professor Anita Ghulam Ali at the "Early Childhood Development" conference organized by SEF in April, 2006, some recommendations for ECE/ECD programmes in Pakistan are:

1. Unlike the traditional approach of making recommendations for ECD from an early childhood perspective alone in Pakistan's case unless and until ECD is mainstreamed in the basic or primary/elementary service delivery agenda we will never get the attention in policy, planning, action plans and budgets. ECE must be officially recognized as part of the formal school system through both formal and non formal delivery modes.

2. No recommendation for ECD can be made in isolation. Each one must be connected to the enterprise called education and learning for living societies. For Pakistan the challenge is not just about rediscovering childhood but rediscovering a society, its education and learning needs as a truly human and contemporary post colonial society. Recommendations disconnected to this challenge will be ghettoized and forgotten or at best only implemented by the ECD walas who are few and far between. Kathy Bartlett may shout out about networks for ECD, AKU and SEF can bring out the best publications but it will remain a fringe phenomenon unless it is mainstreamed in the architecture of basic education in Pakistan.

3. ECD needs a dedicated group of professionals who can work on learning solutions but they must have the skills to link these to basic and higher education options. These linkages are essential for mobilizing resources, strategically acting as a catalyst to effect changes which are long over due in the system.

4

4. ECD programs need to be part of the School Improvement Program and movement across Pakistan. ECD cannot claim a special spot in the primary school which is privileged, depriving other grades and children of attention. Where ECE is a special program, it is creating an elitist sub-culture of attention which is not the most desirable, as it has seen to lead to relapses in enrolment or in some cases children being shifted/demoted from higher classes by choice to the ECD class so that the child is a recipient of better facilities, learning materials and attention.

5. ECE/ECD needs to be everyone's business and not just of the education sector. Childhood (0-8 years) is the most critical of investments with high social and private returns. The choice of not investing in this has high social and personal costs, which we can ill-afford. The support to ECE /ECD must come from all ministries and departments of health, population, women's development, social welfare, labor and industry etc. The Ministry/Departments of Education & Literacy must be able to facilitate the expansion of ECD through other departments which can be on school or community based sites. The multi-sectoral nature of childhood needs to be reflected in all ECD programs.

6

6. ECD /ECE curriculum needs a review committee which should inform the Curriculum Wing about amendments required. The guidelines need to be reviewed every three to five years. The support materials for ECE/ECD must be developed by multiple providers.

7

7. Capacity building initiatives must be systematically supported so that these are targeted towards:  
Teachers; Head teachers; Supervisors  
Trainers of ECE/ECD  
Planners and budget makers (financing of ECE/ECD is not well thought through)  
Policy makers

8

8. ECE/ECD needs public awareness and advocacy: for this both the media (a dedicated TV channel) and print media should be tapped to maximize outreach

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9. A core group should be formed representing all provinces to influence policy and remain vigilant about opportunities for ECD expansion in Pakistan.

A dedicated website for ECD/ECE Childhood reclaimed should be finalized to contain comprehensive information on related policies, programs, approaches, curriculum materials available, program profiles, support organizations for training, specialists for health, inclusive education, psychologists, case studies, research studies, toolkits for ECE/ECD and much more so that the public has easy access to information, skills and resources available for ECE/ECD in Pakistan. This should be maintained by organizations such as SEF but with official links to the Ministry/Departments of Education, Health, Social Welfare etc.

# ITA's ECE Programme

Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi's  
Early Childhood Education Programme

## The first break through in transforming failed schools: A mainstream strategy for school enrichment: Rethinking school culture

Being committed to EFA goals and the effectiveness of early childhood education, ITA in collaboration with the Dept. of Education and City District Govt., Lahore introduced its first ECE program in its partner government\EXMCL schools catering for 3 years + a class even katchi.

A program for early childhood education naturally helped ITA to link the school with the local community, trigger classroom improvement in the primary section and change attitude of teachers and parents with marked results in practices and impact.

### Why early childhood education in government schools?

"ECE is an incentive program for improving access and retention; addressing well-being of the very young at the household and school levels. "It is ITA's firm belief that to achieve sustainable and quality universal primary education, there must be investment in the very young through ECE.

At Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) our foremost challenge has been transformation of under performing government schools, to be seen as the first drop of rain on a parched, angry and orphaned education landscape. ITA managed to get the local government to sign on the memorandum of understanding (MoU), allowing it to run a pre katchi ECD program in some school. This was seen as a mile stone in series of enrichment activities such as learning, nutrition, health, special needs/inclusive education, play, parents counseling and much more in schools. We have not looked back since then. Every partner school is provided with the stimulant to revisit the profile of children and their learning, to relearn pedagogy and to improve the ethos of the entire school through the ECD intervention. What is good for the little ones must be replicated for the older children and so the same methodology and support has an upward stream linkage. The head teacher of course has to be a believer in the development of the young where our biggest challenge has been to win over the school leaders and other teachers regarding ECD.

Direct interventions for Early Childhood Education Program Numbers of Schools:

District	No of Schools	No of Children
Lahore	9	505
Sheikhupura	2	150
Total	11	745

Numbers of Schools where ECE material is being used other than Lahore/Sheikhupura:

District	No of schools	No of Children
Islamabad	5	250
Chiniot	11	700
Nankana	6	150
Total		1100



## Learning materials being used in ITA's ECE programmes:

TRC Taleemi Basta  
Weather charts  
Alphabet train  
Morning news  
Nature Resources like leafs  
Toys / games  
Creative art ( clay work, paint)  
Gardening  
Puppets  
Alif Laila Qaida Kit and CD on Alif Bay Pay  
Big Books (Punjab Middle Schooling project)  
Scheme of work from the Sindh Education Foundation(SEF)  
Building blocks of Alphabets, counting & Alif Bay Pay  
Pocket board with learning aides  
Soft boards  
Washing lines  
Material in Goshas or learning corners language (Urdu, English), Math, Science, Library, art and health on rotational basis.

## Curriculum in use:

National curriculum on early childhood education & guidelines  
Punjab Text Book Board  
Supplementary materials  
TRC materials Pehla Taleemi Basta & Alif Laila Quaida Kit



# Case Study

## Asma at

### Government Girls Primary School, New Islamia, Ghari Shahi, Lahore.

When she was appointed in the school as an ECE teacher, there was no proper ECE set up. From day one, she had to work hard to implement the methodology of ECE and made learning corners, set up washing lines, word walls, weather chart and morning news, which helped her to improve the worth of her students. (Many of these ideas have been adopted from the READ ECE program after ITA's team recent study visit to South Africa).

Due to her dedication and commitment, the enrolment in ECE program is increasing every day.

She knows each one of her students by their names, temperament and their potential. She does not overlook the quiet ones or the 'backbenchers'. It is her ambition to improve the slow/difficult learners. It gives her a sense of accomplishment and joy when her students actively participate in stimulation exercises.

"Asma is a hard working, regular and a punctual teacher. Improvement can be seen in the school on a daily basis from the time she joined. She worked not only to arrange and improve her own classroom set up but also helped other teachers and motivated them to use new teaching techniques and methodologies for interactive learning. She is a real role model for us and we are very proud of her!" Senior head teacher, new Islamia School.



When a senior head teacher with 35 years of experience acknowledges a young recruit who is working for ECE as the lead catalyst in the Whole School Improvement program, it is truly a program of hope and celebration!

# Teachers' Guide:

## Teaching Life Skills

Choose some topics from your syllabus, which are important and can be related to health. Get input from other teachers as well as children. Make a list of priorities. Also add those topics which are important but were not suggested during discussions with others and are not included in the syllabus.

Once you have a list for each topic:

1. Write a clear statement of the idea.
2. Give general information about the subject.
3. Provide a selection of suggested activities to choose from e.g.

### Action Plan:

#### Discussion and other class-room understanding and planning activities:

**with the help of stories, role play, games, experiments.**

**Doing activities:**  
practical activities at home and in the community.

Have a separate day for follow-up or evaluation activities to see if the children have understood the new idea, what action they have taken, whether they have communicated the idea to others.



#### **Each lesson should comprise of two 45 minutes sessions**

1. Introduce the idea and explain it.
2. Conduct classroom activities.
3. Give assignment relevant to activities as homework..
4. Discuss findings of home activities.
5. Evaluate understanding.



# Health Lesson



**Topic:** Looking after our Teeth

**Time:** 45 minute

**Material:** text books, other health material, A/V Aids model of teeth ,charts.

**Class:** Prep, One, Two

### Objectives

To tell the children why do we have teeth.

To tell the children how they can keep their teeth healthy .

To give awareness about the importance of teeth.



### Content

#### How many teeth do u have?

When a baby is born, he/she has no teeth. A baby begins to cut his first teeth at the age of six months.

Different age groups have different number of teeth. Small children have less number of teeth while adults have a big number of teeth.

#### Why do we need teeth

We need teeth for:

Biting and chewing our food  
Smiling and looking good

#### What makes teeth go rotten?

When we eat, small bits of food get stuck into our teeth and gums, germs are formed there and teeth begin to rot.

Not cleaning them properly.

Eating

- o too many sweets.
- o sugary stuff and sweets.
- o fizzy drinks and
- o Specially in between meals.

#### What happens when teeth go rotten?

Holes form in teeth and person suffers from severe pain!



#### Question bank

How many teeth do u have?

How many times should teeth be brushed ?

What are the things which spoil your teeth?

What are the things which make our teeth strong?

Teeth become brown and black and then we have to go to the dentist to get the tooth extracted.

#### How can we help keep our teeth and gums healthy?

Cleaning regularly in the morning and specially before going to bed.

Drinking milk daily.

Chewing the food well.

Washing our mouth after every meal.

#### How many times teeth should be cleaned

Ideally , we should clean our teeth thrice a day but if it appears difficult it should be done twice; after dinner and then in the morning after break fast.

If you forget to clean your teeth at night, do it in the morning before taking your break fast.

### Activities

#### Tell stories about teeth

The story of a child who does not clean his teeth properly.

#### Drawing exercise

Make four groups and ask two of the groups to draw things which can spoil the teeth and the remaining two groups to draw the things which can help keeping teeth healthy.

# ECE in Emergencies

## Key Principles of Early Childhood Education and Care in Emergencies

### Access

The right of access to [early childhood] education, recreation and related activities must be ensured, even in crisis situations. Rapid access to education, recreation and related activities must be ensured, and followed by steady improvement in quality and coverage. ECCE should serve as a tool for child protection and harm prevention

### Resources

ECCE programmes should use a community-based participatory approach, with emphasis on capacity building. ECCE programmes should include a major component of training for teachers and educators and provide incentives to avoid teacher turnover. Crisis and recovery programmes should develop and document locally appropriate targets for resource standards, adequate to meet their educational and psychosocial objectives

### Activities/Curriculum

Curriculum policy should support the long-term development and be supportive of durable solutions. ECCE programs should be based on a holistic approach which includes dimensions of health and nutrition, water and sanitation, etc... ECCE programs should be enriched to include education for tolerance, human rights and citizenship.

Source: Kemal, H (2006).



## Helping Children Cope with Tragedy

For Save the Children, a 'Safe Space' is intended to be a rapid/short-term emergency intervention to a natural disaster or conflict situation, that improves a child's sense of normalcy and structure by providing children and youths with a safe environment to express themselves in, activities to support them develop for the future whilst reducing the risks they face during and after the emergency.

Because giving children an opportunity to play and be children fosters resilience and allows them to return to normalcy, Save the Children quickly set up safe play spaces throughout the earthquake zone in Kashmir and NWFP region. Each safe play space featured plastic mats for sitting and play kits containing sports equipment, arts and craft supplies, and simple toys, including dolls and play tea sets. Adult supervisors and trained youth provided structured activities and supervision. As Save the Children transitioned from recovery to development programs, communities have taken on the management of these safe play spaces, often moving them near schools and integrating them with education programs.

([Http://www.savethechildren.org/publications/reports/final-20broucher-2004-9-06.pdf](http://www.savethechildren.org/publications/reports/final-20broucher-2004-9-06.pdf))



# *ITA's ECE Initiatives in AJK:*



Capacity building workshops for ECE teachers  
Establishment of learning corners in schools and camps  
Integration of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in early year's classes  
Use of puppetry to make learning more interesting  
Health monitoring charts  
Health corners in schools  
Taleemi Basta

## *Case Study*

### **Government Girls High School, Kolah**

The earthquake of 8<sup>th</sup> October had left the girls middle school in Kolah in shambles. With the efforts of Hope 87, NATO army and Pakistan army, the school has been reconstructed and upgraded into a high school now. 177 girls are now benefiting from this re-enactment! In addition to other interventions such as teacher trainings and site-based support, ITA has also introduced Early Childhood Education in this school. Teachers have been trained to establish learning corners and prepare specific timetables and lesson plans for ECE classes. Use of washing lines has been introduced so that children's work can be displayed in classrooms. Teachers have been familiarized with the maintenance of individual portfolios for each student. These portfolios include student's artwork and literacy and numeracy related worksheets. Health check sheets have been distributed in the schools so that health records of the students can be maintained.



### **Capacity Building Workshop on Early Childhood Education / Development**

20-22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2006

A two day training workshop, aimed at capacity building of early childhood educators and relevant stakeholders, was conducted by ITA's trainers at the Sanjan Nagar Public Education Trust Girls High School in May, 2006. Amongst other participants, the training was attended by government teachers from AJK ( Bagh and Muzaffarabad districts), field coordinators from ITA's AJK team and representatives from Department of Education , AJK.



# A Concern... the recently finalized National Curriculum & Scheme of Studies

## Early Childhood Education

Age 4/5, Full day nursery of scholars from 08:30 to 12:30

### Language Experience Block ( Native language/Urdu/English)

Phonics-Alphabets  
Rhymes-Single syllable words  
Conversation in simple sentences  
Written work ( Recording oral language)  
Basic numeracy, number line

### Heritage Block

Folk tales from regional, national and Islamic sources  
Heroes of our History and contemporary world  
Creative Arts and Dramas  
Patriotism  
Shared cultural values and norms of conduct

### Environmental Block

Community study ( Home, Village, City)  
Nature study ( Plants, animals, life cycle)  
Seasons ( growth and change)

**Note:** Each unit to combine interactive small group and large group activities to build age-appropriate knowledge, skills and dispositions to become communicative, creative and constructive members of society

The Curriculum Wing, Ministry of Education has recently released the Scheme of Studies, 2006. The Heritage Block in this scheme of studies needs urgent revision for imposing abstract concepts of patriotism and heroes. The closer the child is to the local context the more concrete the 'wonder' of feeling and learning! What is needed is an update of the last curriculum framework for ECE in an non-obtrusive manner for an early learner (3-5 year olds), minus ideology and nationalism. Comments and concerns should be passed on to the National Curriculum team at [www.moe.gov.pk](http://www.moe.gov.pk).

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### Supported by:



Save the Children



## Early childhood care and education the forgotten link.... claims new report published by UNESCO

According to this report, "Strong foundations: early childhood care and education", though early childhood care and education is the first of six Education for All goals the world is committed to achieving by 2015, this issue still remains neglected in many regions of the world. This report shows that despite an increase in demand for early education and care, half of the world's countries have no early childhood care and education policy for children under age three. Consequently, the financing for early childhood programmes is also a low priority in most countries: less than 10% of total public education expenditure was allocated to pre-primary education in 65 of the 79 countries with 2004 data available; over half allocated less than 5%.

(The full Report, summary report and additional information is available on [www.efareport.unesco.org](http://www.efareport.unesco.org))

## Resources

[www.allianceforchildhood.net](http://www.allianceforchildhood.net)  
[www.crin.org](http://www.crin.org)  
[www.ecdgroup.com](http://www.ecdgroup.com)  
[www.whomindsthechild.org](http://www.whomindsthechild.org)  
[www.commercialfreechildhood.org](http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org)  
[www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org)  
[www.investinkids.ca](http://www.investinkids.ca)